



**THE RELATION BETWEEN TIME AND VALUE IN NIETZSCHE'S
*THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA***

by

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This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other instution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief it contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.


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Abstract

Individual existence in time and the values related to the transience of all human life are important themes in each of Nietzsche's philosophical works. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* these are highlighted through the form of a poetic narrative, which nevertheless contains an important existential message. Nietzsche argues that human beings can learn to affirm transience through their confrontation with the most negative aspects of it: pain, suffering and death. Only as parts of the constant flux of becoming are they free to create their own values.

In this thesis I defend the claim that one of Nietzsche's major aims in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is to argue for a transformed attitude to existence and, accordingly, a transformed standard of evaluation of one's life. Nietzsche's arguments for the transformation of negative individual attitudes to the maximally affirmative perspective on human life relate to three of his most original doctrines: eternal recurrence, the will to power and the Superman.

The examination of Nietzsche's doctrines provides an understanding of how the transformation of some individual attitudes and values is possible. The thesis is divided into two main sections. The first three are concerned with Nietzsche's criticism of the values of those who cling to illusory permanence. The negative effects of this attitude are investigated in relation to the past, present and future. On the basis of these, Nietzsche's arguments for a positive, transformed attitude to existence are developed in the second half of the thesis.

According to Nietzsche, the attitudinal and value transformations can only be effected by the exceptional individual with a central core of affirmative will to power not possessed by others. Only the exceptional individual can impose value on the past and, in this sense, make it changeable. The special qualities are also required from one who can live in the moment in such a way that each becomes as full and unique as possible. The invulnerability of the exceptional individual enables him to withstand loneliness and transform it into creative solitude which further enhances his affirmative powers. The death of God and the finitude of human existence become for him an opportunity for the creation of more positive values which celebrate transience.

I conclude that Nietzsche's constructive task, that of showing that affirmative attitudes and positive values related to transience are possible, is a success. In *Zarathustra* he grapples with the fundamental problems of finite human existence and shows that better values arise precisely because of impermanence and change. Nietzsche's strength lies in his capacity to not only criticize traditional values but to suggest plausible alternatives to these. Where his predecessors descended into nihilism burdened by the spirit of gravity, there he shows in the person of Zarathustra how nihilism can be abandoned in favor of the celebration of Life.

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Introduction

Introduction

How seriously should the work of Nietzsche be taken by students of Western philosophy? The importance, or perhaps notoriety, of Nietzsche is proven by the lack of neutrality towards this question. There are those who argue that he has no place amongst the greatest minds of the last two millennia. These criticisms are based on the apparent incoherence and contradictoriness of Nietzsche's aphoristic statements; they have little to offer those looking for clear syllogisms that can be studied for their validity. Some of these complaints are understandable. Many of Nietzsche's critics are justified in arguing that if one has an important message to transmit, then it pays to express it as precisely as possible. Other claims regarding Nietzsche's incoherence, however, are based on *ad hominem* attacks related to his mental instability. These can be dismissed as unscholarly for this reason.

There are, however, many good reasons for taking Nietzsche seriously; all of these relate to his work as a philosopher who was concerned with the fundamental problems of human existence. The most important of these is the problem of what makes human life valuable in spite of its transience. In this thesis I focus on the relation between time and values in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The task he undertakes there is both negative and positive. He criticizes those who denigrate the world because of its temporal character, its transience and impermanence. More particularly, Nietzsche attacks individuals who despise the human body because of its decay and death. These individuals, according to him, invent another world of permanence which contains no change or death. The targets of Nietzsche's criticism, then, are the illusions on which those individuals who cannot confront their humanity base their values.

Nietzsche's criticism of prevailing, erroneous values is only the first part of his task of the revaluation of all values. The second part, his proposals for how these can be replaced by more positive values, is the more interesting aspect of his philosophy. It is also the more challenging, albeit rewarding, object of study because of the difficulty in interpreting it. The criticisms shock one at every turn because of their often shrill tone; the positive statements lack this force because they are easily lost in the background, in contrast to the former. They deserve further study precisely because they are dismissed by some Nietzsche interpreters as less relevant than his genealogies of humanity's ills.

Zarathustra stands alone amongst Nietzsche's works both because of its style and because of its significance to the author. Nietzsche, as one speaker of what are unpalatable truths to many less independent individuals, expected *Zarathustra* to make an impact on its readers which differed from other literary works of the nineteenth century. He considered it as central amongst his philosophical works:

Within my writings my *Zarathustra* stands by itself. I have with this book given mankind the greatest gift that has ever been given it. With a voice that speaks across millennia, it is not only the most exalted book that exists, the actual book of the air of heights - the entire fact man lies at a tremendous distance beneath it - it is also the profoundest, born out of the innermost abundance of truth, an inexhaustible well into which no bucket descends without coming up filled with gold and goodness.¹

A clear account of what Nietzsche can offer to the independent reader is given by Joan Stambaugh: 'Undoubtedly the preponderance of his genius lies in his unswerving, uncompromising diagnosis of Western philosophical, religious and cultural values.'² Many readers of *Zarathustra* may see Nietzsche's praise of his own work as mankind's greatest gift as hyperbole, but for the attentive reader the book offers discussions of the philosophical issues which Nietzsche considered the most important. Nietzsche states that it stands out amongst his other works because it contains his most original doctrines that most contribute to a more positive perspective on human existence. These perspectives are based on the doctrines of eternal recurrence, the will to power and the Superman, all of which are related. The Superman is presented as the most affirmative being with a superior will to power whose attitude to eternal recurrence is one of fervent craving.³

On the other hand *Zarathustra* deals with the same issues that are prominent from the *Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo*. In all of his writings Nietzsche is preoccupied with the 'problem of existence': if human life is merely transient, how is it possible for an individual to derive value from it? Further, how can human life possess any value in the absence of anything transcendent? In other words, there is a coherence of thought from Nietzsche's first to last published work. Each of them investigates the possibility that the human condition can be transformed by entirely human means. Even if the finitude of human existence cannot be overcome, some individuals can

¹ *Ecce Homo*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979, Foreword 4, p. 35.

² Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994, p.123.

³ *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage Books, 1974, 341.

develop more positive attitudes towards it because of their superior capacities and establish an alternative value system which depends on transience for its success.

Instead of his usual aphoristic style, Nietzsche uses a poetic narrative to describe the travels of an exceptional individual. These take place in an imaginary world which, however, bears a resemblance to the ordinary human world. Thus some aspects of it provoke Zarathustra's fear and anxiety while others inspire his admiration because of their beauty. In the narrative Nietzsche gives two paradigm examples of how the transformation of individuals' attitudes and values can be brought about by their ability to regard impermanence in a positive light, as an opportunity to create their own values. First, he emphasizes the importance of a critical understanding of history; it contains values which can enrich the life of individuals in the present and the future. These values are embodied in the great figures of the past; they are characterized by their independence of thought and action. Second, the most significant example of unique individuals who add value to the past, present and the future are the 'Dionysian' artists whose passion for life and their arts transcend the limitations of human existence. Their works capture eternity as something that can be experienced in every moment, not as something that will be encountered by 'the chosen' in an afterlife.

The major question posed in this thesis is whether Nietzsche's positive task is successful. Has he created alternatives to replace those religious and moral values that the people of the West have held in such high regard for two millennia? Or has his success been limited to the impact made by his negative rhetorical claims about Western nihilism? Is it possible to affirm anything if the world is merely one of transience?

Martin Heidegger argues that in *Zarathustra* Nietzsche continues the tradition of Western metaphysical thinking rather than making a break with it.⁴ According to him, Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysical concepts necessitates an engagement with the tradition; in the process he must also recognize what is best in it. His work is impossible to understand unless one has a good grasp of Western intellectual history of two millennia; nowhere does he try to erase its influence from his life. On the contrary, he appeals to the values of the Ancients and wants to recreate a new philosophy of affirmation congruent with their teachings. Nietzsche's discussion

⁴ Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, New York: Harper and Row, 1977, p. 61.

of Zarathustra's development in the course of the narrative is a key to understanding how an individual can transform his attitudes to transience and as a result create his own, positive values.

Zarathustra's Development

Nietzsche refers to two kinds of values guiding individuals in *Zarathustra*. There are those who are misled by the 'spirit of gravity', with its 'heavy words and values: this dowry calls itself "Good" and "Evil"',⁵ into thinking that these values are absolute and unchangeable. On the other hand the exceptional individual, who has *his* own good and evil, argues that '*the* way does not exist!'⁶ This passage has led some readers to interpret Nietzsche as an unqualified relativist who claims that all perspectives on existence are equally valuable. Ted Sadler argues that this reading fails to recognize the importance of rank ordering in Nietzsche's philosophy.⁷ According to this view, those perspectives that reflect the individual's strength, or his superior 'will to power' are better conceptions of existence than those held by those weighed down by the values proposed by the spirit of gravity. Nietzsche is concerned to show in *Zarathustra* that at least some individuals can transcend their condition of pessimism in the face of human finitude to one of affirmation of this existence.

Stambaugh argues for the idea of transcendence as one of the unique and distinguishing features of Nietzsche's philosophy:

I believe Nietzsche is striving for a new meaning of transcendence. This new meaning is the shift from thinking transcendence as something beyond man to thinking it as man's activity in transcending his human, all-too-human condition.⁸

Only those individuals who accept the transience of existence and engage in a continuous activity to confront them can transcend themselves. If this is possible, then Nietzsche's project of the revaluation of all values is also possible; individuals have a choice between life-denial and life affirmation, between negative and positive values towards existence. If no permanent 'self' exists in the world of flux, then individuals can change and re-create themselves precisely because of this condition of impermanence. Nietzsche does not mean by 'development' the striving towards certain extrinsic goals. The unique individuals are expressions of the will to affirmation; they are

⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969, III: 11, 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Ted Sadler, *Nietzsche, Truth and Redemption: Critique of the Postmodernist Nietzsche*, London: Athlone Press, 1995, *passim*.

⁸ Stambaugh, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-5.

parts of an ongoing process with no beginning nor end. These selves, then, cannot be separated from their environment, but are shaped by constant interactions with it. They strive towards more power and therefore enhance their lives and those of others in time.

In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche is concerned with four aspects of what Stambaugh calls 'earthly transcendence'. These can be summarised in the following terms. She argues that man must transcend his 'human, all-too-human condition' by getting away from erroneous ways of striving for illusory permanence and becoming more 'natural' in the process. However, his values must express a connection with the changing, transient earth. Secondly, man can transcend his condition by living authentically for the moment. Thirdly, man must at the same time heed the vital lessons provided by a critical reading of the past and by an aesthetic evaluation of life. In both of these he is guided by the great figures of the past, the Dionysian individuals with a passion for Life. Both the critical understanding of history and the best art enhance life because they capture the uniqueness of human existence. They express values which are simultaneously timely and timeless. Finally, because transformation is man's ongoing activity, it is not concerned with a final goal or *telos*, but is rather a constant process of becoming.

From this understanding of transcendence I conclude that the development of the exceptional individual has no predetermined end point; on this account there cannot be a fully natural nor authentic human being. The lessons of history and art cannot be learnt in their entirety. The process towards transcendence may end in failure and death. Man must allow for this possibility as a natural consequence of his mode of being in time as a human being - the exceptional individual must affirm this prospect as equal to success and long life.

The Relation Between Time and Value in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Zarathustra is concerned with time at two different levels. At a superficial level there is the chronology of the events of Zarathustra's life. In the beginning we learn that he has spent ten years in isolation from other people on his mountain. He then returns to live with people at the age of forty, and the different phases of his subsequent travels are measured in terms of days and nights; the passing of time delineates the different phases of the narrative.

At a deeper level, *Zarathustra* is a philosophical investigation into our attitudes to time. First, he considers our attitudes to past, present and future in relation to a linear concept of time: if we know that our existence is finite, how is it possible for us to find meaning in our lives?

This dilemma becomes more pressing after the death of God. Once he is no longer the originator of values, can there be any foundation for them? Do all values dissolve in the flux of time? Can even time remain in any sense 'real' if past, present and future are not predetermined by an omniscient, omnipotent God?

For Nietzsche, then, the relation between time and value depends on the distinction between two kinds of time. Time is, on the one hand, the substratum of individual experiences; it is what I live in today. Some individuals, on the other hand, are able to regard time as the historical past as a whole; it is what everyone has always lived in. It contains discrete events of millennia, but it is at the same time continuous and as such seamless.

From the wider perspective of time as history, events in individual lives derive their significance not merely from the decades persons are inhabiting, but from the previous millennia. Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* as we read it now is the product of the whole of Western philosophy. It has been shaped by the past; it is also already shaped by the future. I have supplemented my reading of the impact of the past and the future on the experience and ideas of the present contained in *Zarathustra* by those in the second essay of *Untimely Meditations* and *Ecce Homo* because the continuity of past, present and future is a regularly occurring theme in each of these works.

Nietzsche depicts the ordinary individuals' attitudes to time as predominantly negative.. He recognizes, however, the difficulties of approaching transience from any other perspective. He is sympathetic to Zarathustra's fear of the past: 'This terrified me dreadfully: it prostrated me. And I shrieked with horror as I had never shrieked before.'⁹ Nietzsche accepts this as a common reaction to bad events of the past. He does not, however, regard it as natural because, according to him, it is based on an erroneous attitude to the past. Zarathustra therefore 'comes to himself';¹⁰ he has the strength possessed by few to view the past from a more positive perspective.

Nietzsche explains in *Zarathustra* that the resentment towards the past is caused by its unalterability. He does not, however, regard this negative attitude as inevitable but claims that the will's ability to impose value on previous events can be construed as a means of changing the

⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II: 19.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

past. Nietzsche also observes that the past as collective history can contribute to the value of an individual's life.

The transformation of attitudes to transience depends on how an individual lives each moment. Nietzsche asks what it would mean to live one's life as if it was going to return again. His vision of eternal recurrence is first presented in *The Gay Science* as a thought experiment and as a means of ranking individual attitudes and values to time's passing. There he proposes that only the strongest would have the courage to live in such a way that they would crave the return of each moment because only they are capable of investing each moment with unique value.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* the moment is depicted as a gateway through which everyone must pass and through which lanes lead to the past and the future. The thought of the return of the moment is presented there as an 'existential imperative'. The strong individual must create his own values which enable him to live each moment in such a way that he could welcome its return. Living authentically, then, not only contributes to the most affirmative values in the present, but also in the future. By this means of living, Nietzsche argues, one can truly become what he is. In *Zarathustra* he discusses the value of solitude for this enterprise; only by temporarily withdrawing from the world can one create the values and the 'invulnerable, unburiable inner core' which is required for a life of affirmation.

Outline of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into two major sections. In the first three chapters I deal with Nietzsche's criticism of negative attitudes to the past, present and future. I do this by examining the statements that Zarathustra makes about attitudes to time in the course of the narrative. According to him, the ordinary people harbor 'ill will' towards the past and they are fearful of the future because of the uncertainty it represents to people who desire permanence and certainty. Because the 'unhappy many'¹¹ are preoccupied with the negative aspects and the unpredictable features of the future, they are unable to live fully in the present.

In Chapter One I focus on the past and how it can be viewed from a more positive perspective if time is seen as a continuous history of the millennia. Nietzsche argues that the attitude of most individuals towards the past is predominantly negative. Human beings living in

¹¹ Stanley Rosen, *The Mask of Enlightenment*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, p. 42. Rosen states that the distinction between the 'happy few' and the unhappy many is Nietzsche's own.

time regret their past for two reasons: its positive events cannot be recreated; and its negative events cannot be erased nor altered. I argue that a more positive attitude to the past is possible from two perspectives that are interrelated. First, if one is able to see the past in its entirety as a source of value, then resentment towards its immutability can be transformed into an appreciation of its riches. Second, from this perspective, the past must be seen as continuous with the present and the future. Nietzsche's discussion of the great figures of the past is an example of this; they are as alive to him in his thought as people actually existing in the world.

In Chapter Two I outline two interpretations of Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence. The first, that it is concerned with cosmological facts, is dismissed as implausible because the only evidence for these claims is found in the *Nachlass* fragments. As these were published after Nietzsche's death, the reader cannot be certain that these were ever intended by the philosopher for publication. Laurence Lampert holds that their lack of structure and 'the artistic form that Nietzsche knew to be essential to the presentation of his thought' do not 'add anything essential to what *Zarathustra* has already shown'.¹² Another serious concern for a Nietzsche scholar is the possibility that some sections were tampered with by his sister, Elizabeth.¹³

The second interpretation of the doctrine of eternal recurrence, that Nietzsche meant it as an 'existential imperative' is discussed in more detail and compared with Kant's categorical imperative. It is argued that Nietzsche's imperative is superior to Kant's because it is based on lived temporal experience. It demands more from its proponent because it is grounded in actual existence. It does not offer an abstract, universalizable rule, to be applied to discrete actions, but a vision of how each moment becomes unique for one who appreciates the transience of it.

In Chapter Three I discuss Nietzsche's portrayal of individual attitudes to the future. I argue that there is no inconsistency between his claims for the importance of living for the moment and his emphasis on a better future. I reconcile these by arguing that Nietzsche demands that the exceptional individual should wait for the future in a positive, creative way. This means that one should not succumb to the fear which destroys the present of the less confident person. I argue that the Superman cannot provide the solution to the problem of lack of value in the world because he is not an example of an exceptional individual. He is disconnected from humanity

¹² Laurence Lampert, *Nietzsche's Teaching: An Interpretation of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986, p. 5.

¹³ See Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher*, New York: Macmillan, 1965, on this question.

and because of this cannot represent the prospect of a better future. This can only come about through the transformation of the human condition of some individuals who simply accept their transience. The solution to the human value crisis must arise from human beings with the strength to overcome their *ressentiment* against time's passing.

In Chapters Four, Five, and Six I deal with Nietzsche's constructive task. I do this by investigating the unique qualities of the exceptional individuals who can live without illusions. Nietzsche places special emphasis on their achievements in *Zarathustra* as well as in all of his writings. He argues that there are men who are able to transform the negative aspects of the past and future feared by the many to positive, life-enhancing ones.

In Chapter Four I outline Nietzsche's arguments for and against the existence of a 'self' in relation to time. He argues against the traditional dualistic, romantic, religious and moral concepts of the 'self'. These arguments, however, are not incompatible with his emphasis on the development of a more authentic 'self' because of the different genealogy of the two conceptions of the 'self'. Nietzsche differentiates between how the ordinary and the exceptional individuals experience themselves in the flow of time. The ordinary people's negative attitudes to temporality are expressed in their fragile self-concepts. In an effort to overcome their sense of inferiority they postulate, according to Nietzsche, an essential, unchanging 'self'. He argues that this conception is erroneous because it is based on a metaphysical division between the mind and the body. The preservation of this self or 'soul' through time and after death is the focus of both their desires and fears. This unnatural 'otherworldliness' is reinforced by religions which denigrate the body because of its impermanence. Nietzsche attacks them because they promote this negative view of human existence as 'truths', and ignore the unavoidable facts of its transience.

Nietzsche replaces the erroneous conceptions of the 'self' with his idea of the authentic individual who is identified neither with a permanent soul nor with a transient body. His identity is related to the earth and everything natural. This 'self' has, paradoxically, been created by an individual who has no need to assert his or her selfhood.

In Chapter Five I develop the theme of individual development in *Zarathustra* further. I focus on Nietzsche's arguments for the importance of solitude in the development of the authentic individual and his or her positive values. For Nietzsche, the best values arise naturalistically

from the facts of transience. To live authentically means to live honestly; this demands constant engagement with the existential questions of life.

In Chapter Six death as a test of affirmative attitudes towards time and impermanence is discussed. The fear of death may be overcome by four alternative ways of thinking. Firstly, if the 'self' does not exist, then death is not the end of anything that matters. Secondly, death is present in all moments of life; it is the unavoidable event towards which everyone living in time proceeds. It is an inseparable part of the process of the fluctuations of will to power, outside of which nothing exists. Death is one aspect of the changes that allow for recreation and renewal; it can therefore be viewed from a more positive perspective.

A third, erroneous way of dealing with death is that of those who believe in God and afterlife. A critical aspect of Nietzsche's constructive task is to search for alternative values that are grounded in temporality in a world in which God no longer exists. The new values, according to him, are created by exceptional individuals whose mode of life is different from that of the religious who desire permanence. The creative individuals are characterised by their independence; they transform themselves and their world into one of enriching challenges and experiences. As a result of these their will to power becomes more affirmative; they gain 'great health'; a sense of exuberant well-being which in its turn attracts more power to itself.

I conclude in Chapter Seven that Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy is a success because he has proposed a plausible, positive way of viewing human existence and its most difficult problems. He has suggested that change and impermanence are gifts from which the strongest individuals benefit the most. He draws the reader's attention to those features of Western intellectual tradition that have been shaped by such individuals; his is an inspiring vision of what is possible in a world of transience. Even if one cannot change one's past, for instance, one can overcome one's resentment towards it. Through this one can make it in a sense alterable and thus add value to one's life. It is this issue to which I now turn.

Chapter One

Resentment Towards the Past

Introduction

Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is like no other philosophy text. It is a poetic narrative of the travels of a prophetic individual, Zarathustra, who possesses both human and superhuman characteristics. For instance, he feels pain and sorrow like any human being, but he can go without eating and drinking in a state resembling death for seven days.¹

In this philosophical poem Nietzsche makes use of the metaphysical concepts of Western philosophy in an effort to get beyond them. It contains references to the sacred texts of Christianity and Buddhism while at the same time denigrating aspects of religious traditions. Much of my discussion in this thesis is an evaluation of Nietzsche's enterprise of offering alternatives to the traditional ways of understanding the relation between time and value. Most of these have been grounded in the linear concept of time postulated in the metaphysical and religious thought that the Western readers of Nietzsche are most familiar with.

Nietzsche deals with the metaphysics of time in each of the four parts of *Zarathustra*. The prologues and the stories of the first part of the text underline the connection between transience and negative evaluations of time. They illustrate the apparent powerlessness of the individual in the face of death and decay, and the resulting resentment towards all life because of its impermanence. Those who most crave meaning in life are confronted by its apparent meaninglessness.

The way in which Zarathustra criticizes what he sees as hostility to all life by those around him indicates, however, that alternative perspectives are possible. In the words of Zarathustra, Nietzsche shows that one should not give up on life on the whole even if some of its aspects appear less than satisfactory from the erroneous perspectives of those who fear transience. Zarathustra's alternative approaches include, for instance, the overturning of the hierarchies of those who value the mind over the body or who focus on another world at the expense of this one.²

¹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 13.

² *Ibid.* Prologue 6.

The continuity of time is a problem for individuals living in it because it brings with it the immutability of the past and the uncontrollability of the future. Powerlessness in the face of this relentless passage of time results, according to Nietzsche, in nihilism in the following sense. If neither the past, present nor the future can be altered, everything seems futile to those who are thus reduced to mere spectators of their own lives.³ Continuity in the sense of a steady flow of time also implies that no moment of any life can be separated out as more significant than any other. If this is the case, if every joyful moment disappears into the river of time, then this further adds to the meaninglessness of all lives. If even the most unique moments in life do not matter, then the passage of time levels them all out to nothing.

The continuity of time, however, can also provide a solution to the problem of valuelessness. If time continues as a flowing river, then the past is never truly over, then the moments that most matter to the individual are always in some sense present. If this is the case, then life is not merely a struggle against powerlessness but an opportunity to swim in the river in which the past, present and future flow equally at all times. The continuity of time supports rather than hinders the most unique, creative forms of living. Nothing is excluded from it as a less valuable aspect.

The new evaluations of the familiar aspects of existence are discussed further in the second part of *Zarathustra*. Even Zarathustra does not adopt new attitudes without difficulties. He has to undergo various transformations; many of these possess initially nightmarish qualities which threaten to overcome him. His human struggle with perennial human problems points to the possibility of an actual transformation in the attitudes of ordinary people to existential questions. This is one of the reasons why the Superman ideal proposed in Zarathustra's prologues subsequently fades from the scene. Nietzsche has simply abandoned it because it serves no further discursive function; the solution to everyday problems of meaning must arise from the everyday.

This claim may well be countered by references to Nietzsche's emphasis on uniqueness both in *Zarathustra* and elsewhere. This challenge can be met simply by pointing out that Nietzsche argues that the solution that each of us finds must be unique in the sense that it is individual. Zarathustra does not offer any universal solutions nor appeal to solutions that require

³ See, for instance, *Untimely Meditations* II, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge

the postulation of another world beyond this one. His questions and answers pertain to the positive transformation of pain and suffering each of us encounter in the time we live.

In the third part of *Zarathustra* examples of how an affirmative attitude to a finite life of decay and death are given. Zarathustra shows that the same world of which he had earlier grown weary has now become perfect. Nothing has changed yet everything has changed for the one who has had the courage to confront his nightmares and fears. Zarathustra has become superhuman simply in the sense that he has overcome his 'human, all-too-human condition'; he thinks differently, he feels differently. But he remains mortal, of this world; for him there is no other, better world of the future. The euphoria that results from his understanding of the true nature of existence is the pervasive tone of the final part of *Zarathustra*.

I have referred to Nietzsche's other works in my discussion of Nietzsche's understanding of the relation between time and value for the following reasons. Firstly, in many instances Nietzsche's writings prior and subsequent to *Zarathustra* add further clarity to an important issue hidden in the poetical narrative of the text. Secondly, I am concerned with highlighting aspects of both the continuity and of the evolution of Nietzsche's thought. Therefore I have discussed in more detail passages from other works which enable me to compare and contrast his ongoing concern with the problem of time and value. For instance, Nietzsche assesses different attitudes to the past and history and the values related to these attitudes in *Untimely Meditations*. His detailed discussion of the different approaches aids the understanding of the same issues when he raises them in *Zarathustra*.

In this chapter I will outline Nietzsche's arguments against negative attitudes to the past. He shows that these are erroneous because they do not correspond to the world of flux. If they are erroneous, then the attitude of resentment towards a static, unalterable past, is also in error. In the place of this attitude he proposes that the past can be affirmed as in a sense alterable. It should neither be forgotten nor ignored, but it should be viewed critically as a resource that will positively enhance life in the present and in the future. The past is alterable because it is continuous with them, it remains alive. In support of his argument Nietzsche appeals to his own, experienced continuity with the great figures of history. Furthermore, he projects the lessons he has learnt from them into his own future.

Nietzsche's Criticism of Negative Attitudes to Time

Nietzsche argues that common conceptions of time are erroneous for several reasons. The main error, according to him, is that ordinary people's attitudes to time are predominantly negative. They fear and at the same time desire the passing of time, depending on what their present is like. They want either to cling to a present that conforms to their expectations, or to escape from one that does not. For this reason, they can never live fully in the present. The enjoyment of the present is also spoilt by the pervasive impact of the past on it.

Nietzsche's overall argument investigated in this thesis is the following: he argues that unless people's attitudes to time are wholly positive, they remain entirely negative. This is not a false dichotomy. Rather, it represents the practical unity of Nietzsche's vision which is the topic of each chapter. For him, either being in time is all valuable, or it all lacks value. The passing of time and the changes it brings can either be viewed as the enemy of all value or as the source of it. According to Nietzsche, it is not, for instance, possible to affirm the present while resenting the irredeemability of the past. In other words, he argues for a fundamentally different attitude to living in time. New values are required for this transformation; they are further generated by it.

New values are generated by those with the most will to power - this distinguishes some individuals from their peers. The most comprehensive illustration of the different aspects of the will to power is given by Edgar Sleinis. He argues that by 'the will to power' Nietzsche means all of the following features of the world:

First, there is a 'raw energy' aspect, the sheer capacity to effect change irrespective of whether change increases order or chaos (WP 1067). Second, there is a shaping, or structuring, or form-generating aspect (ibid.). Third, there is the tendency of concentrations of power to increase the concentrations of power (WP 689). Fourth, there is the tendency for concentrations of power to increase the range of their influence (ibid.). Fifth, power is variously concentrated and distributed (WP 1067). Finally, there is the aspect of incessant dynamic change (ibid.).⁴

The six aspects of the will to power are not only characteristics of the world, but they are present in varying degrees in all individuals and also in all interactions between people and their environments.

The outline of the six aspects of the will to power also indicates the reason for Nietzsche's rank ordering of individuals. Most people would fit into the two classes of the herd or the

⁴ Edgar Sleinis, *Nietzsche's Revaluation of Values: A Study in Strategies*, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994, p. 17.

slaves. These classes differ from each other in one significant respect. The herd are content with their situation; they do not aspire to more power; they do not want to shape or structure either their own power or that of others. The slaves, in comparison with the herd, resent the power of their superiors, they want to reduce it and control its forms of expression.

The herd and the slaves are the majority of people which includes everyone apart from those who he singles out for special mention. The latter possess unique characteristics that the majority are not endowed with. Amongst such qualities are strength of will, artistic talent and intellectual integrity or conscience, displayed not only on rare occasions but in a whole way of life. In other words, they have more 'raw energy', they can effect change. Because they have more power they are capable of concentrating more of it in their person, consequently they become more influential. Their powers are concentrated in ways unique to them: for instance, some are artistic, and some powerful intellects or political figures. Their power is constantly changing in ways that can effect both order and destruction.

It must also be noted that if the world is one of will to power, it is simultaneously one of order and chaos. Those individuals who have the most will to power are the most able to deal with it. In relation to the past they can most readily accept the fact that it is futile to try to re-order it; they do not waste their powers in activities that will diminish them. There are then, particular 'facts' and 'truths' about existence that are understood differently by the uniquely self-possessed individuals; this again sets them apart from the majority.

In contrast with the powerful, most people have negative attitudes towards the past. Nietzsche describes them in the following two ways. First, for many people past time is a source of regret because it is time that has slipped by unnoticed; it is time that has been wasted. The second expression of a negative attitude towards the past relates to the first. The passage of time makes the past inaccessible and unchangeable. Nietzsche argues that individuals not only regret this, but actively resent their past because of their powerlessness to alter it; it is the 'most intolerable burden'.⁵

Human beings can neither control the passage of time nor change the inaccessible past. It is nevertheless present to them in their memories:

⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II: 20.

'It was': that is what the will's teeth-gnashing and most lonely affliction is called. Powerless against that which has been done, the will is an angry spectator of all things past. The will cannot will backwards; that it cannot break time and time's desire - that is the will's most lonely affliction.... This, yes, this alone is revenge itself: the will's ill will towards time and time's 'It was'.⁶

The past remains in a sense 'visible'; it extends the 'most intolerable burden' to the present.⁷ As such it functions as a negative 'paradigm for the future';⁸ those filled with regret towards it desire that the future should be different. There is, then, a connection between negative attitudes to the past and to life in general.

Nietzsche's Criticism of Mediocre Lives

Ordinary people's negative attitudes towards the past reflect, according to Nietzsche, their negative attitudes to life in general. These attitudes have been shaped by religions and other prevailing value systems. He holds that the problem with these is that they lead to pessimism and nihilism. According to him, these values render individuals incapable of acting in ways that enhance their lives. In other words, in the lives of the majority of individuals there is a conflict between their natures and the values intended to guide them. On the one hand, they want to act in ways that involve them in concrete, enriching human situations. On the other hand, they are equipped with values that teach them detachment, denial and withdrawal from the world. Action is judged as less worthwhile than the contemplation of 'high' ideals, such as those offered by religions.

The comparison of the lives of the majority and the unique individuals again brings out the difference between the ordinary and the exceptional individual. For the majority, their lives are something to be endured. Many merely focus on the avoidance of pain and suffering; their tedious existence is only made tolerable if they can cling to the possibility of a better life after death. The unique, creative individuals, in contrast, see Life⁹ as an adventure, as a challenge which will further add to their strength of will, artistic talent and intellectual prowess. They do not search for an external, transcendental meaning to their lives, but create their own transient values.

⁶ *Ibid.*, trans. Kaufmann.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

⁹ Nietzsche personifies Life as a woman in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 10. I have used the capital to refer to Nietzsche's conception of Life as a more exalted mode of being in time than merely existing in the world.

The character of Zarathustra can be understood as a role model of an exceptional individual that Nietzsche sets up for the benefit of the reader. He also sets the unique and the common individuals apart by his use of the term Dionysian artist whose will to power is expressed in his exuberance for Life and the art that results from this.

Those who are incapable of artistic expression react to the past with resentment. In the above passage from *Zarathustra*, the will is described as powerless in the face of what has gone on in the past. Because of time's irreversibility we cannot do anything at all about time's passage; it is totally beyond our control; it would pass even if we did not exist. If, as Nietzsche claims, time is commonly perceived as the enemy of life, the sense of powerlessness and the subsequent resentment against it become intense in the minds of those who are incapable of more positive perspectives. Lampert discusses Nietzsche's teaching in *Zarathustra* more comprehensively than has been done by any other interpreter of Nietzsche. He discusses important issues, for instance 'The Education of Zarathustra',¹⁰ which is the major focus of the narrative. Lampert relates this to Nietzsche's discussions on individual development in his other works.¹¹

Lampert depicts Zarathustra's role as one of 'a practitioner of his highest virtue, the honesty, or will to truth, that is also his work'.¹² He is a member of 'the new nobility [which] redeems the whole of the past' and which supplants 'the base uniformity of political monotheism' with diverse and unique individual qualities'.¹³ Zarathustra, then, expresses Nietzsche's desire for the transformation of societies through its best representatives. This possibility, however, is questioned by Keith Ansell-Pearson. He argues that there is a paradox in Nietzsche's thought: on the one hand he is concerned with a fundamental transformation of whole societies, on the other he is individualistic and excludes this possibility.¹⁴ If, however, the transformation of societies is based on the redemption of the whole of the past, then this whole must include the pasts of those who are not members of the new nobility. A different future, then, becomes a consequence of an all-inclusive redemption of the past by those for whom it is a source of positive values.

¹⁰ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

¹¹ Lampert refers, for instance, to *Beyond Good and Evil*, see *op. cit.*, p. 6.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 206.

The majority of people, however, are unable to view the future and the past in these positive terms. Lampert gives an explanation of the causes of the powerlessness of the majority presented in *Zarathustra*:

Time, personified as desiring, imprisons the will. 'Time's desire' is its inexorable movement from future possibility through present actuality to past necessity, where it enters glass coffins, visible but immutable. The creative will is situated in time's passage.... It is not mortality as such, the becoming that ends in death, that poisons the creative will's response to time's passage, but the becoming that is imprisoned in the unchangeable.¹⁵

Lampert agrees that time is regarded with hostility by those who fear change in human affairs. He states that ordinary people perceive time as a greedy 'father' that devours his 'children'. This interpretation draws attention to the significance of the repeated use of a particular literary device by Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*. He personifies time and values related to it in order to contrast different individual attitudes. Lampert also points to the possibility of an alternative attitude to time and to the past in *Zarathustra*. He refers to the 'creative will' that can respond to the memories of the past in a more positive way. According to Nietzsche, then, the past can, in a sense, be altered.

The creative will obviously cannot be a spectator outside time. It cannot manipulate the past, present and future from some god-like perspective. If everything was under the will's control, it would not make any sense to talk about different attitudes to time. What Nietzsche argues for, instead, is the possibility that the past can be viewed in an entirely different light by those living in time. What does Nietzsche mean by a different attitude? It could be supposed that he means something like the following. Time wasted in the pursuit of a goal that has not been achieved, for instance, may alternatively be regarded as time not 'poisoned' by the constraints that the achievement of the goal may have imposed. One may, for instance, have applied for a job and been disappointed when one did not get it. This can, however, leave the individual free to pursue interests for which he may not otherwise have time.

Lampert acknowledges, however, that for most individuals living in time results in a sense of powerlessness for the following reasons. He is saying that some features of the past are still very real to us because they live on in our memories. In some ways this past may even be more real than the present, as it can still cause intense feelings of distress and regret. The strongest of

¹⁴ Keith Ansell-Pearson, "Who is the *Übermensch*? Time, Truth, and Woman in Nietzsche," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, vol. 53, No. 2, 1992, p. 310

emotions can arise in retrospect, when people examine their previous actions, rather than at the time that they are actually carrying them out.

But in spite of this potency of memories, the past is not accessible to alteration. One sees it as if through a glass coffin - it is available for observation but not for manipulation. And yet the past is the component of time people would most like to change, precisely because of the uncomfortable way in which it still impinges on present thoughts and actions.

The past is alive both for the nihilist and the creative individual, but in a quite different manner. The nihilist focuses on the undesirable aspects of the past; these prove to him the futility of existence. The creative individual, on the other hand, is able to see the past in conjunction with the present and the future for the possibilities it creates. This idea of continuity relates to the different approaches to history discussed by Nietzsche in *Untimely Meditations*. The past is still in some sense alive, yet dead in the sense that it is 'unreachable by the will';¹⁶ a will which nevertheless desperately desires power over its undesirable aspects. In another sense, however, the past lacks form. No individual can view his or her past in its entirety. The complete history of an individual can only be evaluated by others after the death of the person. What difference does this make? Nietzsche's references to how differently the sick individual and the convalescent view the world bring out the problem of an 'incomplete' life. While you are sick you cannot appreciate the fact that sometime in the future that sickness will become something in the distant past, a faint memory. Nor can you look forward to the period of convalescence and improving health which also become aspects of the past:

It is still a long way from morbid isolation, from the desert of these experimental years, to that enormous, overflowing certainty and health which cannot do without even illness itself, as an instrument and fishhook of knowledge; to that mature freedom of the spirit which is fully as much self-mastery and discipline of the heart, and which permits paths to many opposing ways of thought.¹⁷

Only in retrospect can the desolation of illness be viewed as a precursor to the happiness of health; what will become the past will be naturally redeemed by what will become the present and the future. These in their turn become aspects of the same past.

¹⁵ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 143. He comments on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 19.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Human, All Too Human*, trans. Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1994, Preface 4.

It is important to note that Nietzsche does not refer to mere physical illness in the above quotation. He likens illness to ignorance and good health to knowledge and understanding. Once this stage of intellectual and spiritual well-being is reached, one has also achieved 'self-mastery and discipline of the heart'. The past, then, has shaped the individual in ways which liberate him not only from the burdens of the past, but also of those of the present and the future; the past has ensured his mature freedom in the present.

The above process from ignorance to understanding also applies to the story of Zarathustra. He has to undergo the sickness of his nightmares in order that he become free to affirm his past. 'Mature freedom' has another significance. Those individuals who attain it, through meeting the challenges that others cannot cope with, are in a sense liberated from time as a constraint on their actions. This freedom in its turn allows them to create their own values; they are able to rise above '*cowardice*' and '*mediocrity*'.¹⁸ They overcome sickness and return from convalescence to full health, to wisdom.

Nietzsche criticizes the mediocre conception of happiness and demands something much more positive from his ideal individuals. They should not only accept with grace, but approach with a joyful attitude everything that is changing and unpredictable. In other words, this approach is characterised by joy in the very same things that are for the majority the causes of pessimism and subsequent nihilism. Nietzsche considers this attitude the most 'authentic' way of living:

It would be strange if that which a man can do best and most likes to do failed to become a visible presence within the total formation of his life; and in the case of men of exceptional abilities their life must become not only a reflection of their character, as is the case with everyone, but first and foremost a reflection of their intellect and of the capacities most personal to them.¹⁹

Nietzsche obviously refers to the Dionysian, exuberant individuals who have the most will to power. This becomes 'a visible presence' in the values they hold. These values reflect their uniqueness because they are shaped by the individual, the individual is not shaped by values external to him. The total formation of life does not refer to the length of life that has passed; this may well be very short. It is the depth and diversity of past and present experiences that matter, not their duration or repetition.

¹⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 5, 2. Nietzsche's italics.

¹⁹ *Untimely Meditations* IV: 2.

The 'intense' individuals are capable of willing their own destiny. They are, according to Nietzsche, engaged in the process of 'becoming what they are'. This shows that they can ignore the 'thresholds'²⁰ of the past, present and future as mere conceptual abstractions that inhibit the activities of less capable individuals. For them, the past does not exist as an insurmountable threshold, neither does the future. They can see the totality of their lives even if they are yet to be completed because for them it contains a sense of mission; they know that they have a particular destiny to fulfil.

Nietzsche's explanation of how a life can be seen in its totality is in terms of the doctrine of eternal recurrence. If everything recurs, then past, present and future are only arbitrary divisions of time. This does not, however, appear to sit well with his focus on specific future goals.

Alternative Attitudes to the Past

Nietzsche argues that individuals resent the past as a hypostatized event that cannot be accessed by them any longer. As such it also continues to color their present and future; it remains an aspect of passing time. Maudemarie Clark reiterates the problem of the past in *Zarathustra*.: 'Zarathustra's words make it clear that our problem with time is our complete powerlessness in relation to the past'.²¹ The past, for the majority, amounts, on the one hand, to a list of mistakes that cannot be retrospectively rectified. On the other, it represents successes that cannot be repeated in the present or the future. Both failures and successes become a source of regret for the powerless.

The 'new nobility', however, have the power to redeem the whole of the past. This means that they have an affirmative attitude not only to their own experiences but also to the past as history. They use it in creative ways unlike the powerless who make a futile effort to quarry it to bolster their lack of power. The contrast between the two attitudes is illustrated by Nietzsche in the second section of 'Of Old and New Law-Tables'; it is one of the most enlightening passages

²⁰ This term is used by David Karnos in 'Beyond Flesh and Hope', p. 11, a paper presented at *Nietzsche Event: Looking at Nietzsche Looking at Ourselves*, Goucher College, Baltimore, 10.30.1994.

²¹ Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
Ibid., p. 259.

concerning what he sees as the misuse to which history is subjected. He describes it in the following terms:

My pity for all that is past is that I see: It has been handed over - handed over to the favour, the spirit, the madness of every generation that comes and transforms everything that has been into its own bridge! A great despot could come, a shrewd devil, who with his favour and disfavour could compel and constrain all that is past, until it became his bridge and prognostic and herald and cock crow. This, however, is the other danger and my other pity: he who is of the mob remembers back to his grandfather - with his grandfather, however, time stops. Thus all that is past is handed over: for the mob could one day become master, and all time be drowned in shallow waters.²²

The important point is that although Zarathustra is describing the negative attitudes of the despot and the mob, he is at the same time emphasising that this is not his attitude; he cares far more about the past than to abuse it in this way.

One example of how Zarathustra views *his* past is shown in the 'Funeral Song':

O, you sights and visions of my youth! O, all you glances of love, you divine momentary glances! How soon you perished! Today I think of you as my dead ones. ... You murdered my youth's visions and dearest marvels! You took from me my playfellows, those blessed spirits! To their memory do I lay this wreath and this curse. This curse upon you, my enemies! You have cut short my eternity, as a note is cut short in the cold night!²³

The prevailing sentiment here appears to be one of profound regret. Is Zarathustra, then, an ordinary human being clinging to the past? Does he resent time's passing and desire permanence? After all, he refers to how 'his highest hope has remained unspoken and unachieved'²⁴ and wonders how he could have endured these disappointments.

After these regrets, however, Zarathustra examines the in-vulnerable aspect of his nature. This makes endurance of adversities possible and ensures recovery from them and the overcoming of regret. In his will, all of the visions and 'all the unachieved things of my youth still live on';²⁵ willing is what liberates him from his past, present and future and from his sense of regret. What does Nietzsche mean by 'will' in this context?

Graham Parkes argues that the 'Tomb Song' indicates that 'the past may not after all be unalterable'.²⁶ He explains that the possibility that the past can be altered depends on the

²² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 12, 11.

²³ *Ibid.* II: 11.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Graham Parkes, *Composing the Soul: Reaches of Nietzsche's Psychology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 134.

transformation of the will; it must be transformed 'into a configuration of will to power'.²⁷ What is this new configuration of the will and how does it come about? Parkes interprets Nietzsche's meaning of the transformation of the will as a reaching down to the invulnerable core of an individual;²⁸ the change is founded on something unchanging. He refers to Nietzsche's clear statement to this effect:

But at the bottom of us, 'right down deep', there is to be sure, something unteachable, a granite stratum of spiritual fate, of predetermined decision and answer to predetermined selected questions.²⁹

What is the connection of the inner granite core of the individual to the past? Nietzsche does not mean that unchangeable 'stratum of spiritual fate' is merely the result of the short life of one individual. The stratum has been inherited from past generations, who have built on it; it will continue to be built on by the future generations. Parkes shows that it relates to both the history and death of innumerable human beings.³⁰ In this sense it cannot refer to the 'essence' of a particular individual. Instead, '*one ought to turn to stone. - Slowly, slowly to become hard like a precious stone ...*'³¹ This process is effected not only by the individual himself, but also by the entire past of human history. Therefore, as Nietzsche argues, death and decay contribute to the preciousness of human beings as much as living and growing: 'Still am I heir and heritage of your love, blooming to your memory with many-coloured wild-growing virtues ...'³²

There are, in Nietzsche's view, no individual essences nor any essences shared by all humanity. The layers of values that have been built up, destroyed and shaped by the processes of millennia, however, overlap from generation to generation in a way that provides some continuity. It is therefore plausible for Nietzsche to claim that we inherit particular, valuable aspects of ourselves from the past. As will be seen below, he thinks that this inheritance should inspire gratitude in us. This gratitude in its turn should be expressed in the way we deal with our past and future, by transforming our negative attitudes to transience.

What, then, according to Nietzsche, should be preserved of the past as an expression of gratitude by its heirs? His simple answer is that whatever enhances life should be preserved;

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 135-6.

²⁹ *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990, 231.

³⁰ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 136.

³¹ *Daybreak*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 541. Nietzsche's italics.

³² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 11.

certain artworks rate in his mind highly as things that add value to the life of an individual. Shakespeare's plays are one example; many of them, such as Richard III, Hamlet and Macbeth are based on historical characters. The contemplation of their flaws enriches the life experiences of the spectators, not because the characters are idealised, but because of their very humanness. Nietzsche attributes this appeal of a certain ugliness to the special form of creativity of the author:

Indeed, where the plant 'man' shows himself strongest one finds instincts that conflict powerfully (e.g., Shakespeare), but are controlled.³³

The strongest individuals do not reject the most instinctual inherited aspects of themselves.

Ordinary individuals lack the will to power to shape them in positive ways; to them the past can therefore be a source of shame. In other words, what enhances the life of one person can be a disvalue in the life of another.

Nietzsche does not address the question of why irreligious people and atheists appreciate religious art; it is possibly more relevant in today's secular societies than a century ago when religious values were more prevalent.³⁴ He may have answered it by noting the impoverishment of those who, for instance, 'escape' to the idealised representations of human form in some religious paintings. In other words, he may have argued that this is an example of the kind of simplification and categorization of existence that he objects to. A case could be made for some religious artworks as examples of the creative will approved of by Nietzsche. This will would be capable of producing works of art that enhance life by displaying even disagreeable aspects of it in an artistic form.

Nietzsche values the preservation of those aspects of the past that enhance life in the present and the future by celebrating, not denying, it. These, according to him, are apprehended in solitude; they are the 'dead in the glass coffins' who remain present in a sense. The valuable aspects of the past, in other words, provide the kind of continuity in time that adds to the granite core of the individual. In other words, the most valuable aspects of the past elicit a

³³ *The Will to Power* 966.

³⁴ Meurig Bowman, 'Sounds of Silence', *24 Hours*, July 1998, pp. 62-5. The article is subtitled 'Why do secular people love religious music?'. The answers vary from escapism (discontinuity with life) to the solitary contemplation of the human voice (continuity with life of the past). I think some of the popularity of the music has come about simply through the power of relentless advertising. Gregorian chant and Hildegard of Bingen, for instance, have been 'in' because of this. They are 'new' for those with no knowledge of history. For those with a critical approach to history, however, she can well represent the independent, exceptional individual that Nietzsche values most.

transformative response from the creative will; in this sense these aspects become even more valuable because of what can be added to them by present and future individuals.

The past, then, can be used either to reduce the value or to add to the value of the present or the future. The negative evaluations of the past can be undertaken by individuals such as the 'great despot' or 'a shrewd devil, who with his favour and disfavour could compel and constrain all that is past'.³⁵ He cannot redeem the past, he can merely distort selected aspects of it to enhance his power over the masses. They, in their turn, resort to the past in their effort to subdue the stronger individuals:

Imagine the inartistic natures, and those only weakly endowed, armoured and armed by a monumentalist history of the artists: against whom will they now turn their weapons? Against their arch-enemies, the strong artistic spirits, that is to say against those who alone are capable of learning from that history in a true, that is to say life-enhancing sense, and of transforming what they have learned into a more elevated practice. Their path will be barred, their air darkened, if a half-understood monument to some great era of the past is erected as an idol and zealously danced around, as though to say: 'Behold, this is true art: pay no heed to those who are evolving and want something new!' This dancing mob appears to possess even the privilege of determining what is 'good taste' ...³⁶

The mob uses the past as a means to an end, to serve their desire for revenge. Gary Shapiro shows that the past has become a 'weapon'³⁷ in their hands; they do not revere what is best in the past, but 'Monumental history, by valorizing that which is great and noble in a traditional past, may serve as a compensatory and wish-fulfilling device in response to an unheroic present'.³⁸ They are guilty of 'the mechanisms of denial and rewriting'.³⁹ The mob's revenge, then, is a concrete, psychological action. It may have been inspired, however, by the ideas of the misanthropic thinkers. The vandalism of artworks in Catholic churches inspired by Luther's reformation is an example of this combination of motives of revenge. The Protestant mobs denied everything in their past, including the most valuable, because of the unjust treatment of some individuals by the Church. This denial and rewriting of the past has been carried on to the present. Here I have in mind the aesthetically less appealing exteriors and interiors of Lutheran churches in comparison with their Catholic counterparts. The former lack the intricate architectural features and the ornate, colorful artworks of the latter.

³⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 12, 11.

³⁶ *Untimely Meditations* II: 2.

³⁷ Gary Shapiro, *Nietzschean Narratives*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989, p. 9.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche gives a good indication of the attitude one should have towards the past. Worth noting are the many references to the great persons of the past, and not just the philosophers but also the writers, artists and musicians without whom he would not have become the person that he is:

History thus belongs in the second place to him who preserves and reveres - to him who looks back to whence he has come, to where he came into being, with love and loyalty; with this piety he as it were gives thanks for his existence. By tending with care that which has existed from of old, he wants to preserve for those who shall come into existence after him the conditions under which he himself came into existence - and thus he serves life. The possession of ancestral goods changes its meaning in such a soul: they rather possess it. The trivial, circumscribed, decaying and obsolete acquire their own dignity and inviolability through the fact that the preserving and revering soul of the antiquarian man has emigrated into them and there made its home.⁴⁰

Nietzsche shows here that he reveres the past for the many gifts that it has given him. It is interesting to note that he uses the religious term 'piety' for this reverence. His focus on the future is important; he not only appreciates the past because of what he can gain from it, but because of the contribution it can make to the lives of future human beings.

The second point of importance in this passage is his juxtaposition of the adjectives 'trivial', 'circumscribed', 'decaying', and 'obsolete' with the words 'dignity' and 'inviolability'. Nietzsche argues that nothing is inherently either trivial or dignified. The impoverished minds can make anything dignified trivial; the creative will can invest even decay with dignity. In other words, value is subtracted from or added to the past by the minds contemplating it. The past can in this sense be changed.

I stated above that Nietzsche's simple answer to the question of what should be preserved of the past relates to enhancement of life. In many contexts he explains this with references to Dionysos, the god who to him represented 'the *range* of Greek happiness' of which our 'fragmentary, multifarious, sick, strange age' knows nothing. Nietzsche describes himself as 'a disciple of the philosopher Dionysos'.⁴¹ He is attracted to the god who enables individuals to identify themselves with nature and in this process allows them to forget about themselves. By doing so they gain 'joy, strength, overflowing health, excessive abundance'.⁴² In the same

⁴⁰ *Untimely Meditations* II.

⁴¹ *Ecce Homo*, Foreword 2.

⁴² *The Birth of Tragedy*, 'Attempt at Self-Criticism' 4, trans. S. Whiteside, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1993.

passage he raises the possibility that whole communities might be infected by this joy and as a result the overflowing of health and abundance can be shared by everyone. The spreading effects of Dionysiac joy may be likened to the redemption of the whole of the past by the new nobility Lampert describes. The positive transformation in the attitudes of the best will enhance healthier attitudes in the rest of the population; they are assisted by their leaders not to react to the past as powerless spectators but as more creative shapers of it.

Nietzsche, because of his critical reading of the history of ancient Greece, is able to discover in it the contradictory impulses that brought forth the art of tragedy. The strong impressions gained by him through his imaginative recreation of the past are transmitted to the reader. In this way Nietzsche's understanding of the past contributes to the enhancement of the present and the future, not only for him, but for his careful readers.

In Nietzsche's work, then, there is a close connection between art and history. For him the best art is historical in the sense that it will be preserved throughout centuries and millennia. At the same time he illustrates the way in which the best history writing is artistic. It does not add value to the past and present because of the mere recitation of facts, but involves the painting of a picture, the recreation of an atmosphere. It makes the past live again in the present as something one can access without fear.

Conclusion

From the foregoing it can be seen that Nietzsche's perspectives on time serve two functions. On the one hand, they contrast two opposing attitudes that people can have to the past and on the other hand, they contrast two opposing value systems which these attitudes reflect. Here the contrast is sharp and the reader is left in no doubt as to which attitudes and values towards the past are the most valuable.

Nietzsche argues for a critical approach to the past. Nothing in it should be revered just because of its age, neither should any aspect of the past be feared because of its unchangeability. He values 'monuments' of the past that enhance life in the present and in the future. Their capacity to do this is in direct relation to their truthfulness to life. Artworks that celebrate the transience of life, including decay and death, are more valuable than those that are created through illusions. The sick, impoverished individuals who resent time's passing and the immutable past are prevented from becoming what they are because of their negative attitudes.

These attitudes are reflected in the preservation of monuments of the past that maintain the illusions of permanence and stability.

The Dionysian individuals who, in contrast, do not fear any aspects of the past but are able to see it, together with the present and the future, as a continuous whole, can transform the past and therefore themselves. They do not have to cling to the past; Nietzsche argues that such individuals possess an invulnerable inner core that contains what is best in the past, the creative will. This will expresses itself both in creation and in destruction; it enables the rare individual to live for each moment. In the next chapter I will argue that Nietzsche values living for the moment as the most authentic way of life.

Chapter Two

The Significance of the Moment in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Introduction

Nietzsche argues in *Zarathustra* that living for the moment is the most authentic way to live. Through the doctrine of eternal recurrence he illustrates how each moment gains added significance when an individual lives in such a way that he or she would welcome its repetition.

Lampert characterizes *Zarathustra* as ‘a vehicle for the thought of eternal return’; according to him it is Nietzsche’s ‘most important and most novel teaching’.¹ It is novel because it provides a different perspective on transience from the linear conception of time that most Westerners are familiar with. It is important because of the impact that the adoption of this perspective has towards the development of the most affirmative values by exceptional individuals.

In this chapter I explain first what the doctrine of eternal recurrence is by outlining two interpretations of it. The first, that Nietzsche postulated recurrence as a cosmological fact, is discounted because the only references to it are in the *Nachlass* fragments. The second interpretation, that Nietzsche used the notion of eternal recurrence as a thought experiment or as a vision, not as an assertion of facts, is more plausible for the following reason. Nietzsche uses it as a test of the maximally affirmative attitude to existence and ranks individuals according to the degree to which they attain this in relation to transience. The Superman is depicted by him as the most affirmative individual who creates his own values in time.

Bernd Magnus' interprets eternal recurrence as an ‘existential imperative’; I compare this with Kant's categorical imperative in order to identify the similarities and differences of them. Both function as guides to action, but there is a major difference. Kant’s imperatives relate to universalizable actions by rational, homogeneous individuals at all times. Nietzsche’s ‘advice’ is meant for the select few who can create their own ‘imperatives’ as a result of thinking through the thought of eternal recurrence. Because of the way it brings into focus certain features about the

¹ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

nature of temporal experience, it will have an impact on the values of these individuals. It will enable them to affirm the uniqueness of every moment, instead of despairing at the thought of repetition which Nietzsche expects will be the reaction of most people. The value of the moment, then, depends on the ability of some individuals to live in it in the maximally affirmative way as a result of their vision of eternal recurrence. It moves these individuals to an existential response and thus provides a guide to authentic action.

Interpretations of Nietzsche's Doctrine of Eternal Recurrence

The place of the doctrine of eternal recurrence amongst Nietzsche's works has been interpreted in numerous ways. Some interpreters have dismissed it as an irrelevant aberration in his thought. Arthur Danto, for instance, regards Nietzsche's attempts at 'proofs' as 'extremely garbled'.² Richard Schacht bases his interpretation of the failure of the doctrine of eternal recurrence on his reading of Georg Simmel's proofs against the cosmological interpretation of it.³ As there are, however, no indications in *Zarathustra* that the doctrine was intended as a genuine hypothesis of how the world really is, but only in the *Nachlass* fragments;⁴ the endeavor to find proofs for recurrence in physics seems misguided.

Others, such as the philosophers cited below, find that it makes a valuable contribution to the understanding of human existence in time. Higgins, following Magnus, argues that the doctrine was not intended to answer 'question[s] of cosmology',⁵ therefore it is not necessary to look for 'proofs' for the actuality of eternal recurrence in the world. She also argues that it does not equip an individual with a 'handbook of ethical injunctions',⁶ but that its importance is as the measure of the most affirmative, 'existential' attitude. The most plausible interpretation of the doctrine of eternal recurrence, then, is that it is concerned with 'basic existential issues'.⁷ It is an existential, rather than an ethical imperative.

Nietzsche first introduces the doctrine of eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science*:

The greatest weight. - What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: 'This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; ...

² Arthur C. Danto, *op. cit.*, p. 205.

³ Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 263-4

⁴ Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

⁵ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: 'You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.'⁸

In the above passage Nietzsche brings into focus two possible responses to the idea of recurrence. One can either be terrified by the thought of the return of each moment or one may find it exhilarating. The opposing responses depend on the way in which an individual views existence. If it is regarded in negative terms, if each moment and day is merely something that has to be got through, then the repetition of this drudgery holds no appeal to the one who is asked to imagine it by a 'demon'. The experiences of the affirmative individuals, on the other hand, equip them to welcome more of the 'tremendous' moments of insight that have shaped their already positive values in such a way that the demon has become a god and the frightening message has taken on 'divine' qualities. What makes each moment unique for the strong is the opportunity to affirm their lives from every one of them. The vision of eternal recurrence confers a blessing on those who receive it from gods, not from demons:

Where all becoming seemed to me the dancing of gods and the wantonness of gods, and the world unrestrained and abandoned and fleeing back to itself, as many gods eternally fleeing and re-seeking one another, as many gods blissfully self-contradicting, communing again and belonging again to one another. Where all time seemed to me a blissful mockery of moments, where necessity was freedom itself, which blissfully played with the goad of freedom.⁹

The affirmation of the moment allows the exceptional individuals to reach the 'noontide' when the world has 'become perfect'.¹⁰ For them everything has changed for the better. On the other hand, the thought of eternal recurrence leads those who are incapable of affirmation to contemplate the most negative aspects of an endless existence.

How, then, is it possible to live for the moment, in the present, and at the same time to see time as a whole, as an endless becoming with no divisions? Nietzsche promotes living for the moment as the only authentic way to live, the only way of being fully engaged with the world. If this mode of living is adopted, then each moment comes to have its place in relation to every other and the value of the whole life is enhanced through the uniqueness of these moments.

⁸ *The Gay Science* 341.

⁹ *Ibid.* III: 12, 2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* IV: 10.

The Value of Living in the Moment

Zarathustra arrives at the gateway 'Moment' with the dwarf or 'the spirit of gravity' on his back. He is returning from the Blissful Islands full of 'sadness', 'melancholy and bitterness';¹¹ on the ship he is 'silent for two days .. cold and deaf for sorrow'.¹² He is so troubled by his thoughts that he is unable to communicate with other people. An ordinary individual in such a weakened condition would most likely descend deeper into a depression out of which it would become increasingly harder to climb out. Zarathustra's abysmal thought, however, tests his courage. Instead of gnashing his teeth, he triumphs over his adversities: 'Courage, however, is the best destroyer, courage that attacks: it destroys even death, for it says: "Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!"'¹³

Zarathustra experiences a tremendous insight into the uniqueness of each moment unlike the dwarf, who murmurs 'disdainfully' that 'time itself is a circle'¹⁴. He is incapable of understanding the repetition of moments as anything else but the return of every negative event of the past; he cannot hear the exuberant message of the playful gods. The dwarf's limited understanding of eternal recurrence as the repetition of every detail of life cannot transform his attitude to existence. He cannot share the vision of Zarathustra, but merely clings to a mistaken abstraction. This is explained by Genevieve Lloyd in the following terms:

Repeatability belongs with general concepts. It is possible only 'in the abstract'. To specify an event is to render it unrepeatable. What is repeated is some aspect that our sense and intellect have singled out from reality because action can move only among repetitions.¹⁵

In *Zarathustra*, it is the last man who labels things and makes everything small; he even claims to have discovered happiness, but this turns out to be just the avoidance of any difficulty or discomfort,¹⁶ or poverty of spirit.¹⁷ This typical member of the herd is the kind of man who would focus on the content of the doctrine of eternal recurrence and who would label it bad and undesirable; he is the kind of man who labels 'universal slow suicide ... life'.¹⁸ But Zarathustra is convinced that there are free spirits in the world who are able to take a different perspective on

¹¹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 1.

¹² *Ibid.* III: 2, 1.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.* III: 2, 2.

¹⁵ Genevieve Lloyd, *Being in Time: Selves and Narrators in Philosophy and Literature*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 108.

¹⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue 5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I: 3.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, I: 11.

life, a life whose eternal return they could welcome and affirm. The 'last man' is something 'that should be overcome',¹⁹ one should be able to see 'the rainbow and the bridges to the superman'.²⁰ The dwarf cannot overcome himself nor develop his understanding beyond the abstraction of time as a circle in which every event gets repeated in every detail.

According to the narrative, Zarathustra's courage and insight into the nature of momentary existence keep him going on his chosen path. His return to his cave takes place 'indirectly', 'through divers towns';²¹ on the way he observes people and their lives. He discovers that in his absence everything has become even smaller and meaner. Yet he cannot 'endure to die now',²² nor give up his teaching because 'Thus I am in the midst of my work, going to my children and turning from them: for the sake of his children must Zarathustra perfect himself'.²³ He must transform himself into a being with a 'lion's arrogance and lion's wantonness'²⁴ and finally overcome himself and be transformed into a being who is more like a child who can 'seize the right to new values'.²⁵

In depicting the disdainful dwarf and the courageous Zarathustra, Nietzsche portrays two possible attitudes to the doctrine of eternal recurrence. The dwarf's murmuring is dismissed angrily by Zarathustra who thinks that the former treats the importance of the moment 'too lightly'.²⁶ Zarathustra's anger results in his abandoning the dwarf. Initially this does not, however, lighten his load, but rather makes him feel 'alone, desolate in the most desolate moonlight'.²⁷ He has not yet gained the full courage of his convictions, but neither does he give in to desolation. He is on the way to the joyful celebration of his transient existence; he is unwilling to die because the moment's insight assures him of other moments full of promise. Nietzsche's important lesson transmitted through the dialogue of the dwarf and Zarathustra is that even if the world cannot be changed, it can nevertheless be evaluated in new ways by individuals who are capable of adopting new perspectives on it.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I: 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, I: 11.

²¹ *Ibid.* III: 7.

²² *Ibid.* III: 2, 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, III: 3.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ *Ibid.* I: 1.

²⁶ *Ibid.* III: 2, 2.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

Zarathustra believes that by focusing on the content of the doctrine of eternal recurrence as mere repetition his animals have, like the dwarf, misunderstood him. He does not want to die because he wants to further contemplate the startling insight offered to him by the doctrine. He must hold onto his new understanding of the value of each moment in the peace of his cave in order to become an effective teacher of it to others. He must learn something about himself and about other people; he must fully transform his attitude to existence. If this transformation is to be credible in concrete terms, it must provide others with an example of a plausible alternative to pessimism and nihilism.

Zarathustra's transformation, then, is gradual; it does not take place at the moment of his vision. But it equips him with the courage required for getting rid of the spirit of gravity; it also provides him with more clarity about his work in the world. He attains full competence, he experiences the final tremendous moment of joy, at the end of the narrative:

My suffering and my pity - what of them! For do I aspire after *happiness*? I aspire after my *work*! Very well! The lion has come, my children are near, Zarathustra has become ripe, my hour has come! This is *my morning*; *my day* begins; *rise up now, rise up, great noontide!*²⁸

Zarathustra ripens with experience, he becomes more profound and attains 'great health' after periods of 'sickness' and 'convalescence'. He is sickest when he is unable to communicate with others and when he most feels his loneliness and desolation. Convalescence follows when he has become aware of his 'sick' values and attitudes and of alternative ways of viewing existence. He reaches 'great health' once he recognises the impermanence of all life and celebrates existence precisely because of its transience.

Sickness for Nietzsche, then, is the blindness or inability to see the world as it is. It is the mistaken desire to force aspects of existence into a particular shape that corresponds to one's fears and wishes:

Lately I looked into your eye, O Life! And I seemed to sink into the unfathomable. But you pulled me out with a golden rod; you laughed mockingly when I called you unfathomable. All fish talk like that you said, what they cannot fathom is unfathomable. But I am merely changeable and untamed and in everything a woman, and no virtuous one. Although you men call me 'profound' or 'faithful', 'eternal', 'mysterious'. But you men always endow us with your own virtues - oh, you virtuous men.²⁹

²⁸ *Ibid.* IV: 20.

²⁹ *Ibid.* II: 10.

It is easier to be virtuous in a world of one's own making than to live each moment to its fullest on its own terms. In other words, Nietzsche claims that it is healthier to respond to each moment as it arises rather than to focus on it through the tainted visions of the past. This does not, however, mean that one should become oblivious to one's past. On the contrary, an appropriate response to the present is only possible for those who celebrate their past and the historical past in it. One must trust life in its entirety, not see it as a problem:

Whether we learn to pit our pride, our scorn, our will to power against it ... or whether we withdraw from pain into that Oriental Nothing - called Nirvana - into mute, rigid, deaf resignation, self-forgetting, self-extinction: out of such long and dangerous exercises one emerges a different person, with a few more question marks - above all with the *will* henceforth to question further, more deeply, severely, harshly, evilly and quietly than one had questioned heretofore. The trust in life is gone: life itself has become a *problem*. Yet one should not jump to the conclusion that this necessarily makes one gloomy. Even love of life is still possible, only one loves differently. It is the love of woman that causes doubts in us.³⁰

The ability to live in the moment, then, is simply the capacity to learn to see things differently. It is based on the recognition that previous ways of understanding one's existence in time, and the values that arise from that limited understanding, have been erroneous. One cannot begin a search for alternatives until the present ways of perceiving are subjected to rigorous questioning. Those unable to question received wisdom remain in a state of sickness and can in no way become healthy; they stay for ever blind to the opportunities for change that life has got to offer.

There are two alternatives as to how the transformation of attitudes towards time can be brought about. Either the transformation may be the result of a sudden insight or it may take place gradually as a result of new insights gained into the past and future through certain life experiences undergone.

There are two examples of creatures who live in the moment in *Untimely Meditations*. Their attitudes to life, however, cannot be described as truly affirmative and therefore they do not fulfil Nietzsche's criteria of exceptional individuals who have the strength to overcome the negative burden of time's passing:

³⁰*The Gay Science* Preface 3.

Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by: they do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, and so from morn till night and from day to day, fettered to the moment and its pleasure or displeasure, and thus neither melancholy nor bored. ... A child which, having as yet nothing of the past to shake off, plays in blissful blindness between the hedges of past and future.³¹

Why should the apparent happiness of the animal or the child not be sufficient evidence for the fact that they hold no resentment against time and that they have a positive attitude towards it? The answer is that neither the animal nor the child can have any attitude to time whatsoever, as they know virtually nothing about its existence; their happiness could be characterised as mere complacency due to ignorance. Their state is not a result of resentment overcome; it is on the contrary a state lacking in any awareness. As such, it is a simple state in which no questions of existence arise. It could not, therefore, afford the richness of experience that is possible for those individuals who are aware of the world around them and of themselves as parts of it in every moment. They are at one with the moment, not because of their ignorance of its value, but because of their understanding of it.

Rosen points out that the metaphor of the child lends itself to both positive and negative interpretations when Nietzsche uses it to denote one of the metamorphoses of the soul or spirit in *Zarathustra*. The positive interpretation of the metaphor is that it is the 'symbol of rebirth and innocence, hence of the possibility of creation'.³² As the symbol of rebirth and creation the child represents what is best in living for the moment; if the child is unfettered by the past or the future it can then add to the present something that is unique and novel. This kind of creativity is what Nietzsche advocates as the function of the exceptional individuals, they add value to the world because their spirits are child-like in this important respect. Their capacities for innovation have not been inhibited by the burden of the past or the threat of the future.

The negative interpretation of the metaphor of the child, according to Rosen, is that the child makes a mistake in assuming that the self is made of two distinct entities, the mind and the body. Therefore,

... the child is also the symbol of sleep, dreams, illusion and ignorance. The child has to wake up and become an adult. To be an adult is to say that one is nothing but the body: 'Soul is only a word for something about the body.'³³

³¹*Untimely Meditations* II: 1.

³²Rosen, *op.cit.*, p. 84.

³³*Ibid.*

Rosen illustrates the adult's and the child's different understandings of the mind and body and their own place in time. Nietzsche's arguments regarding individual values in relation to time in *Untimely Meditations* and *Zarathustra* can also be expressed in the following terms. The ordinary people are like children in the sense that like them they are prone to misinterpret phenomena due to their state of intellectual slumber. The exceptional individuals can see below the surface of dualistic doctrines imposed on them. They are able to see them as only postulates by ordinary people who lack knowledge of physiology and psychology and who desire permanence and stability.

So Nietzsche does not claim that the animal or the child is better off than the mature adult because the former are living by their instincts and senses, without the burden of reason or experience.³⁴ He claims that although it is important that as adults people possess reason and that they need to accumulate experience, they have lost some worthwhile qualities possessed by animals and children. To experience life to the full people need to regain these qualities which are often stifled by too much reason and too much experience of the wrong kind. For instance, if one is always 'short of time' and one resents this shortage, one is unlikely to be able to enjoy living for the moment.

Zarathustra exhorts us 'to an innocence of the senses'³⁵ that belongs to the animals; by learning to live rationally people have learnt to live less well. Because people have experienced many things repeatedly, these experiences have lost any novelty or appeal. A large part of life is carried out routinely, the senses are dulled, people are unable to experience anything afresh. People may be satisfied with this state of the affairs, but their happiness is an illusion: 'The happiness of our present condition is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'³⁶ People need to learn to see again with the eyes of a child if they are to transform this condition of wretchedness:

The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes! Yes, a sacred Yes is needed, my brothers, for the sport of creation: the spirit now wills *its own* will, the spirit now sundered from the world now wins *its own* world.³⁷

³⁴As noted by Stambaugh, *op.cit.*, p. 6.

³⁵*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I: 13.

³⁶Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³⁷*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I: 1.

The transformation of an individual is ordinarily taken to mean a change from one condition to another. For instance, being on a diet can transform an obese person to a slim one. The ordinary concept of transformation therefore implies that the person has a particular goal in mind at the outset, that transformation is a teleological concept. Spiritually a person seeks transformation in the form of enlightenment, he desires to be the opposite of what he is at present, he wants to reach a particular end point on the continuum of existence, he has a finite goal to strive for.

Rosen argues that 'the innocence of becoming' is the opposite of transformation aimed at a specific goal. He claims that 'it has no intrinsic ends' either on a personal or on a more general level, 'neither does it posit a higher end to human affairs'.³⁸ The human striving for mundane goals is thought of by the ordinary people as movement from a poor state of affairs to something better, in contrast 'the innocence of becoming in itself is neither good nor bad but can become what we make of it'.³⁹

The positive references to a child in *Zarathustra* point to a special quality of a child that Nietzsche thinks has been lost and without which life is consequently poorer. This is the quality of spontaneity. The play and sport of the child are creative in an all-absorbing manner; they are authentic ways of living each moment to the full. While the child is engaged in the activity he lives it without evaluating it; it does not have a specific goal. Yet it can be argued that this activity is more satisfying because it is more creative than the goal-oriented activity of the adult. But as noted by Rosen, although 'To be a child is to be purified and so to exemplify the principle of a new cycle'⁴⁰ and although even 'Zarathustra assumes that children have no memory or that they act spontaneously ... it is also true that they act out of obedience to their elders, from habituation.'⁴¹

Therefore Nietzsche does not claim that people can or ought to return to childhood by attempting to abandon reason or by attempting to forget their experiences, but that they should be spontaneous and creative like a child *in spite of* their reason and experience. One should not be weighed down by life, one should be buoyed by it; the more of life one lives, the more one should be able to create through superfluity. Even the most unpleasant experiences of life should increase the individual's awareness of the fact that no matter how long one lives one is never

³⁸Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

³⁹*Ibid.*

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 30.

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 83.

‘complete but open to a wide range of possibilities’.⁴² In other words, the ‘innocence of becoming’ never ceases and one should never grow ‘weary, common, comfortable’⁴³ because new opportunities await one at every turn:

Life - that means for us constantly transforming all that we are into light and flame - also everything that wounds us: we simply can do no other. And as for sickness: are we not almost tempted to ask whether we could get along without it? Only great pain is the ultimate liberator of the spirit ...⁴⁴

According to Nietzsche, the biggest challenge for people is to be able to affirm the moment in spite of what has been learnt of the moments of pain. One can only make this kind of affirmation because of the insights one has gained from suffering:

In the end, lest what is most important remain unsaid: from such abysses, from such severe sickness, also from the sickness of severe suspicion, one returns *newborn*, having shed one’s skin, more ticklish and malicious, with a more delicate taste for joy, with a tenderer tongue for all good things, with merrier senses, with a second dangerous innocence in joy, more child-like and yet a hundred times subtler than one has ever been before.⁴⁵

Living in the moment is, for Nietzsche, living constantly at the edge of the precipice, courting danger. Klossowski argues that Nietzsche uses the metaphor of abyss to mean several things, all of which are connected in his thought. Furthermore, all of them relate to the task of the philosopher and of philosophy in general. Nietzsche argues that only the strong are capable of looking down into the abyss at all times; the majority of people live their lives pretending that it does not exist.

In contrast with the majority, the philosopher who contemplates the abyss at every moment, becomes aware of the true nature of reality as chaos.⁴⁶ The abyss does not become any less deep through contemplation. Its nature cannot be changed by the thinker, the thinker himself must be transformed in the process. The abyss, therefore, is a metaphor for a certain kind of truth.⁴⁷ It is a truth that exists but which cannot be reached. Its relentless pursuit may end in the destruction of the individual because of its depth. It is also a metaphor for the philosopher who tries to draw the attention of others to this truth.⁴⁸ Just as most individuals turn away from a ravine because of its frightening depth, so they also avoid deep individuals because they feel uncomfortable in the company of their truths. Klossowski also argues that for Nietzsche, the

⁴²*Ibid.*, p. 109.

⁴³*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, III: 8.

⁴⁴*The Gay Science*, Preface 3.

⁴⁵*Ibid.*, Preface 4.

⁴⁶ Klossowski, *op. cit.*, pp. 114, 184.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 204-5, Klossowski quotes *Ecce Homo*, ‘Why I Am So Clever’, ‘But one must be

abyss represented descent to insanity as a result of the weight of these truths and the burden the mission of imparting them placed on him.⁴⁹

The word 'newborn' in the above passage also has various metaphorical uses. It is commonly associated with innocence, with a lack of any experiences. Here Nietzsche uses it in relation to those individuals who have experienced the most, who have peered deeper into existence than any of their contemporaries. He points out that although the individual who is reborn through suffering sees things as if for the first time, that person has developed a subtlety of perception not possible for others. Children and those in intellectual and emotional slumber do not have the capacity to exercise their skills at the edge of the precipice.

Therefore, the understanding of the moment gained by the suffering individual equips him with the skills necessary to live in the moment in the most authentic manner. He is able to focus on it as intensely as a child who is unaware of the past and the future. In comparison with the child, however, his life is enriched by the past. His moments, therefore, possess more depth than those of the child. Their depth is the result of the diversity of his experiences as well as his enhanced power or strength. At the same time he is 'reborn' because he is not burdened by resentment towards the past; his attitude is 'fresh' just like that of a child.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche highlights another attitude to time that, although neither truly negative nor positive, is nevertheless an example of the deleterious effects of too much reason that leads to a person's detachment from life. This attitude to the passing of time is not coloured by a resentment towards the past, nor by a fear of the present or the future. Even if it appears acceptable to Nietzsche on these grounds, it fails because of the person's inability to critically appraise history. He has no strength of character that would enhance his moments lived in time:

For he is genuine only when he can be objective: only in his cheerful totalism can he remain 'nature' and 'natural'. His mirroring soul, for ever polishing itself, no longer knows how to affirm or how to deny; he does not command, neither does he destroy ... as a rule a man without content, a 'selfless' man.⁵⁰

Living for the moment, therefore, cannot mean the passive acceptance of everything as it is. To affirm the moment entails positive actions and an ongoing process of enhancement of life. To affirm life does not mean that none of it should be evaluated. According to Nietzsche, those who

profound, an abyss, a philosopher, to feel that way.'

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, ch. 7-9, passim.

⁵⁰ *Beyond Good and Evil* 207.

are passive in the face of pain and suffering are to be despised for their lack of strength: 'Truly, I dislike also those who call everything good and this world the best of all. I call such people the all-contented.'⁵¹

Nietzsche argues against the narrow conceptions of happiness represented in the idea of the hedonistic calculus:

O sancta simplitas! What strange simplification and falsification mankind lives in! One can never cease to marvel once one has acquired eyes for this marvel! How we have made everything around us bright and free and easy and simple! How we have known how to bestow on our senses a passport to everything superficial, on our thoughts a divine desire for wanton gambolling and false conclusions! - how we have from the very beginning understood how to retain our ignorance so as to enjoy an almost inconceivable freedom, frivolity, impetuosity, bravery, cheerfulness of life, so as to enjoy life!⁵²

Nietzsche claims that those who take blinkered contentment for true happiness and the absence of challenges as freedom are deluding themselves. Their cheerfulness is based on ignorance. He esteems those individuals who are truly brave in spite of their understanding of the impermanence of everything, including themselves. He also recognizes, however, that this path is too difficult for most individuals. A certain condition of ignorance is necessary for the survival of the average person, only in it can he maintain his cheerfulness. The real proof of the affirmation of life is to remain brave on the edge of the abyss, in the knowledge that one may not survive.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of knowing one's history and having the ability to appraise it critically raise an obvious question: why is this so important? What is wrong with remaining ignorant if this means 'inconceivable freedom, frivolity, impetuosity, bravery, cheerfulness of live'? Are these not precisely the qualities of the Dionysian individual who Nietzsche maintains is the only one capable of living fully in the moment? The answer, which is expanded on below, is simply that these qualities are not Dionysian if they are based on 'strange simplification and falsification'. They must be based on truths about existence, not their evasion.

Nietzsche's Critique of Those Who Are Incapable of Living in the Moment

Nietzsche criticizes ascetics who withdraw from the world completely. Their detachment from life does not bear any fruit, it does not result in any worthwhile transformations:

⁵¹*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 11.

⁵²*Beyond Good and Evil* 24.

The ascetic ideal's answer to nihilism made later outbreaks of nihilism inevitable because it deprived human life of intrinsic value, treating it as valuable only as a means to its own negation: nirvana, heaven, for example.⁵³

Asceticism is a form of escape from the world and a form of intellectual dishonesty; it cannot be a comprehensive, adventurous way of life because it is led within narrow confines, with its margins outlined by outmoded dogmas. The ascetic retreats from sensual pleasures but his way of life cannot be compared to that of the child or the animal that is characterised by the 'innocence of senses' and creativity at every moment, as discussed earlier. There is also a 'distinction between Christian asceticism and Nietzschean, or philosophical, chastity'.⁵⁴ The ascetic 'murders' his senses whereas the philosopher 'devotes his energies to the highest spiritual tasks'.⁵⁵ The latter is therefore living for the moment creatively like the child and at the same time living in time wide awake like an adult; the ascetic does not want to live in this world at all.

Nietzsche offers his 'practical doctrine of recurrence' as 'a counterideal to the ascetic ideal'.⁵⁶ There are many examples in *Zarathustra* that set the two ideals in opposition: asceticism denigrates and punishes the body and instead only values the 'spirit'; it takes suffering in this world as evidence that there must be another, better world where we can be free from suffering. It sets up a final goal of perfection towards which one must strive but which must remain unattainable. Instead, the practical doctrine of recurrence requires one to return over and over 'back to body and life: that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning'.⁵⁷

Christian ascetics have interpreted suffering as punishment for sin. This doctrine is seen by Nietzsche as revengeful because it redefines many gratifications as sins and thus vindictively condemns normal, healthy people to hell. This doctrine of sin is focused on past actions and their redemption in the future, it therefore 'amounts to an essentially passive stance in the present'⁵⁸ and as such 'denigrates the actuality of our lives'.⁵⁹

Asceticism, particularly of the Christian kind, could be seen as an unnatural clinging to the past, dwelling on our 'bad' experiences, getting 'stuck in them, becoming obsessed with them', this is our 'counterwill against time and its "it was"'.⁶⁰ If our clinging to the past and its effect

⁵³Clark, *op.cit.*, p. 252.

⁵⁴Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 109.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*, pp. 109 - 110.

⁵⁶Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 253.

⁵⁷*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I: 22, 2.

⁵⁸Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

⁵⁹*Ibid.*, p. 174.

⁶⁰Stambaugh, *op.cit.*, p. 114.

on our present with guilt and regret is the real problem with our attitude to time, how does the doctrine of eternal recurrence allow us to let go of the past and in a positive sense lead us to affirm it? It could be interpreted as the affirmation of every moment and living in the present.

Stambaugh refers to Nietzsche's statement that 'if we affirm one single moment, we thus affirm not only ourselves but all existence'.⁶¹ She interprets this as saying that if one lives every moment affirmatively, this attitude would 'preclude any duration or teleology', 'no moment would exist for the sake of another', 'nothing is put off or deferred for the sake of some future time which may never be realised'.⁶² In other words, one can only live fully if one lives in the present, if we make the most of the opportunities which are at hand, rather than searching for non-realizable goals in the future with the search being conditioned by the disappointments and prejudices of the past. The present is 'the only moment in which we are actively involved in time'.⁶³ Stambaugh argues that the moment is the only 'segment' of time one truly possesses. That is why one can say that 'past and future meet in the moment, all time, eternal return are in the moment'.⁶⁴

What does Stambaugh mean by the above statement? How do the different aspects of time meet in the moment? Ansell-Pearson gives an 'existential' answer to these questions:

The meaning of life is to be found nowhere but within life itself as we live it and shall live it. But instead of such an insight crippling us, we should be inspired by it - to the extent that we are able to affirm unconditionally the eternal return of all the moments of our existence because we recognize that every one of those moments is necessary to who we are.⁶⁵

This kind of 'unconditional affirmation' of every moment necessarily brings up the question of whether one has to affirm everything bad in life as well, which was also the preoccupation of Zarathustra in relation to the small man and the rabble. Ansell-Pearson answers this question by saying that the unconditional affirmation of all values does not separate between good and evil:

⁶¹ *The Will to Power* 1032.

⁶² Joan Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972, p. 26.

⁶³ Higgins, *op.cit.*, p. 175.

⁶⁴ Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*, p. 41.

⁶⁵ Ansell-Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 318. A similar answer to the question of how the past, present and future are entwined in each moment is given by Shapiro when he discusses Nietzsche's views on critical history: 'The thought of eternal recurrence can be seen as contributing to such a critical history because it allows us to think of the present (or the future for that matter) as that which gives rise to all other moments of existence and therefore to our past as well.' Shapiro, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

The significance of the doctrine is twofold: it is both a teaching on the nature of time and an experience which affirms the creative unity of all things, including that of good and evil ... if viewed in terms of an imaginative response to the problem of time and time's 'it was' (the problem of the past), we see that it proposes an affirmation of the nature of time, of time's passing away, of its becoming and perishing. The peculiar challenge that the thought presents lies in the question that confronts the person who undergoes the experience. Can I accept the destiny of my being in such a way that I can also accept the necessity of my past because, as a creator of the future, I willed it?⁶⁶

Living authentically in the present does not mean that one has to become a mindless amnesiac regarding the past and the future, it is not a case of becoming cow-like. The child or the animal do not have the concepts of past, present and future and therefore do not have negative attitudes towards time to overcome. A close reading of *Zarathustra* makes it clear that Nietzsche displays an 'aversion to an unreflective sense of "living in the present"'.⁶⁷ Man has only become aware of time and the opportunities it has either denied or granted him by living through it; it is only possible for him to be affirmative about the moment if he has accumulated varied experiences in his past. Nietzsche depicts the Superman as the individual who is most capable of reflecting on his life in the present.

The Attitude of the Superman to Eternal Recurrence

If man, as Nietzsche claims in *Zarathustra*, must be overcome by something better, then human beings cannot be transformed into Supermen, the latter are a race apart. The last man or the 'ultimate man' is the antithesis of the Superman. The former serves no other function than preparing the way to the latter. The last man has no positive qualities; his lack of them merely highlights those possessed by his extraordinary successor. As Higgins points out:

The overman's existence is the erotic mode of being *par excellence*, and while it surpasses human capacity for resilient self-transcendence, it establishes a project for human beings by serving as this capacity's ideal. Zarathustra believes that his project can serve as a basis for meaning in human life. ... The details of one's life can be seen as steps and experiments toward this goal. The project itself - which includes the entirety of a life dedicated to its pursuit - is valuable ...⁶⁸

She argues that human beings can only find meaning in life in relation to other individuals:

If the meaning of the individual's life must be established here on earth, it must be established in a context in which the individual does not find himself or herself alone, but with others. The energetic, vibrant involvement with the life of the world demanded by the project of aspiration toward the overman necessarily involves interaction with other human beings.⁶⁹

⁶⁶Ansell-Pearson, *op.cit.*, p. 318.

⁶⁷Higgins, *op.cit.*, p. 177.

⁶⁸Higgins, *op.cit.*, p. 81.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 82.

In the first of the two quotations above, Higgins argues that the overman possesses the ideal capacities that ordinary human beings lack. She implies, however, that some individuals can apprehend these ideals and strive towards goals shaped by these. In the second quotation she claims that the projects of the individual relate to the projects of the community or even the whole society he is a part of. These two ideas are brought together by Nietzsche in his discussion of Dionysian insights into the significance of the moment in the *Birth of Tragedy*. These insights make possible both individual transformations and the transformation of societies 'because of the ways in which the Dionysian individual is able to transmit his joy in the moment to others. His overflowing strength, his will to power in its finest expression as art, can be participated in momentarily by those around him.

Higgins focuses on the most important aspect of Nietzsche's revaluation of values. This is his message regarding the search for a different, more positive way of living in time: 'the project itself - which includes the entirety of a life dedicated to its pursuit - is valuable'. The meaning of any individual's life must be derived from life on this earth. Her choice of the word 'erotic' in the context of the Superman is somewhat puzzling. It could well be replaced by other words, such as 'the most affirmative mode of existence' or others that refer to the Superman's joy at the prospect of eternal recurrence. As an adjective that refers to the Dionysian artist it is, however, most appropriate. The will to power must also include sexual energies that are expressed in art. The word 'erotic', then, can also be used to distinguish the artist from the ascetic who tries to erase the erotic from his life by punishing his body. If we take Nietzsche's arguments for the primacy of the body seriously, Higgins' claims regarding the relations of individuals to each other is consistent with, rather than contradictory to his intentions. The dynamic interaction between individuals must include the sensual aspect as well, not just the meeting of intellects.

When the tightrope walker is dying, Zarathustra 'consoles' him by saying that his soul will be dead even before his body and therefore he has nothing to fear.⁷⁰ Higgins interprets these words as a reflection of 'Nietzsche's theoretical position: The move to a worldview that counters the Socratic-Christian worldview'.⁷¹ This interpretation is consistent with her argument for the

⁷⁰*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue 6.

⁷¹Higgins, *op.cit.*, pp. 88- 89.

eroticism of the superman. It also accords with Nietzsche's criticism of the life-denying doctrines of Western philosophy and Christianity.

People, according to Nietzsche, have inherited from philosophy and religion the idea that at least a certain degree of asceticism is necessary in order to preserve their souls and that this preservation for afterlife is intrinsically worthwhile in a world in which God still exists as the cause of everything. The body is a mere hindrance to the preservation of the soul, therefore its sensuality should at least be ignored if not actively discouraged from expressing itself.

Nietzsche argues that these inherited values are wrong, the eroticism of the body is, according to him, a force which enriches life. The ascetic's ambition to nurture the 'eternal' soul leads to the impoverished values of the 'last man'. These cannot lead to anything, they must be 'inverted' to their opposite. According to Parkes,

Heidegger's characterization of Nietzsche's philosophy as 'inverted Platonism' hits the mark, and the inversion is nowhere more persistently performed than in the prologue and first several sections of *Zarathustra*, where the locus of value is emphatically asserted to the earth (and the body) rather than the heavens (and the rational soul).⁷²

One should take the attitude that the project or process of living in this world and in this body is intrinsically worthwhile; consequently it is possible to affirm every moment as a part of this process. One must be like the tight-rope walker whose 'vocation is not directed toward the attainment of any static goal, but instead is focused on the activity of graceful, balanced movement':⁷³ 'You have made danger your calling, there is nothing in that to despise. Now you perish through your calling.'⁷⁴

The tight-rope walker exemplifies some of the characteristics of the Superman that could be regarded as ideals worth pursuing: he has chosen his own destiny in spite of the dangers associated with it; he is in this sense a free spirit. He also lives life to the full in that he concentrates on each moment to maintain a graceful, balanced movement; in other words, he creates something worthwhile. But he is not the Superman who '*shall be* the meaning of the earth'.⁷⁵ The tight-rope walker's life ends abruptly in the present, unlike that of the Superman, whose existence is something to be accomplished in the future.

⁷² Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 132. A particularly good example of what Heidegger means is his discussion of Nietzsche's inversion of Plato's allegory of the cave. See Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, pp. 106-7.

⁷³ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

⁷⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue 6.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, Prologue 3.

Tight-rope walking is, however, a good metaphor for the recurrence of the same in every moment. However, as Stambaugh argues

It (the same) is not a 'content' in any possible sense of that word. It is not a 'what' at all, but a movement: the inexhaustible movement of eternal return. All of Nietzsche's insight into the lack of substance, subject, substratum, 'Being' and so on, culminates in this thought.⁷⁶

The performance of the tight-rope walker is an example of an activity in which the awareness of the subject's own self leads to faltering steps, as would focusing on the completion of the task of walking; he must be fully engaged with his steps in the present to stay alive. He is more like the child or the animal who lives in the present, he has some of the characteristics that Nietzsche praises in the exceptional individual. He is literally above ordinary humanity; he lives and dies by his own rules. Even if these rules are, however, related to the skills of an exceptional individual, they are in no sense arbitrary. On the contrary, they are as rigid as any of theoretical moral philosophy since they need to guide him in his difficult task.

In the following section I contrast the 'existential imperative' contained in the doctrine of eternal recurrence with Kant's categorical imperative. I undertake this analysis for two reasons. First, I explore the influence of Kant's philosophy on Nietzsche's thought to support my thesis of the continuity of it with previous thinkers. Second, I investigate the plausibility of Nietzsche's claim that an individual can create his own rules. These set the person apart from the rest; they take him beyond conventional morality. If this is the case, then can there be any right or wrong ways of living in the moment?

Nietzsche's 'Existential Imperative' Compared with Kant's Categorical Imperative

Nietzsche's criticisms of the 'hermit of Königsberg' are scattered throughout his writings. Many of these can be read as Nietzsche's attempt to get beyond the metaphysics of Kant. Further, they can be assessed in terms of whether Nietzsche provides a successful alternative to Kant's way of viewing man's place in the temporal world. The fact that the latter's deontological theory of morality remains influential today implies that Nietzsche's effort to overturn it by the postulation of an 'existential imperative' has been futile.

The main features of the two imperatives appear at first glance to be distinctly opposed to each other. Kant appeals to an absolute moral standard founded on reason. For him, something is

⁷⁶Stambaugh, *Nietzsche's Thought of Eternal Return*, p.108.

right for all people at all times and places - no exceptions to this rule are permitted. Nietzsche in *Zarathustra* emphasizes the importance of individual choices that are uniquely right for one person at a particular time and place. His philosophy is practical, his doctrines are intended to transform the world views and therefore the actions of individuals.

There are, however, certain significant similarities between Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence and Kant's categorical imperative that merit further study. At the general level, both recognise the significance of time in shaping human perceptions of the world and consequently their values. Time is fundamental to how we see ourselves in the world.

At the level of guides to action, Nietzsche's and Kant's doctrines resemble each other in this respect. Both argue that we need a guide to action and both agree that the guide must arise from within the agent. Both also agree that some intentions and actions are better than others, even if they totally disagree on how they ought to be ranked. Ansell-Pearson correctly recognizes the continuity of thought from Kant to Nietzsche and the similarities in their doctrines:

The significance of the doctrine of eternal return is that it represents a radicalization of Kant's categorical imperative in so far as it establishes the conditions for a truly individual act of willing (self-legislation as self-creation). The eternal return provides the form of universality associated with the categorical imperative only in the act of returning, while what returns (the content) cannot be universal, as each individual's experience of life is unique.⁷⁷

Gilles Deleuze also makes a connection between eternal recurrence and Kant's categorical imperative: 'The eternal return gives the will a rule as rigorous as the Kantian one.'⁷⁸

Kant's first formulation of the categorical imperative is 'I am never to act otherwise than *so that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*'.⁷⁹ According to him, any rational human being must act according to this maxim, it would be irrational not to do so. Because of his rationality, it is possible for a human being to know what the right action is in any given situation, his *a priori* reason provides the guide for the right action. A moral being can conduct his affairs in an ethical manner in spite of his lack of life experience; moral behaviour does not have to have an empirical foundation. Morality for a rational human being is therefore 'a matter of following absolute rules - rules that admit no exceptions, that must be followed come what may'.⁸⁰ How, then, does Nietzsche's 'existential imperative' compare with Kant's first

⁷⁷Ansell-Pearson, *op.cit.*, p. 315.

⁷⁸Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, London: The Athlone Press, 1983, p.68.

⁷⁹Immanuel Kant, *Fundamental Principles of the Metaphysic of Morals*, trans. Thomas K. Abbott, New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1949, p. 23.

⁸⁰James Rachels, *The Elements of Moral Philosophy*, 2nd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993, p.

formulation of the categorical imperative? Kant's maxim is a strict rule which permits no exceptions; he dictates one right way of acting. Nietzsche, on the other hand, formulates his imperative in terms of a thought experiment: how can one live in such a way that one could welcome the recurrence of that life? In other words, he focuses on the whole of life, not on discrete instances in which ethical choices have to be made. In the latter case one merely needs to react to moments as they come to hand. In the case of Nietzsche's existential imperative, an individual responds to life according to his understanding of the best, most authentic, way to live. In other words, the exceptional individual has created his unique, temporal values; how he responds to situations is shaped by these, not by a rule that compels one to weigh up alternatives according to detached, universal values.

Even if both Kant and Nietzsche emphasized time's fundamental importance in the shaping of individual perceptions of the world, their understandings diverge in one significant respect. Kant uses time as a theoretical construct which forms the substratum of other theoretical constructs. For Nietzsche, time is equivalent to lived experience. He is more concerned with man's personal and historical place in time. In other words, time provides the context in which individual values are created.

Although Kant appears to have worried about moral chaos in the absence of reason, he did not fully acknowledge the moral dilemma confronted by one asked to tell the truth to the inquiring murderer; he would not admit that 'telling the truth [at all times] can complicate or destroy social relationships'.⁸¹ In other words, he did not adequately recognise the complexity of the social world of which every individual is part. Moral choices cannot be made in the kind of vacuum implied by the categorical imperatives. Neither can they be made by relying on reason alone; one's feelings towards the friend trying to escape the murderer seems to make lying to the latter not only more probable but also more morally acceptable.

In contrast with Kant, Nietzsche emphasizes the diversity of types and denies that any person can be detached from his society or culture. He argues against any universal, permanent values which would apply to all individuals at all times. Each person has his perspective which is conditioned by his environment at a particular time and place, it is not possible for him to get

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⁸¹ Robert C. Solomon, 'Is It Ever Right to Lie? The Philosophy of Deception', *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 27.2.1998, p. A60.

outside this perspective, there is no stable moral order existing independently of members of a given society:

All kinds of imperatives have been employed to make moral values appear permanent: they have been commanded for the longest time: - they *seem* instinctive, like inner commands.⁸²

Kant argues that one must act morally because it is rational to do so, to act otherwise would be both immoral and irrational. The permanent being who had endowed man with rationality and morality is God:

But whence have we the conception of God as the supreme good? Simply from the idea of moral perfection, which frames a priori and connects inseparably with the notion of a free will.⁸³

On the other hand, Nietzsche denies the existence of God and the desirability of any permanent values; these are detrimental to the development of an independent individual who can create his own values. Nietzsche, then, advocates getting rid of all the categories of understanding that Kant takes for granted. The former argues that we can only follow the 'existential imperative' and live in the moment if we abandon the categorical imperative which demands absolute commitment to timeless values. Both, however, agree that past experiences do not equip individuals for successful actions in the present; more than experience is needed. Kant warns that an individual's moral act based on experience must fail, principles must come before actions, not vice versa: 'Nor could anything be more fatal to morality than that we should wish to derive it from examples.'⁸⁴

Nietzsche regards clinging to past experiences as a hindrance to living fully in the present. He also argues that individuals do not have 'free spontaneity'⁸⁵ which would enable them to make choices between moral and immoral actions:

*First proposition: There are no moral actions whatsoever: they are completely imaginary. Not only are they *indemonstrable* (which Kant, e.g., admitted, and Christianity as well) - they are *altogether impossible*. Through a psychological misunderstanding, one has invented an *antithesis* to the motivating forces, and believes one has described another kind of force; one has imagined a primum mobile that does not exist at all.*⁸⁶

The above shows Nietzsche's search for the 'Genealogy of Morals' at work. He argues that humans are motivated by their psychological fears and desires to distinguish between moral and

⁸² *The Will to Power* 271.

⁸³ Kant, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

⁸⁴ Kant, *op.cit.*, p. 32.

⁸⁵ *The Will to Power* 786.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

immoral acts. To this could be added that they are also motivated by their basic physiological drive for survival. 'Moral' and 'immoral' acts are merely those that either enhance or endanger survival; there is nothing intrinsically 'good' or 'bad' about them. Therefore, for instance, wild animals or nature are labelled 'cruel' from the human perspective; it is not their inherent quality.

Nietzsche's explanation makes eminent sense as an account of how moral concepts arose amongst primitive people whose main concern was survival. It is, however, less plausible once human beings have developed a culture at the level of which survival is taken for granted, and psychological fears and desires have become more complex. It is also less plausible in multicultural societies in which large numbers of individuals do not believe in God. In spite of these developments, the distinction between moral and immoral actions is still made. If anything, the increasing interest by many ordinary individuals as well as philosophers in fields of applied ethics, such as bioethics, environmental ethics or police ethics, is evidence of the prevailing moral concerns of human beings.

Nietzsche would most likely explain the continuing moral evaluation of individual actions in terms of the will to power. Even if God no longer exists, even if human beings are no longer concerned with mere survival, they are still motivated by their desire to increase their power or to deprive others from theirs. He argues that there is only one force in the world, the will to power: 'The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its "intelligible character" - it would be "will to power" and nothing else.'⁸⁷ Values are not external to this power, therefore they cannot be artificially extricated from it and divided into categories of good and bad:

First, power is constitutive of all value, and the increase in power all beings seek is the ultimate value. On the realist conception of the will to power, value is embedded in the very fabric of reality.⁸⁸

Those individuals who express moral concerns in their interest in applied ethics display, according to Nietzsche, their motivations guided by their will to power. They could, for instance, use the secular rules provided by contemporary moral theories to subdue their opponents or to further their academic careers. In other words, their distinctions between 'moral' and 'immoral' acts remain arbitrary. They are based on the need for psychological and intellectual, if no longer physical, survival.

⁸⁷*Beyond Good and Evil* 36.

⁸⁸Sleisin, *op.cit.*, p. 17.

If the will to power is the force underlying all human actions, these cannot be brought about by rational choices conditioned by an ultimate reality, a 'thou shalt', as Kant claimed. Instead, if the will to power is 'the intelligible character' of the world, actions are brought about by it. Values and actions in this case cannot be separated as they are manifestations of the will to power. Therefore, actions as such cannot be labelled either good or bad.

Another similarity between Nietzsche's and Kant's position involves consequences; both philosophers would maintain that persons should act in certain ways regardless of the consequences. Kant would argue that what matters is acting rationally according to a rule which allows no exceptions. Nietzsche's 'thus I willed it' would make any consequences worthy of affirmation, not subject to moral evaluation. He would argue that we need to look at life as a whole and evaluate it in aesthetic terms, not in terms of individual actions. He would not agree that actions can be singled out for moral evaluation in ways suggested by Kant's categorical imperatives. In other words, an individual life cannot be assessed according to whether a person followed the categorical imperative consistently throughout life.

Even if the person himself defines what is good or bad for him, this is still evidence of the inability to live fully in the moment. It shows that the person lives with regrets of the past and these still color his present. Only once one is exceptional enough to be able to affirm one's whole life as beautiful has the transformation of attitudes succeeded and new values been created.

The second formulation of Kant's categorical imperative is: '*So act as to treat humanity, whether in thine own person or in that of any other as an end in every case withal, never as means only.*'⁸⁹ It has been a puzzle to many philosophers as to why Kant should have regarded the two formulations of the categorical imperative as expressing the same thing: 'They *seem* to express very different moral conceptions.'⁹⁰ This formulation of the categorical imperative seems to have nothing in common with the ideas of Nietzsche. Where Kant holds that human beings possess 'an intrinsic worth, that is, *dignity*',⁹¹ Nietzsche denies emphatically any such value.

If man has no intrinsic value there is no reason why he should not be treated as a means to an end. Nietzsche points out that in spite of claims to the contrary this is what morality is all

⁸⁹Kant, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

⁹⁰Rachels, *op.cit.*, p. 128.

⁹¹Kant, *op.cit.*, p. 65.

about. Nobody, according to him, is altruistic because he respects the dignity of another person. Human altruism is motivated by human needs, it is only a means to an end and so is the person who is the object of an altruistic action. Altruism is another manifestation of the will to power in the world, another form of 'I will' rather than 'thou shalt'. In this case 'I will' means that a person acted altruistically because he could not have acted otherwise, he did not choose to do so.

In summary, both Nietzsche and Kant argue that time conditions the actions of individuals. For Kant, time is the substratum underlying those theoretical constructs on which agents base their rational ethical actions. For Nietzsche, time is not separate from individuals' lived experiences. For him, these experiences illustrate the diversity of human types, whereas Kant's ethical individuals all conform to the same type. Both philosophers argue that the 'rightness' of actions does not depend on their consequences, but rather on the intentions of the individuals. For Kant, the intentions are determined by one's rationality. For Nietzsche, they are an integral part of the existential response of the authentic individual.

Is Nietzsche's 'Existential Imperative' Deterministic?

If a person cannot choose his actions, if everything is causally determined, are people free to change their attitudes from the resentment of the past or of time's passing in general to one of unconditional affirmation of living in time? According to Stambaugh, this choice is available:

Nietzsche's concept of necessity is not deterministic, but is rather closer to Spinoza for whom necessity and freedom were identical. Necessity is *inner* necessity as opposed to being compelled by some external force. Nietzsche's attempt to affirm eternal recurrence, to affirm *everything* as it is, by being willing to repeat it exactly as it is, gives expression to this inner necessity.⁹²

Nietzsche argues that there already exist strong individuals who see the world as it is and who nevertheless can exercise the kind of choices Stambaugh refers to: 'I want to learn more and more to see as beautiful what is necessary in things; then I shall be one of those who make things beautiful.'⁹³

If form is more important than content and if beauty is a matter of what each individual deems beautiful, problems arise. As Alan White argues

if there are no universal criteria for beauty, is there anything to prevent the mass murderer and the child molester on the one hand or the couch potato on the other, from viewing their lives as beautiful, and thus as good - even as ideal?⁹⁴

⁹²Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche*, pp. 103 - 4.

⁹³*The Gay Science* 276.

⁹⁴Alan White, *Within Nietzsche's Labyrinth*, London and New York: Routledge, 1990, p. 115.

Nietzsche obviously argues for the superiority of the aesthetic evaluation of life in comparison with a moral evaluation of it. White very reasonably questions whether Nietzsche can provide any arguments for his position. Does it, for instance, make sense to view one's life in the same way that one would review a tragic novel in which 'the question of how one's actions are to fit together into a coherent, self-sustaining, well-motivated whole' is more important than 'the quality of those actions themselves',⁹⁵ as a work of art towards which one can adopt a detached perspective?

The problem of how a life ought to be evaluated through the perspective of eternal recurrence is spelt out most precisely by Clark. She believes 'that the ideal of affirming eternal recurrence supplies some content',⁹⁶ but she is then confronted with the dilemma of how one can welcome the return of people like Hitler. She thinks that life-affirmation includes the welcoming of the negative aspects of the past: 'On the other hand, Nietzsche's ideal surely requires us to affirm him [Hitler] and much else we find abhorrent, in some important sense, and I think that sense is one that excludes moral condemnation.'⁹⁷ She concludes:

... it seems to me that there is much work for philosophical underlabourers to do before we can understand well what our choices are ... the kinds of reasons Nietzsche has to offer in support of his ideal are not metaphysical ones, but empirical claims, especially psychological ones, concerning human beings, their needs, and their values.⁹⁸

In answer to the question 'Must We Love Atrocities',⁹⁹ Kathleen Higgins gives a metaphysical answer that does not address the issue of psychological needs in the detail required by Clark, even if the former calls *Zarathustra* a 'psychological adventure'. She places emphasis on the moments, each of which 'is involved in the vibrant movement of life, and Nietzsche's point is that participation in this movement is fundamentally gratifying in itself' and concludes that Nietzsche 'ultimately endorses an interpretation of the doctrine that focuses on the dynamic of the life that is loved, and not on life's atomistic components'.¹⁰⁰

Both White and Clark claim that one could not affirm oppression because it would be detrimental 'to the health of the earth and humanity' and to the cultivation of the kind of nobility

⁹⁵Nehamas, *op. cit.*, p. 115.

⁹⁶Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

⁹⁷*Ibid.*, p. 285.

⁹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 286.

⁹⁹Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, pp. 199 - 201.

Nietzsche presents as an ideal in the *Genealogy of Morals*.¹⁰¹ Oppression prevents the oppressed from 'getting a sufficient sense of power in relation to life'.¹⁰² Only this kind of power would enable them to affirm the moment and the whole. In other words, living in the moment does not mean the unquestioning affirmation of everything in the world as it is. The affirmation of pain and suffering cannot amount to mere passive observation of them, they must be met as a challenge. The will to power can only be positively increased through authentic actions. Even if these can only be carried out with a full recognition of the transience of existence, this does not make them less valuable. They are valuable precisely because they are undertaken in spite of their impermanence.

Conclusion

Nietzsche shows in *Zarathustra* that living each moment authentically in such a way that one could welcome its return adds value to an exceptional individual's whole life. He poses eternal recurrence as a test of the maximally affirmative attitude an individual can have to transience. Only the Superman and the rare Dionysian artist is capable of passing this test based on his vision of a perspective on time which differs radically from the conventional linear Western conception.

Zarathustra's animals and the dwarf on his back are depicted by Nietzsche as having a mistaken understanding of his doctrine of eternal recurrence. They perceive time as a circle which to them means the repetition of all negative aspects of the past and therefore fills them with horror. Nietzsche thinks that this will also be the attitude of ordinary individuals to his vision, they can only understand it as the message of demons. Because of this inability to share Nietzsche's insight, their attitudes can never be transformed. They will remain resentful of the passage of time; the quality of their will to power remains negative rather than affirmative.

The exceptional individuals can determine their own existential imperatives based on their affirmative attitudes to transience. Because of their origins in lived temporal experience, and because the actions of the exceptional individual are based on these, they are superior to Kant's existential imperative. As will be seen in the following chapter, this affirmative attitude to existence has a profound impact on the way in which the exceptional individual views his future.

¹⁰¹White, *op.cit.*, pp. 135 - 6.

¹⁰²Clark, *op.cit.*, p. 285.

Chapter Three

The Problem of the Future in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Introduction

The future is an important theme in *Zarathustra*. The whole emphasis of Zarathustra's teaching regarding the death of God, the doctrine of eternal recurrence and the coming of the Superman, is directed to the future. The people whom he sees around him are the ordinary people, the 'rabble' who cannot face up to the reality that there are no transcendental values to guide them in the future; they believe that if God is dead then everything is permissible. The prospect of this kind of future fills them with horror; they interpret this message as the obliteration of any objective values and for them life without absolute standards has no value. There appears to be nothing for them to live for; pessimism and nihilism seem the only possible attitudes to adopt in the face of this calamity.

Nietzsche depicts two kinds of future for the individual to choose from. On the one hand he paints a picture of a future which is entirely different from the past and the present. In it all traditional values have been overturned. On the other hand he does not make clear what is to take the place of these. This may lead the ordinary individual to choose a more secure alternative. He may deny the possibility of any fundamental change; he may refuse to believe Zarathustra's claim about the death of God; he may persist with the old values and endeavour to ignore any conflict with those who hold different values. He can strive for stability and permanence by claiming that those who oppose them and question traditional values are wrong. For Zarathustra, however, the abandonment of old, dogmatic values based on conventions, resentment and the need for mere survival lead to a future of more freedom, choice, and independence, or in other words, the fulfilment of the highest values in this life rather than in the Christian 'afterworld'. Many would say that life after death is the only life that truly matters. Pain and suffering are justified on the basis of future rewards; a heavenly future is what one should strive for on earth; it is the highest value and anything else is an illusion.

People who cling to old values are guided by the herd mentality; they find it more comfortable to focus on their past and scavenge it for unchanging values. This is why the majority holds certain views on art that do not allow for any innovation and why dictators cling to the past in order to use it

for their own ends, as Nietzsche maintains in *Zarathustra* and *Untimely Meditations*. For them, the familiar is more comfortable and less threatening; they want the present and the future to be like the past, but only under certain conditions. The past can be of value to the future only if its positive aspects can be highlighted, only if the seamless continuity of traditions can be emphasized. Any major upheavals such as revolts against the prevailing standards are labelled as deviations from the norm and ignored as irrelevant. The 'herd' needs fixed, externally imposed categories by which the good and bad aspects of the past can be correctly evaluated. Of course these categories are then transferred to the future intact and thus permanence is ensured.

Nietzsche illustrates the average person's need to cling to familiar categories in *Zarathustra*. During Zarathustra's absence from the people they have grown even more cowardly and mediocre.¹ The attempt to keep everything the same has not led to stability but rather to desiccation and the narrowing of horizons. The permanence desired by the people has been an illusion after all; it has led to the destruction of the higher values as surely as if they had been attacked head on.

What is Zarathustra's alternative to the mediocrity of the 'herd'? There appear to be two options for understanding a more individualistic life based on the values created by the person himself. On the one hand Zarathustra describes the wisdom that he has accumulated in his years of solitude.² On the other is the value of the moments of 'wild wisdom', sudden insights that come to him like storms. Both wisdoms pose problems in his relations to other people; his understanding that has developed over time is ignored, his insights terrify those around him.³ They may even entail a contradiction, a possibility I will explore in the next section.

Nietzsche postulates the Superman as a solution to the problem of transformation. The Superman will be the most affirmative being who will cope with the memories of the past with the most affirmative attitude to it. As a result of this attitude, he will live fully, 'erotically', in the moment, and transform it into a wonderful future. presents to the interpreter. In this chapter I explore further his role as the herald of the future, focusing particularly on the apparent tension in Nietzsche's thought regarding the rate and degree of attitudinal transformations to the future. The

¹Thus Spoke Zarathustra III: 5.

² Ibid. II: 1.

³ Ibid.

Superman ideal implies a sudden upheaval; he arrives on the scene like 'lightning'.⁴ In this case it does not make any difference how human beings of the past and the present have prepared for his arrival; there is no link between the two kinds of beings. Nietzsche's references to the value of the past, however, support his arguments for a gradual change. Past attitudes evolve when they are set against the different backgrounds of the present and the future. Negative attitudes, on this account, can be transformed into more affirmative ones through wisdom accumulated with the passage of time. This interpretation is examined in the light of Nietzsche's references to the value of waiting in the next section.

The Significance of Waiting in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Nietzsche discusses two kinds of waiting in *Zarathustra*. He emphasizes, on the one hand, the necessity of waiting for the Superman as the deliverer of more positive values in the future. On the other hand he also argues that waiting is inherently worthwhile; the individual with patience is more appropriately predisposed to time's passing than one who merely lives in the moment or in the past: If you believed more in life, you would devote yourselves less to the moment. But you have insufficient capacity for waiting - or even for laziness!⁵

It is important to note that in this passage Nietzsche associates the capacity to wait with the ability to truly live. To merely exist in the present, therefore, is not to be fully alive. This seems to contradict the emphasis placed on the importance of living in the moment discussed in the previous chapter.

The two commands, that of living for the moment and of waiting may, however, be reconciled by focusing on the importance of the belief in life. By waiting Nietzsche does not mean simply an attitude of passive resignation, of trying to endure everything life throws into one's path. From this negative perspective life would be considered as mere passing of time; both would amount to nothing more than an enemy of the individual. A more positive perspective can be adopted by a person who believes and trusts in life, who views it as a challenge rather than with hostility. For such an individual waiting is a positive activity of living fully in time.

⁴ *Ibid.* Prologue 4.

⁵ *Ibid.* I: 9.

Sometimes, however, the activity of waiting entails doing nothing active as preparation for future action. This waiting could be characterised as the intense listening to an 'inner voice' or as the confrontation with truths about existence. There is an example of this in *Zarathustra*. At the end of the first part of the narrative, Zarathustra has failed to transmit his message to his listeners. At the beginning of the second part he

went back into the mountains and into the solitude of his cave and withdrew from mankind: waiting like a sower who has scattered his seed. His soul, however, became full of impatience and longing for those whom he loved: for he still had much to give them.⁶

By the use of a metaphor from nature, Nietzsche argues for the value of waiting between periods of activity. He likens this to the prudence of the farmer who cultivates his soil, sows his seed and is then rewarded by ample crops. It would not help him to rush to harvest them too soon; he gains more by waiting. In other words, he is not resigned to merely existing while waiting, even if he undertakes no visible activity during this period. He is in a state of joyful anticipation because of the reasonably certain knowledge of what the future will bring. The amateur gardener's delight in spring flowers after a long winter is another example of the fulfilment of such expectations.

The contrast between resigned endurance of life as waiting and waiting as an exuberant activity is brought out clearly in a later passage of *Zarathustra*:

I also call wretched those who always have to *wait* - they offend my taste: all tax-collectors and shop-keepers and kings and other keepers of lands and shops. Truly, I too have learned to wait, I have learned it from the very heart, but only to wait for *myself*. And above all I have learned to stand and to walk and to run and to jump and to climb and to dance.⁷

Only petty, ordinary people spend their lives waiting like the tax-collectors and the shop-keepers. They differ from the exceptional individuals because they do not believe in life. Nor do they have the ability to 'run, jump, climb and dance' while they are waiting'. They do not believe in life nor in their fellow human beings. They expect to be cheated from their money, they fear that their products will perish in the future. In other words, none of their waiting is founded on positive values. It does not result in the creation of more positive values for the future as it is narrowly

⁶ *Ibid.* II: 1.

⁷ *Ibid.* III : 11.

focused on columns and balance sheets. It is based on the desire for a future identical to the present, provided this entails balanced accounts of income and expenses.

Nietzsche, then, argues that just as there are good and bad ways of living in the moment, there are good and bad ways of waiting. Those who wait for something or someone else to remove the pain and suffering associated with transience from their lives, wait in vain and do not develop themselves in the process. In the positive sense of waiting, people who can wait can create and value life unlike those who want to harvest the results of their efforts too soon. What does creation and valuing mean in this context? Nietzsche provides the answer in terms of creating things of value for the future. *Zarathustra* is an example of such a creation. Although sections of it were written by Nietzsche in a great hurry, they are nevertheless the result of solitary contemplation of many years. The book is also intended to be like an abundant harvest, a plentiful gift to his friends.

Creative Waiting For the Future and Its Relation to History

Nietzsche regarded the message of *Zarathustra* as something that would reach across the millennia. He expected it to have an impact not just in the immediate future but also to have far-reaching consequences for centuries to come. This at least seems to be the implication of the ideal of the Superman who is so different from ordinary 'human, all-too-human' individuals:

The notion of the *übermensch* poses major problems for anyone who wishes to come to grips with the paradoxes and tensions of Nietzsche's thought. Can his promotion of the idea of a humanity 'beyond' (*über*) man be taken seriously when much of his thinking is premised on the conviction that all modern ideals which encourage human beings to sacrifice the present for the future are no more than relics of our Christian ascetic past ...⁸

Ansell-Pearson points out the apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's demand for the transformation of the individual on the one hand and of whole societies on the other in the following terms. If you desire the transformation of humanity, human beings must be the agents of this transformation. They must become more independent in order to create values which reflect their more affirmative attitudes towards time and transience. They cannot benefit from the expectation of a creature from another world who will erase their fear of the future. They must be able to shape it in such a way that it will cease to be an object of apprehension. In other words, they must grow in

⁸ Ansell-Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 310.

ways which transform at least some of them into supermen. Yet this is not possible on Nietzsche's account; in *Zarathustra* he argues that humans to Superman are like apes to humans, they are 'no bridges to the Superman'.⁹

Elsewhere, however, Nietzsche indicates that it is possible for some actual individuals to affect the course of history. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for instance, he talks about the social and political future of Europe, and about how, instead of the fragmentation of the empires of his day, a new unity would be required to counteract the threat of the Russian empire:

... to acquire a single will by means of a new caste dominating all Europe, a protracted terrible will of its own which could set its objectives thousands of years ahead - so that the long-drawn-out comedy of its petty states and the divided will of its dynasties and democracies should finally come to an end. The time for petty politics is past: the very next century will bring with it the struggle for mastery over the whole earth - the compulsion to *grand* politics.¹⁰

In the preceding paragraphs of this section Nietzsche discusses the decline of European culture and how scepticism and nihilism have taken over. The resulting 'sickness of will' is subsequently regarded as the norm and anyone who rejects this prevailing attitude 'is henceforth considered dangerous'.¹¹ Why does Nietzsche reject this scepticism if he is far more aware of the decline of cultural values in Europe than any of his contemporaries and if a fair degree of scepticism independently seems more than justifiable? The answer in the above passage is that he retains faith in a certain kind of progress, he believes in life, in spite of the fact that the present provides very little evidence to support his optimism. But does Nietzsche really hold hopes for a better future? There are at least three passages that support the interpretation that he is hopeful for a better future in ordinary human, not superhuman terms.

First, there is the statement in *Untimely Meditations*, in which he derives hopes for the future from the evidence supplied by the past:

He learns from it (the monumentalistic conception of the past) that the greatness that once existed was in any event once possible and may thus be possible again ... the doubt which assailed him in weaker moments ... has now been banished.¹²

⁹ Thus Spoke Zarathustra I: 4.

¹⁰ *Beyond Good and Evil* 208.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Untimely Meditations* II: 2.

How does Nietzsche arrive at the kind of understanding of the past that warrants his hopes for the future? The title of the text, *Untimely Meditations*, furnishes an answer; Nietzsche's philosophical ideas are focused on the future, he is ahead of his time. Nietzsche's geopolitical analysis can be characterised as elitist. He is critical of the levelling tendencies of the nations of the late nineteenth century; he castigates their pursuit of democracy which in his mind results in the rule of the 'herd'. Against this he sets the city states of the ancient Greece with their valuation of the powerful individuals.

Paradoxically, then, Nietzsche's vision for the future resembles that of the past. His ideas for the future incorporate the past into them: in his mind they form a coherent whole. In other words, in his mind the future is already 'real' in one sense while the past remains so as well. Nietzsche, as a prophetic thinker, is constantly aware of 'the impossibility of arriving at the past by any route other than that of the future'.¹³ When one attempts to think of what the future will be like, one can do so only by drawing on examples from the past, the two phases cannot be separated from each other in any way but conceptually. As one attempts to get a grasp of the features of the future one at the same time gains a better understanding of the past. For instance, a political historian may try to develop an appropriate model for a future constitution of a state. In order to do so he or she needs to investigate the models of the past: only then can he focus on what form they may take in the future. By doing this he at the same time achieves a clearer picture of the institutions of the past. Therefore he gains a better understanding of the past through the future; Nietzsche is correct in arguing that it would have been impossible for the historian to have increased his understanding in any other way. There cannot be creation *ex nihilo*, it must originate from something, in this case the past provides the raw materials for the future but the transaction takes place in the other direction as well. The anticipation of a particular future, in Nietzsche's case of one that resembles the glory days of Greece, necessarily shapes his understanding of that past.

In Nietzsche's eyes, however, an individual's superior ability to incorporate them into the present and the future again distinguishes him as someone with a more positive attitude to time. This interpretation which supports the evolution of positive attitudes again underlines the implausibility of

¹³Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

the Superman as a solution to the human value crisis. The Superman does not need to have any understanding of the past if he is not a link 'in the great chain of being'. In other words, his superiority is not the result of his understanding of the past nor of its incorporation to the present and the future.

Historical and Unhistorical Men

A good historian, according to Nietzsche, is someone for whom the past is still alive, whose present and future it enriches with its pervasiveness. Rosen regards the prophet as another example of an individual whose perception of time is different from that of the majority:

The prophet sees the future within the present; that is, he sees the present as the future. And this means that he does not see the present as the present. Instead he comes to see the present as the past. I mean by this that he understands the present *qua* present only retrospectively, after it has rejected him. Hence the partial detachment of the prophet from his own time ...¹⁴

Based on textual evidence, it is plausible to argue that Nietzsche regarded himself as a prophet, that he focused on the future despite his great interest in the past. It could be argued further that he uses the literary device of the prophet Zarathustra to voice his intentions for the future in the form of the teaching of the Superman and the doctrine of eternal recurrence. The historian, the prophet and the great artist possess the ability to transform the past, the present and the future because of 'the force of imagination'.¹⁵

The picture that Nietzsche paints of the seamlessness of the past and the future, how they are mutually dependent and how they enrich each other, is compatible with the doctrine of eternal recurrence: 'There cannot be a radically unique creation'¹⁶ if the future resembles the past. In other words, events that ordinary people have been conditioned to perceive as finite stages towards finite goals are seen completely differently by Nietzsche. He sees them as an infinite process with no beginning and no end.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 38.

¹⁵*Ibid.*

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 5.

Let us call them historical men; looking to the past impels them towards the future and fires their courage to go on living and their hope that what they want will still happen, that happiness lies behind the hill they are advancing towards. These historical men believe that the meaning of existence will come more and more to light in the course of its *process*, and they glance behind them only so that, from the process so far, they can learn to understand the present and to desire the future more vehemently; they have no idea that, despite their preoccupation with history, they in fact think and act unhistorically, or that their occupation with history stands in the service, not of pure knowledge, but of life.¹⁷

If the past, present and future coalesce into one infinite process, this seems to imply that this process has no goals and it also has no purposes. In this case it does not seem to make sense to ‘desire the future more vehemently’, it will ‘proceed’ regardless of the needs or fears of the individual. Although the interpretation of events as an infinite process accords well with Nietzsche’s argument that the world is ‘will to power and nothing else’¹⁸ it appears incompatible with his emphasis on the future that entails progress in the shape of the Superman. In this case the courage and hopes of the historical men are also misdirected, there is no ‘happiness behind the hill’.

In spite of Nietzsche’s arguments for the seamlessness of time, he has to divide it conceptually into different phases. Only this way can he criticise the concepts held by historical and unhistorical men. For instance, Nietzsche must focus on the present in order to diagnose the ills of modernity. He then contrasts this present with the past and the future; both of these in his estimation are better than what he is observing around himself. The past, for instance, can be that of the pre-Socratics or the ancient Greeks from whose shoulders he views the world, dwarfed by their statures. The future belongs to the Superman with an affirmative nature the like of which has not been seen before.

Concurrently with the systematic approach to time of the philologist and aspiring scientist, Nietzsche advocates another way of understanding time. On this account, time should be viewed as whole. It should not be delineated by impenetrable conceptual ‘hedges’¹⁹ into the past, present and future. In his criticisms Nietzsche underlines repeatedly that the ‘hedges’ are an acquired way of thinking; they are not parts of ‘objective reality’. He attempts to show that it is possible to view

¹⁷*Untimely Meditations* II: 1.

¹⁸*Beyond Good and Evil* 36.

¹⁹*Untimely Meditations* II: 1.

history and therefore time from other perspectives less restricted by conventional conceptual boundaries.

The metaphor of opaque versus transparent ‘hedges’ is, however, a useful way of illustrating how Nietzsche compares and contrasts the two ways of waiting that I noted in the previous section. One can wait in the confines of a small segment of time, within an area inside of hedges that obstruct your vision on all sides; this is what the “impatient people and the shop-keepers and the tax-collectors are doing”. They are only waiting for another small segment of time to pop up out of the hedge, something that can be expressed in objective, familiar numerical terms. Their time is divided into weeks, months and years in which payment for goods is received or payment of debt or interest is incurred; they are not waiting for a fundamental change in the world. Their world is too small to afford room for innovation or creativity. They would experience these as dangerous to the *status quo*; their future is totally conditioned by their past; they desire it to be identical with the past and the present; they only feel secure inside their hedged area just like the inartistic natures who see the innovations of the true artists as something dangerous that must be denied, as not ‘good taste’.²⁰

So far I have argued that Nietzsche’s Superman ideal as the new hero of the future is implausible because it has no relevance to real human beings. It cannot furnish a solution to the human-all-too-human value crisis which is the reason for its postulation. More positive future values must be created by real individuals who have experienced the crisis. Those who can respond to it as a challenge are the exceptional individuals, the real philosophers, rather than the philosophical labourers, and the Dionysian artists. In order to explain how these values are created, it is necessary to investigate how the exceptional human beings develop.

Zarathustra’s Will

Nietzsche contrasts the ‘sickness of will’ of the modern sceptical era in Europe which he diagnosed in *Beyond Good and Evil*,²¹ to ‘something invulnerable, unburiable’ identified by Zarathustra within himself, ‘something that rends rocks: it is called *my Will*. Silently it steps and unchanging through

²⁰*Ibid.*, II: 2.

²¹*Beyond Good and Evil* 208.

the years'.²² Ordinary people, in contrast to Zarathustra, do not possess this unchanging core that is stronger than rocks which can face up to any changes; instead they desire the unchanging in the aspects of the world external to themselves. So both in looking at themselves and looking to the future ordinary people are looking in the wrong direction. When they should be looking outwards over the hedges, they turn inwards in fear. When they should be turning inwards to confront their own demons, they turn away for lack of courage.

How has Zarathustra come to possess this iron will or 'the fundamental self .. which .. is the source of the worth of persons and actions'?²³ There are two answers. Either he was born with it and it was always an intrinsic aspect of his unchanging character, or he has developed it over time, and under different circumstances it may not have developed at all or may have developed in a totally different direction. For instance, Zarathustra could have become like the despot whose will abused the treasures of the past for the sort of changes he desired in the future.²⁴ After all, this despot shows the stamina, determination and creativity which are the desirable qualities of those able to wait in the appropriate manner. His waiting, however, is not appropriate in the sense that he is not looking forward to the unexpected or the unpredictable, but wants to ensure that the future is different from the present in ways which accord with his chosen ends. In other words, he is hiding behind his own hedge just as much as the shopkeeper or the tax-collector waiting for his payment or the 'exquisite' woman concerned with her weight.²⁵

Judging by the above examples of the less desirable characteristics of average human beings, the only kind of individual development that is possible according to Nietzsche is that 'one will become only that which one is ...A man prospers through virtue, it brings long life and happiness ... One becomes a decent man because one *is* a decent man'.²⁶

Nietzsche's statement regarding the process of self-development underlines what appears a major paradox in his thought. On the one hand he compares the few exceptional individuals who have a strong sense of self and the majority whose self-esteem is constantly threatened by the

²²Thus Spoke Zarathustra II: 11.

²³Lester H. Hunt, *Nietzsche and the Origin of Virtue*, London: Routledge, 1991, p.18.

²⁴Thus Spoke Zarathustra III: 12, 12.

²⁵*Ibid.* III: 11.

²⁶*Ibid.* 334.

unfamiliar, the unexpected. On the other hand he argues that the self is an illusion, that everything is in a state of flux, that nothing is permanent, that the world is nothing but the will to power.

If 'education, instruction, milieu, chance, and accident'²⁷ cannot play any role in the development of the exceptional individual, does this mean that Zarathustra or Nietzsche cannot have any expectations, that they contradict themselves if they claim to wait for a better future? Surely, if we affirm the moment and if we affirm the eternal recurrence of the same, then we accept things as they are; there is no better world than this one. But the Superman ideal implies progress on a grand scale; he is described as the culmination of development of mankind over millennia. Basically the same explanation of this apparent contradiction can be given as before. One is wrong if one looks for change or stability outside of oneself. One must both possess the unchanging inner core which can cope with all change and flux in the world around one and at the same time one must be inwardly flexible enough to create new values and question old ones. The unchanging inner core cannot consist of rigid hierarchies of values but must consist of a will which does not have to resort to such categories because of insecurities that need to be externally bolstered.

Individual Development and Progress

Lampert agrees that 'The project of the superman implies a praise of progress'.²⁸ But just as there is a difference between good and bad ways of living in the moment or good and bad ways of waiting for the future, so there is a good and bad progress in the world according to Lampert's interpretation. He claims that the Superman is an emblem of progress in Nietzsche's thought and compares this emblem with the many deluded contemporary ideas of "progress". I think he is also correct to point out how deluded many contemporary ideals of progress are, especially as they relate to uncritical interpretations of human history as a linear progression towards higher goals. Lampert claims that Nietzsche considered 'as madness unrestrained progress in the alteration of nature',²⁹ and that

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

²⁹*Ibid.*

his most vehement contempt is reserved for what still stands and what is coming to stand as a consequence of what is toppling, namely the modern teaching on progress, the modern form of pride that interprets the history of mankind edifyingly, in the form of self-congratulation, as the long struggle for democratic politics and universal enlightenment now reaching its culmination.³⁰

According to Nietzsche, the improvers of mankind have been too busy tinkering with the foreground of existence and they have gradually begun to believe that this foreground is all that matters, that it is 'reality' itself. The ascetic ideal suffers from this kind of confusion between what is 'real' and what is not; a lot of weight is placed on the only right way in which men ought to live and this entails proscriptions, rules and rituals concerning every aspect of life. In theory, one could be an ascetic by living in poverty and by depriving oneself of the necessities of life, but this does not make one into a truly good person. One's fundamental self remains the same; particularly, if one is still motivated by envy and resentment of those better off than oneself:

· And *in politics* likewise. A statesman who builds for them (the masses) another Tower of Babel, some monstrosity of empire and power, they call 'great' - what does it matter if we, more cautious and reserved than they, persist in the old belief that it is the great idea alone which can bestow greatness on a deed or a cause.³¹

It is noteworthy how contemporary many of Nietzsche's criticisms of the modern world still appear. Most people could easily name current monstrosities of empire and the abuse of power; the frenzy with which Australian state governments compete to build casinos and racetracks comes readily to mind. Since Nietzsche's day caution and reserve have been thrown to the wind in the name of progress; nature has been altered in a manner approximating madness. If one looks at why this is done, the answer must be that the aim is to control the external world. People like to flatter themselves with the notion that they must have changed a lot if the world around them has changed a lot. They would hardly want to look for evidence to the contrary inside themselves.

Nietzsche argues that external conditions alone do not make people what they are; the European 'civilization' or 'humanization' or 'progress'³² has the potential to produce mediocre herd animals with very narrow domains of thought inside thick hedges of dogma:

³⁰*Ibid.*, p. 80.

³¹*Beyond Good and Evil* 241.

³²*Ibid.*

...this process (of *becoming European*) will probably lead to results which its naive propagators and panegyrists, the apostles of 'modern ideas', would be least inclined to anticipate. The same novel conditions which will on average create a levelling and mediocritizing of man - a useful, industrious, highly serviceable and able herd-animal man - are adapted in the highest degree to giving rise to exceptional man of the most dangerous and enticing quality.³³

Nietzsche refers to the levelling effects of the democratization of Europe. Individual development is no longer conditioned by the climate of a particular area, nor the class into which one is born. Many of the factors which determined the place of a person in the past, are no longer present. A person at the end of the nineteenth century no longer derives his identity from that of his immediate community, but assimilates to the larger one of a democratic nation.

The same conditions that produce the 'herd-animal man' also give rise to the exceptional individual. His development can be read as a rebellion against the mediocratizing forces; he is critical of the propagators of progress because he sees the lie and the dubious motives behind this proselytizing. This makes him an undesirable, dangerous member of the herd. His non-conformist criticism is akin to Zarathustra's pronouncement on the death of God; both remove the substratum of conformist values. This integrity, however, makes him enticing to those who demand originality and integrity from the leaders of society. Even at their most destructive, according to Nietzsche, they have more to offer than the industrious peddlers of democratic values.

Nietzsche argues that the 'detachment' of the 'progressives' from past values and 'milieus'³⁴ necessarily leads to the mediocratization and loss of individuality of the average person. Their new herd, although larger, is no different from the familiar one of the past. It is actually worse because it requires more conformity than the local village community which allows for more individuality. This claim may be countered by pointing out that in a larger community it is easier to blend in with the masses than in a small village where many pairs of eyes are constantly on one. There is nowhere to hide; the village represents more homogenous values and is more stifling for individual development.

From Nietzsche's perspective, however, a village such as Motley Cow may have advantages over the democratic herd society. The former would have a sense of its history; a member of it may

³³*Ibid.* 242.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

benefit from his critical understanding of it in ways that promote his uniqueness. In other words, he may create a better future of individual values from the foundation offered by Motley Cow, if he was able to go beyond the worship of its ancient monuments of no value. The lessons of the past could function as guides to action in the future because of their concreteness. In this sense they are superior to the amorphous, abstract ideas of democracy which are not founded on the lived experiences of small communities with their 'natural' hierarchies. For Nietzsche, order of rank is a fact about human existence. Empirical evidence at the end of the twentieth century still supports this thesis for the necessity of strong leaders in all fields of human endeavor.

Detachment, however, is also the answer to the development of the exceptional individual. To cut loose from the ties of the past is for him a challenge. The average person can deal with this only by looking for new ties that anchor him to the present and the future. The artist or the philosopher, in contrast, perceives in this same world a tremendous multiplicity of opportunities for change and creativity as they are no longer constrained by climate or class. The new milieu demands new responses from them. Time's passing results in a schooling whose nature is 'unprejudiced'.

Zarathustra's Future Task

What does Nietzsche mean by 'the unprejudiced nature of his schooling'? Do these terms relate to his own experiences or the experiences of Zarathustra and how do they differ from the sort of education and instruction which he earlier claimed do not play any role in the spiritual richness of an individual? In Nietzsche's own case, he claims repeatedly that he is grateful for his past, for all that it has given him, and for the way his schooling has made him into an exceptional individual. 'He describes his writings as a schooling in suspicion, contempt, courage, and audacity'.³⁵ Ansell-Pearson's reference to the activity of writing implies that this is the only way in which one can become an exceptional individual. Nietzsche's references to other writers such as Shakespeare and Goethe appear to support this argument and give credence to Nehamas' interpretation of 'Life as Literature'. Nietzsche certainly argues for the transformative function of learning, of which writing

³⁵Ansell-Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 324.

is an integral part. But first one must have thoughts and experiences which one can put down on paper, one cannot get beyond any hedges in the isolation of Königsberg:

‘What has happened to me’, he says to himself, ‘must happen to everyone in whom a task wants to become incarnate and come into the world’. The secret force and necessity of this task will rule among and in the individual facets of his destiny like an unconscious pregnancy - long before he has caught sight of this task or knows its name. Our vocation commands and disposes of us even when we do not yet know it: it is the future which regulates our today.³⁶

It is clear from this passage that the exceptional individual is distinguished from the average by his different understanding of himself and his task in the world. The only task of the ordinary members of the herd is to conform and become one with it. Zarathustra, as the representative of a minority, is schooled by the task of teaching others which is his destiny. He learns most from his initial failure to impart the significance of the death of god and the doctrine of eternal recurrence as the alternative. When he first comes down from his mountain and gives his teaching he has no success; he lacks knowledge of how to communicate his message; he lacks understanding of what ordinary people are about. In order to understand the doctrine of eternal recurrence and how to teach it better to the people he has to go back to his mountain to review his strategies: ‘Zarathustra and his audience had first to be prepared for its experience’.³⁷

Zarathustra wants to return to his home for the second time when the thought of eternal recurrence has left him extremely depressed. He is unable to speak for two days and his heart is like ice. It is important to note, however, that his hearing remains acute; it provides his only means of contact with the external world.³⁸

What is the significance of Zarathustra’s faculty of hearing while his ability to speak is in abeyance? At first glance it appears that he would be better off if he closed his ears as well, in order to prevent himself from hearing ‘many strange and dangerous things’ or from hearing the mocking tones of the ‘dwarf’ or ‘the spirit of gravity’.³⁹ In other words, if Zarathustra is in danger of becoming more depressed the more he hears, then, would it not be better to be deaf as well as dumb?

³⁶ *Human, All Too Human* I: 6.

³⁷ Ansell-Pearson, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

³⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 2.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

The answer to this question is that Zarathustra's hearing also serves a positive function at a time when his other senses are dulled by misery. His remaining ability to hear is his means of contact with the outside world: 'in listening his tongue was loosened, and the ice of his heart broke, then he started to speak'.⁴⁰ Even during his deep gloom Zarathustra is able to cling on to his courage which is temporarily submerged. His ability to hear, or more importantly, his ability to listen actively, proves that he is not totally drowned in misery. It keeps him in contact both with the world around him and with what is best in himself. Although he lets the dwarf 'pour lead drops into [his] ear, leaden thoughts into [his] brain',⁴¹ at the same time he also listens to his inner core, his will or courage. In other words, the strength, the quality of his will is different from the will of those who would be overcome by the leaden thoughts introduced by the dwarf. While they are vulnerable to negative influences, Zarathustra can transform these into positive action because of his invulnerable which cannot be buried even by the most abysmal thought.

In *Zarathustra* there is another, more significant connection between hearing, courage and affirmation. When the world of eternal recurrence finally becomes the perfect world for Zarathustra, he hears 'sweet lyre',⁴² he 'hears eternity'.⁴³ Because the contact between the external world and the individual has been maintained even during Zarathustra's worst moments, at moments of affirmation it is made explicit by the senses.

Rather than emphasizing the connection that the senses provide between the individual and the external world, the more appropriate interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy is that there is no real separation between them. Nietzsche argues that to posit an individual separate from the world is the artifice we use to keep the world at bay by simplifying it. He claims further that the 'herd' ignores the abyss because of their inferior faculties; to the exceptional individual it presents a constant challenge.

Nietzsche's use of the metaphors of seeing and hearing, then, point to the differences between the average person and the exceptional individuals. The exceptional individual exercises his capacity

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*, IV: 19, 6.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, IV: 19, 10.

to see and hear to the fullest. His affirmative will perseveres with listening and with looking down into the abyss even at his most abject moments. The more he sees and listens the stronger he becomes; the stronger he becomes, the more of the lead-drops and abysses he can endure. Through his courage he develops an entirely different understanding of the world:

... as deeply as man looks into life, so deeply does he look also into suffering.
 Courage, however, is the best destroyer, courage that attacks: it destroys even death,
 for it says: 'Was *that* life? Well then! Once more!'⁴⁴

When Zarathustra makes this statement, regarding the relationship between the ability to see the deepest abysses and the capacity to understand the fundamental nature of life as suffering, he is still unable to spell out his affirmation of existence including the most abysmal thought. Only later will he be able to 'bring together what is fragment and riddle and dreadful chance in man' and say: 'But I willed it thus! So shall I will it - .'⁴⁵ Yet, his desolation is never complete. In spite of his understanding, that man is always standing at the abyss, he does not permit the thought to overwhelm him. The beautiful sounds of eternity can only be heard by him because he has set his path along the narrowest precipices. He not only overcomes his fears, he actively attacks them instead of trying to withdraw to more secure ground as the more timid individuals would.

The Development of Affirmative Attitudes Towards the Future

Can Nietzsche's metaphors of affirmation of the future be made concrete at an everyday level?

Lampert argues that Nietzsche values intellectual rather than material progress:

... Zarathustra will later unfold a comprehensive view of human history that makes clear the ways in which he embraces progress - the progress of inquiry, for instance - while refusing as madness unrestrained progress in the alteration of nature.⁴⁶

Nietzsche appears to value scholarly pursuits more than progress in the sense of material well-being for those who are starving. Does an affirmative attitude towards the future, then, amount to no more than the passive acceptance of the *status quo*? Nietzsche's work is evidence that he cares for matters that are important not only intellectually but also practically. He takes action in the form of critical analysis of what is wrong with the world as he sees it in order to suggest ways in which the wrongs could be righted.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* III: 12, 3.

Nietzsche's intellectual pursuits may, of course, be characterized by critics as nothing more than a retreat from life, not as action proper. Even worse, the misinterpretation of his work is claimed to have given rise to Nazism and lesser forms of intellectual elitism. Some of these criticisms can be countered by pointing out that Nietzsche cannot be held responsible for the edition by others of his work posthumously. It is also important to acknowledge that he did not write in order to further his philosophy career. Nietzsche's final public act of protecting a horse from its cruel master also deserves attention as a deed that reaches beyond the pages of a textbook.

How can the 'progress of inquiry' make a difference in the real world? I think that Nietzsche would reply in the following way; if the results of inquiry are not accumulated as mere superficial foreground, but if they also have the power to be integrated into one's central core, then these ideas are likely to affect the way one lives and the way one acts in relation to other people and to this world. There is a difference between doctrines that can be studied as the objects of intellectual curiosity and those that have transformative value. The doctrine of eternal recurrence serves as an example of both; on one hand it has been subjected to diverse analyses and interpretations that have made no impact on the value choices of Nietzsche's interpreters. On the other, Nietzsche claimed that it changed the way he viewed the world very profoundly and he expected select individuals to share his transformed world view. The most obvious way that it would make an impact on the life of an individual who believes in the truth of it would concern his choices. If one knew that the consequences of these reverberated through several millennia, he would take care to choose in such a way that he could welcome the innumerable repetitions of the reverberations.

An obvious counterargument against Nietzsche's expectation that others should share his understanding of the world has been underlined throughout this chapter. It is supported both by *Zarathustra* and by his other writings; he argues that a strong individual must shape his own understanding of the world in his own terms. If he follows someone else's example he is merely one of the herd. Zarathustra has his disciples but he encourages their independence: 'This is now *my* way: where is yours? ... For *the* way does not exist!'⁴⁷ The references to truth scattered throughout Nietzsche's writings, however, raise the following question. Even if Nietzsche argues that there is

⁴⁶Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 26.

no one way of travelling and of becoming schooled, should the goal of all travel and education nevertheless be the same? Nietzsche's answer is in the affirmative. In spite of his arguments against development and teleology, his descriptions of the exceptional individuals underline their common, distinguishing characteristic that is accentuated by their learning.

According to the above argument emphasizing the creation of new ways and values, then, it must be possible to affirm Life according to the insights provided by the doctrine of eternal recurrence. If each moment is appreciated as unique, then it is possible to adopt a maximally affirmative attitude to the future, even when one is aware of its finitude. For example, in ordinary life many ordinary individuals suffering from terminal illness engage fully with every moment of

Some may argue that the affirmation of pain and suffering relates to the individual's religious convictions; the end of life has simply been made tolerable because of the prospect of an afterlife without suffering - and without the fear of an unpredictable future. Many terminally ill people, however, remain atheists to the end. In other words, they remain self-sufficient and courageous in a way familiar from Nietzsche's descriptions of the exceptional individual. A future of suffering and death can be faced by an individual who has created his or her own values. In this respect many women as well as some men actually meet Nietzsche's exacting standards.

There are, broadly speaking, two ways of dealing with human mortality. There are, on the one hand, those individuals who avoid thinking about it, just as they avoid thinking about anything unpleasant. Their actions center around evading truths about impermanence; they focus on creating illusions of permanence. Their approach to history, for instance, would be monumentalistic rather than critical. Because of their need to live within narrow horizons of past and present, their futures are impoverished because they are based on illusions. Those individuals, on the other hand, who acknowledge the finitude of their time in the world, are capable of living with truths about existence.

The argument for the equal capacity of some women as well as some men to face their own mortality is supported by Tapper's discussion on the differences between individuals motivated by *ressentiment* and by the will to power. She outlines three characteristics that the former lack and that the latter possess in abundance. Her characterization can be applied to both men and women. Her

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* III: 11.

first characteristic is the ability to 'let go', to forget'.⁴⁸ The dying person must let go of the past, she cannot cling to the previous state of health and the pleasures it brought, she cannot regret her loss. Instead, she must live in the present and gain mental strength from her ability to shape it in a way from which she can derive positive value. She must also forget about any plans for the future, on the one hand and on the other she cannot value the moment if she lives in constant fear of it. In other words, she must learn to live without the aid of the conceptual hedges of past, present and the future. She must see herself in a different relation to the passage of time.

Tapper's second characterisation of the difference between *ressentiment* and the will to power pertains to the apportioning of praise and blame. She describes how an individual 'motivated by the spirit of *ressentiment* looks for 'evil', needs to recriminate and distribute blame'.⁴⁹ The dying person may very well experience her suffering as an evil imposed upon herself by some outside force. She may blame other people or her job for her predicament, or she may regard it as punishment for some evil she has committed. The powerful person in the same situation does not regard her illness as inherently evil, she does not blame anyone else nor herself for it. She does not feel powerless in the face of impending death, but still has the power to shape her future by trying to gain a factual understanding of her condition and then by forgetting about the limits that it places on her.

The third capacity possessed by those with a will to power, according to Tapper, is the 'ability to admire and respect'.⁵⁰ It seems questionable to claim that one should admire or respect disease or suffering, no matter how affirmative an attitude one has to one's dying. Even in this situation, however, one can admire Life in its multifariousness and complexity which it would not possess if everyone enjoyed a perfect state of health. One may also come to admire and respect those health professionals who are able to share one's last moments with grace.

Tapper's characterisations of the differences between *ressentiment* and power can be summed up in terms of Nietzsche's three types of moralities. Those individuals who are unable to let go or to

⁴⁸ Tapper, *op. cit.*, pp. 130-143.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 134.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

forget conventions, those who cling to their past lives of health in order to be one with the majority, are like the herd. They feel most comfortable with the average, they cannot be outstandingly fit nor ill. The slaves are like the sick individual who labels her illness as 'evil'. They can only be motivated by their resentment against the more powerful who are responsible for their powerlessness. They regard this as a proof of their own goodness and of the evil of the other.⁵¹ The masters are those who do not seek the admiration of others - to them it is entirely irrelevant. They are, however, powerful enough to respect others in whom they recognise capacities for independent values.

Nietzsche argues that profound ideas force the uncommon individual open to them to revalue all values in relation to one's fundamental self; he is not talking about being concerned with everyday ideas and values that are imposed on the 'herd' by its members. For instance, if one looks at the motivation behind empire-building and scrutinise the conceptual framework underlying these grand gestures, one meets with shallow extrinsic desires to change the future only to the extent that the shopkeepers and tax-collectors want to change it. They are members of the 'herd', not exceptional individuals who have their own values independent of it. The 'great' monuments erected by the herd can only possess transient value of a superficial kind, they will crumble into dust sooner or later. The truly great ideas can transcend millennia, just like Nietzsche hoped *Zarathustra* would do. He also thought that the protracted will of the new caste of Europe may be able to do so, as it 'set its objectives thousands of years ahead'.

O my brothers, am I then cruel? But I say: that which is falling should also be pushed! Everything of today - it is falling, it is decaying: who would support it? But I want to push it too!⁵²

Nietzsche is obviously not just talking about buildings when he argues that everything of his day is decaying. He is saying that people should not revere any idea just because it is old; ideas decay and crumble just like impermanent buildings do. So how can one differentiate those ideas that last and as such are worthy of your valuation from those whose time will be over tomorrow like the time of seasonal fashions?

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 134-5.

⁵² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 12, 20.

The Contribution of History to the Future

Nietzsche answers the question of the relation of the past to the future in his consideration of the uses and disadvantages of the three kinds of history, the monumentalist, antiquarian and the critical, for life.⁵³ In the same context he discusses his high, although in retrospect transient, regard for Richard Wagner, he holds him up as someone who has learnt the right lessons from history and philosophy. These have enabled him to create new music for the future. In Nietzsche's eyes he is a champion of change:

And it was to precisely this kind of discontent that Wagner was compelled again and again by his involvement with history and philosophy: he discovered here, not only weapons and armour, but also and above all the inspiring afflatus that wafts from the tombs of all great warriors, of all great sufferers and thinkers. One cannot stand out more clearly from the whole contemporary age than through the way one employs history and philosophy.⁵⁴

Nietzsche values Wagner's critical approach to both history and philosophy; his music is inspired by his understanding of what is best in each. Nietzsche's later estimation of Wagner was reduced to characterizing him as the preserver of Christian monuments in works like *Parsifal*. I think, however, that Wagner's approach to the problems of existence, particularly to death, is original and deserves praise even today. He confronts human problems by transforming them to superhuman spectacles in order to enhance their impact on the audience. I return to this claim in more detail in Chapters Six and Seven.

Members of the 'herd' in the present age approach history and philosophy from a purely utilitarian perspective; they look only at its value for future survival. They delude themselves by thinking that this is ensured by maintaining the hedges around their present happiness. Nietzsche argues that the scholars of his day are no different in this respect; the future of philosophy is in a precarious state because of their 'indolence':

Philosophy is in a similar situation: all most people want to learn from it is a rough - very rough! - understanding of the world, so as then to accommodate themselves to the world. And even its noblest representatives emphasize so strongly its power to soothe and console that the indolent and those who long for rest must think they are seeking the same thing philosophy is seeking.⁵⁵

⁵³*Untimely Meditations* II: especially 2,3, and 7.

⁵⁴*Ibid.* IV: 3.

⁵⁵*Ibid.*

Nietzsche's claim to the parlous condition of philosophy is even more true today. Some academic philosophers do not even pretend that there is a connection between their technical analytic endeavor and an understanding of the world. They no longer have a need to accommodate themselves into the world, but pride themselves on their detachment from it. Those outside the academy and even academics in other disciplines regard philosophy as an esoteric, peripheral activity whose time has passed.⁵⁶ If they seek consolation or rest, they most likely seek it in sociology or psychology rather than in philosophy. Nietzsche's ideas for a profound philosophy of the future have been abandoned in the pursuit for secure careers and easy lives.

So far the terms 'waiting', 'progress' and 'expectations' have been used in relation to the future; all of them indicate that there are concrete goals that need to be set. Nietzsche says that many individuals doing philosophy have as their goal only rest and consolation and not intellectual searching of the right kind. What is the right kind of search that philosophers should be concerned with? In *Untimely Meditations* Nietzsche gives an answer which highlights why the indolent are wrong in their search for rest:

To me, on the other hand, the most vital of questions for philosophy appears to be to what extent the character of the world is unalterable: so as, once this question has been answered, to set about *improving that part of it recognised as alterable* with the most ruthless courage. True philosophers themselves teach this lesson, through the fact that they have worked to improve the very much alterable judgements of mankind and have not kept their wisdom to themselves.⁵⁷

What exactly is Nietzsche's answer to the question of which features of the world are alterable and which ones are not? In the above, he says that mankind's judgements are alterable, but he does not give any details regarding which judgements and in which ways they need to be altered. But it is clear in his writings that he regards judgements that are motivated by our desire for permanence in the world as erroneous, as are judgements advocating absolute standards of good and evil such as those of Christianity. So the goal of Zarathustra is to improve the alterable judgements of mankind:

⁵⁶ A notable exception to this is Finland where high schools teach philosophy as an integral part of the curriculum, and where the professor of practical philosophy is approached by the media for his views on current issues such as the development of the Helsinki foreshore. In other words, philosophy is regarded as an intrinsic aspect of life.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

The present and the past upon the earth - alas! my friends - that is *my* most intolerable burden; and I should not know how to live, if I were not a seer of that which must come. A seer, a willer, a creator, a future itself and a bridge to the future - and alas, also like a cripple upon this bridge: Zarathustra is all this.⁵⁸

There are, however, particular judgements referred to by Nietzsche that apply only to some members of the human race, at certain historical epochs. He has given us the example of the Dionysian artist as someone who comes as close to the ideal as is humanly possible. He describes the special qualities of actual individuals of the past in the following way:

In all the more profound and comprehensive men of this century the general tendency of the mysterious workings of their souls has really been to prepare the way to this new synthesis and to anticipate experimentally the European of the future: ... I think of men such as Napoleon, Goethe, Beethoven, Stendhal, Heinrich Heine, Schopenhauer; I must not be blamed if I also include Richard Wagner among them.⁵⁹

Which aspects of these men attracted Nietzsche's attention enough for him to give them as examples of profoundness and comprehensiveness, the kinds of aspects which would also be possessed by the Superman? Although they represent different fields of artistic and human endeavour, it can be said that they were all responsible for creating something new and this creation was made possible by their ability to see this world differently from those around them. They had visions of what might be politically or artistically possible that far exceeded the perspectives of their contemporaries; one need only think of the size and scope of Wagner's operas or Napoleon's designs for Europe. The influence on these visions of the different types of history and their uses for life is easy to see; Napoleon can be seen as a new Caesar who had learnt his lessons from the Roman empire; if greatness of that kind had once existed he was justified in his optimism that it may exist again.

To return to the metaphor of hedges again, the difference between the waiting of these men and that of the shopkeepers and tax-collectors is that whereas the latter have only a limited vision of what the future may bring and therefore they only give themselves very restricted choices in relation to this future, the former have the capacity to adopt the widest possible perspective on the future because of their acquaintance with the past. They are also selective in what they choose from it, but their selectivity has a different foundation. They select those things that enhance their will to power;

⁵⁸*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 20.

⁵⁹*Beyond Good and Evil* 256.

this may be in terms of increased knowledge or added aesthetic enjoyment. It may also mean risk-taking, the like of which the mediocre members of the herd are incapable.

The levelling tendencies of contemporary Western societies with their emphasis on homogeneous consumerism, for instance, pose different challenges to different individuals. The 'herd' feel great pressure to conform to fashions and popular opinions. For some individuals, however, these pressures are to be resisted, they can be the spurs to original philosophical thinking in the search for alternatives. The environmental ethicist's concern with developing a different conception of man's relationship with nature is a good example of this - and evidence that philosophy is not in as terminal a condition as implied earlier. There are, then, exceptions to the herd mentality of the present age:

On one important level, therefore, the notion of the *übermensch* serves to denote the future readers of Nietzsche who have acquired the art of interpretation and who affirm 'who' they are by affirming 'what' they are: complex, multiple, in tension, paradoxical, playful, contradictory and different. Now we must become these that we are by undergoing the experience of the 'moment' and out of it returning 'newborn'.⁶⁰

Rosen agrees with Ansell-Pearson that Nietzsche addressed *Zarathustra* to future readers who would share his 'own loneliness and longing for spiritual and intellectual companions'.⁶¹ Like Ansell-Pearson, Rosen argues further that Nietzsche wanted to attract as wide an audience as possible because he desired the 'transformation of mankind'⁶² rather than just wanting to appeal to a limited number of intellectual disciples:

It (*Zarathustra*) is designed to attract the attention of as large an audience as possible among those intellectuals and aesthetes, romantics, idealists, and so on who are dissatisfied with the vulgarity of late-modern European *Bildung*. But it is also addressed to the quasi-religious, to those who are dissatisfied with life as such, who long for transcendence but lack the power to believe in the gods of traditional religion.⁶³

Both Rosen and Ansell-Pearson argue that it is possible for numerous individuals to meet some criteria of Supermen. They focus on the readers who can be influenced by the strength of Nietzsche's arguments against old values. These readers search for new values to replace redundant

⁶⁰ Ansell-Pearson, 'Who is the *übermensch*?', p. 330.

⁶¹ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

religious and moral values because they have come to see, like Nietzsche, that these do not have anything to offer them. In other words, the 'idealist and aesthete' may be more critical than the average person who wants to cling to old values and who fears their demise; they recognise that there is a problem with prevailing values, unlike their less intellectual counterparts.

But Rosen's statement about those individuals who are dissatisfied with life and who 'lack the power' to believe in traditional religions seems to contradict Nietzsche's views. After all, he argues that Christianity attracts the weak, the slaves, precisely those who are powerless; they need to be sustained by faith in an omnipotent, omniscient God. Their dissatisfaction with life can be ameliorated by the alternative of another world of heavenly rewards. The individuals who lack power cannot be the creators of new values, therefore they cannot be Supermen. Those who are dissatisfied with this world and everything in it cannot affirm this world to the highest degree of affirming eternal recurrence; this also makes them inferior to Supermen. In other words, they do not have a robust enough self-concept to be truly exceptional and original in the sense required by Nietzsche. These readers referred to by Rosen therefore do not operate from the perspective of superfluity or overflowing, they only seek for alternative values created by someone else to replace the traditional ones. In other words, they are looking to fill a vacuum resulting from the removal of one set of unsatisfactory values by the substitution of others that will prove just as deficient:

But they [the scholars] sit cool in the cool shade: they want to be mere spectators in everything and they take care not to sit where the sun burns upon the steps. Like those who stand in the street and stare at people passing by, so too they wait and stare at thoughts that others have thought.⁶⁴

The exceptional individual is strong enough to wait in solitude thinking his own thoughts, even those that take him to the edge of the abyss. For him the future is a challenge to be met, not a phase of time separate from the past nor the present. It is there to be shaped by the power of original thoughts and actions; it is not to be evaded in inactivity or futile waiting for some utopia that cannot be realised.

⁶⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 16.

Conclusion

I have argued that Nietzsche's Superman ideal does not solve the human value crisis which he regards as the most serious problem of the present and the future. I have argued that the solution must arise from those humans who have been confronted by this crisis as a lived experience. For this reason, their new values for the future must arise from this, rather than from the intellectual contemplation of the doctrine of eternal recurrence in the abstract. If this is the case, then it must be possible for some ordinary individuals to affirm time's passing and the future as the products of their contemporary environments. What leads some to despair, can stimulate others to Dionysian creativity. I have argued that the latter relates to a critical sense of connectedness with what is best in history and philosophy, and that despair is the result of a lack of understanding and detachment from one's intellectual heritage.

Rosen identifies the same paradox earlier highlighted by Ansell-Pearson; Nietzsche desires the transformation of all humanity and therefore he wants to address his message to as many people as possible. At the same time he recognises that a transformation on a large scale is not possible, that there are only a few true philosophers among the many philosophical labourers.

Nietzsche's desire for a fundamental transformation on an individual level raises another problem already alluded to in relation to self-development. If Nietzsche's exceptional individual possesses an unchanging inner core that appears unaffected, then what is there to be changed or developed in such an individual? So far it has been argued that the exceptional individual with his superior capacities can, according to Nietzsche, transform the way that ordinary individuals see the world. This seems to be the case at least in relation to the artistic natures whose contribution to the world he values so highly. The Dionysian will to power of a Shakespeare or a Goethe did not only enhance the feeling of strength of these authors, it enhanced the feeling of power of those receptive to their ideas.

In the future envisioned by Nietzsche, then, there will be three kinds of individuals. There will be those unique beings, who will follow in the footsteps of the great writers and philosophers. There will be those who have the capacity to receive their ideas. Finally, there will always be the

majority who are both unwilling and unable to share in the unique ideas of those individuals on whose shoulders the responsibility for transformations is placed.

Nietzsche argues in many instances, however, that the 'self' or the 'ego' does not exist. We merely use these terms to denote our ignorance and in order to survive in the world. These conflicting claims regarding the non-existence of the 'self' and Nietzsche's exhortations for self-development are investigated further in the following chapter.

Chapter Four

Individual Development in Time

Introduction

In the preceding chapters I have referred to Nietzsche's views on the development of the self in time; he emphasizes the growth of the exceptional self while denying any teleology. *Zarathustra* has been characterised as a *Bildungsroman* by some commentators.¹ While it is true that Zarathustra develops in the course of the narrative, he develops from a starting point different to, for instance, Goethe's *Young Werther*. The latter develops from youth to adulthood; Zarathustra is an adult with intellectual maturity from page one:

Behold! I am weary of my wisdom, like a bee that has gathered too much honey;
I need hands outstretched to take it. I should like to give it away and distribute
it, until the wise among men have again become happy in their folly and the
poor happy in their wealth.²

Zarathustra, however, lacks the skills of communication with other human beings; he must develop this in the course of the narrative. This lack of connection with others underlines the problem identified in the previous chapters; that of the relationship of the individual to the society in Nietzsche's thought. The aspect of this that will be highlighted in this chapter is how the individual's sense of 'self' is derived from those around him. If Nietzsche, however, argues that there is no 'self' as a substratum on which layers of knowledge and experiences are accumulated; if there is no 'self' of Zarathustra, then what is it that develops?

In Chapter One I attributed the individual's resentment towards time's passing to the irredeemability of the past. In Chapter Three I showed how Nietzsche values the exceptional individual more than the ordinary because of the former's superior will, because of his unshakeable inner core. There is, according to Nietzsche, a difference between a substratum for development and the inner core that is enhanced through specific growth. The latter as affirmative power is an ongoing process during which the levels of power constantly fluctuate. It can also be transformed from a positive to negative power; I discuss the case of Wagner as an example of this in section two. In other words, the amount of power possessed by the individual attracts

¹ Higgins, *op. cit.*, pp. 100-2, 220-21. Young (following Higgins), *op. cit.* p. 99.

² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 1.

more power to itself resulting in both further physical and intellectual growth. Zarathustra has always possessed this core power; it enables him to overcome his resentment of the small man and the last man. Nietzsche's Superman, at least in the beginning of the narrative, is the epitome of this concentration of superior power.

The ideal of a superior being distinct from human beings, however, cannot furnish a solution to the value crisis experienced by ordinary individuals. If Nietzsche insists that a solution must be found, then this must be related to the development of ordinary individuals in particular ways. It cannot come from extraneous sources, because in this case people would not be challenged in such a way that their attitudes to time and the problems of existence would be modified for the better. This can only happen through a creative response to the challenges posed by time's passing. Individuals must be able to live fully in the moment and they must shape the future by their positive attitudes to the past and the present.

The account of the development of the self over time as a transformation from an inferior to a superior state of being would not pose a problem to a Platonist who would ascribe it to the ever clearer apprehension of the Forms. Nietzsche, however, attacks teleological conceptions of the self. He attacks, for instance, the dualist, rationalist, empiricist, romantic, moral and religious conceptions of the self. At the same time he appears to endorse others at least as worthy of consideration; these others may be characterised as naturalistic conceptions of the self. These must develop into unique modes of being in time in individual ways, not according to some preordained pattern or Form.

For Nietzsche, there is no single univocal concept of the 'self' that he either attacks in some places or defends in others. He argues that the moral and religious conceptions of the self, for instance, erroneously imply something that is unchanging through time. They posit a 'substance' that possesses some essential, unalterable qualities regardless of the kinds of experiences it is subjected to. Nietzsche's criticism of the erroneous concepts of 'self' and the alternatives he posits are discussed in the first section of this chapter.

In contrast to the erroneous concept of the 'self' that has arisen as a result of a desire for permanence, Nietzsche portrays the 'self' of the exceptional individual. This concept, or rather, plural conceptions of different individuals acknowledge the transience and fluidity of

experiences. There is no 'self' as the neutral 'substratum' which various events pass by without making any fundamental impact on it. The 'self' is made up of processes of constant change.

Nietzsche emphasizes the necessity of transformation of those attitudes that deny life, including human life in the form of the physical body. From this it may be concluded that he argues for the primacy of the body, or even that he is a materialist. The possibility that the 'self' is the same as the body is investigated in section four. I draw the conclusion that this is not Nietzsche's intention. He denies that the 'mind' and 'body' are separable, and particularly that the 'self' can be 'spiritually' developed by despising the physical body. He claims in *Zarathustra* that precisely because the soul dies before the body one should not fear death.³ These two claims appear incompatible, but this not is the case. Nietzsche simply uses the word 'soul' in the latter instance in order to emphasize that nothing of the individual survives death. There is no other world for the soul to escape to nor to dwell in. There are no developmental goals in this sense; the cultivation of the spirit is not rewarded with a future eternal life. What he deems important is the process of continuous development from moment to moment according to an existential imperative. Personal identity, according to Nietzsche, then, is not linked to the existence of a 'mind'. Neither can it originate in the transient body. It must also be emphasized that his claims do not amount to anything like Spinozistic double-aspect monism either.

Nietzsche gives two main reasons for the inseparability of mind and body. One is that if everything is in a state of flux, mind and body cannot be stable entities to which unchanging qualities can be attributed. The second reason is connected with the first; in a world of change mind and body are arbitrary labels for continuing processes with no beginning or end.

Nietzsche argues, however, for the development of the 'self' and exhorts individuals to become 'who they are'. This argument appears to take the following form: if an essential 'self' existed, a change in values and attitudes over time would not be possible. Any transformation must be the result of understanding the true nature of the world as one of 'becoming', not of 'being'. Paradoxically, those 'selves' that he regards as the strongest are also those that are most at one with the flux. They are the most able to celebrate temporality; their personal identity is at the same time both dissolved because of impermanence and enhanced by it. Only change and

³ *Ibid.*, Prologue 6.

impermanence affords man those experiences that make him who he is. For Nietzsche, the highest expression of this individuality in unity with the environment is the Dionysian artist:

The artist has already abandoned his subjectivity in the Dionysiac process: the image that now reveals to him his unity with the heart of the world is a dream scene symbolizing the primal contradiction and primal suffering, as well as the primal delight in illusion. The 'I' of the lyric poet therefore sounds from the very depths of being: his 'subjectivity' in the sense used by modern aestheticians is a falsehood.⁴

Those 'selves' that Nietzsche most approves of have the least in common with the static 'selves' of the rationalists, moralists and the aestheticians. They are falsely portrayed as 'pure knowing subjects' or 'pure moral agents' that are constituted by their knowledge or moral values. To such selves is erroneously attributed a permanent foundation on which the facts and values solidify as 'images and concepts'.⁵ Nietzsche's exceptional individuals with no fundamental self cannot be separated from the world by the arbitrary use of concepts. What sets them apart from the rationalists and moralists is precisely their understanding of the illusory nature of the 'self'; they are one with the 'moving centre of the world'.⁶

In this chapter I outline Nietzsche's arguments against many conventional conceptions of the self which, according to him, reflect negative attitudes to time. Human beings, for instance, postulate an eternal soul in order to overcome their transience. In spite of Nietzsche's arguments against the 'self' of dualists, rationalists, empiricists, moralists and the religious, I conclude that for him the 'self' of the exceptional individual exists precisely because of the way it opposes the other conceptions. It is not an invention to ward off transience, it is about a particular, affirmative way of being in time.

Nietzsche's idea of an exceptional individual with a robust self-concept, or his rejection of the notion of a substantial self, does not contradict his arguments against the inseparability of mind and body. A strong individual is someone who can accept the impermanence of the world and himself, and who does not need to erect boundaries between himself and chaos. Instead, he has a 'fluid self' that can make a synthesis between the 'internal' and the 'external' without having to rely on rigid categories used by ordinary individuals to make sense of the world.

This alternative conception of a 'self' in unity with time and environment, however, raises the same problem as the Superman ideal. Does it remain a merely hypothetical alternative to the

⁴ *The Birth of Tragedy* 5.

⁵ *Ibid.*

value crisis in the real world and as such has no practical importance? The answer to this question is that it provides several guideposts to direct those who want to create their own values. To propose anything more finite would be to go counter to the spirit of Nietzsche; just as he has his way, the reader must find his or her own by a critical appraisal of these guideposts.

Conceptions of the ‘Self’ Attacked and Defended by Nietzsche

Nietzsche employs a cluster of terms to refer to various conceptions of the ‘self’. They include ‘spirit’, ‘ego’, the ‘I’, ‘subject’, ‘mind’, individual’, ‘soul’ and so on. Some of these terms have more than one sense for Nietzsche. There are, for instance, good and bad senses of ‘spirit’. The variety of terms used by Nietzsche in different contexts are both intertwined and overlapping. It is, however, possible to distinguish between two different senses in which Nietzsche uses them. On the one hand he uses them in a descriptive sense, which articulates what is common to all those things that formally qualify as being selves. This is the case especially in the early parts of the narrative and until the end of Part Two, which marks a turning point in Zarathustra’s development. On the other hand he uses the same terms in an evaluative sense, which articulates an ideal of what the highest level that the self can attain to is. This the case particularly in Part Three of *Zarathustra*. This movement from the descriptive to the evaluative can also be characterised as a shift of focus from the abstract discussion of types to the more affective portrayal of an individual.

When individuals refer to themselves by the first-person pronoun, they take it for granted that their description refers to a real entity with clearly defined characteristics with which they are familiar. ‘I’ is used to denote the ‘self’ of whose personal identity there is not the least doubt: ‘I think, therefore I am’. In other words, I regard myself as unique because I think my own thoughts and because I know myself like no one else can. I have been the same person in the past as I am today and I will remain the same in the future.

Nietzsche, however, argues that the concept of ‘self’ is an illusion and that it is only an erroneous perspective on a world of chaos and flux. People, according to him, have adopted this perspective in an attempt to make order out of chaos. His claim, that people assign names to entities of which they lack understanding, challenges commonly held assumptions regarding the acquisition of knowledge. Many would argue that the larger the vocabulary of an individual, the

⁶ *Ibid.*

more comprehensive his or her knowledge of the world and the entities in it. To be able to use the word 'suffer' appropriately implies, for instance, that one is aware of what it means to suffer. One would, moreover, be familiar with the pleasant feelings that prevail in the absence of suffering. The empiricists, for instance, would argue that we learn the use of words both through experience and by our ability to infer from it; thus we increase our knowledge of the world even further.

Nietzsche argues that the words used to denote the 'self' give us the illusion of knowledge of something 'real' in the world. They also fix the 'real' entities into something permanent; as such, the words become the signifiers of unalterable 'truths'. In this way an illusion is added onto an illusion and consequently, the more we think we know, the less we actually understand about the 'self' and its place in the world of change. In other words, Nietzsche argues that there is no permanent, true 'self' as constituted by one's knowledge.

Nietzsche argues that people have come to believe in a 'self' because it serves its purpose as a useful conceptual tool. This argument reinforces his claim that the 'self' cannot be something knowable, that it is merely something that can be linguistically demarcated for the sake of expediency: 'Man himself must first of all have become *calculable, regular, necessary*, even in his own image of himself, if he is to be able to stand security *for his own future ...*'⁷

The postulation of a 'self' provides man with a continuous personal identity in time. But it is not, according to Nietzsche, a 'substance', the existence of which we can assume as 'true *a priori*'.⁸ In other words, there cannot be a 'self' as something separate from the totality of one's life experiences, needs, desires, beliefs, pains, pleasures, memories, thoughts, perceptions, hopes, defeats, triumphs, ambitions, regrets and so on. The 'self' is not an underlying substratum to which all of the above human experiences adhere to varying degrees and from which they can be separated at will. On the contrary, they are what loosely constitute a constantly changing 'individual' as something inseparable from the environment. Nietzsche's discussion of the case of Wagner illustrates his views on the self in time particularly well.

⁷*Genealogy of Morals* II: 1.

⁸*Ibid.*

The Case of Wagner

Nietzsche provides answers to the question of personal identity in time in his references to Wagner. These demonstrate the consistency of his views regarding the non-existence of any essential 'self'. These statements emphasize the composer's close connection to nature. They therefore make the case for the adoption of more naturalistic values by the exceptional individual. This is also one of the strongest themes in *Zarathustra*, underlined by Nietzsche's use of metaphors from nature.

The naturalistic values do not originate in illusory metaphysical entities such as God. They are therefore evidence of the development of a 'self' that is without boundaries in the following senses. The exceptional individual's values arise from nature, he is will to power:

Wagner's music as a whole is an image of the world as it was understood by the great Ephesian philosopher [Heraclitus]: a harmony produced by conflict, the unity of justice and enmity. I wonder at the fact that it is possible to calculate the grand course of a total passion out of a multiplicity of individual passions each heading in a different direction: that such a thing is possible I see demonstrated by each individual act of a Wagnerian drama, which narrates the personal history of various individuals together with a general history of all of them.⁹

In this passage Nietzsche juxtaposes several important concepts in order to highlight the existence of the individual as a piece of time. That this is also the only passage in which he compares the work of Wagner and Heraclitus gives it added significance. It was after all Heraclitus who referred to time as the child playing with dice; Wagner's compositions capture some of the same attitude to time as something circular rather than linear. Life and death in them are woven into 'a harmony produced by conflict', they are never linear narratives of individual lives. They are, as Nietzsche argues, combinations of the personal and the general. As such they exemplify what Nietzsche regards as the correct sense of history; nothing is venerated for its own sake. Rather, some aspects of the past are highlighted because they are worth it. These are symbolized in the passionate individuals who can provide the most passionate, Dionysian role models to the audience. Those appreciative art lovers who really listen to Wagner's operas live in the moment of awesome splendor created by the composer; their individual passions become one with the general passion for living. In other words, they lose all sense of the self as a spectator.

⁹ *Untimely Meditations* IV: 9.

Nietzsche's second, significant reference to the relation of the individual to time and to the values that are shaped by particular attitudes to time relate to 'the unity of justice and enmity'. The moral terms of this statement seem strange coming from someone who wants to get 'beyond good and evil' and who investigates the dubious genealogy of morals. His concept of 'justice' cannot refer to the treatment of equals equally; he certainly does not wish that time should have any levelling effect on individuals and their values, on the contrary. He does not argue that enmity should be erased from the face of the earth but that it should be united with justice.

Wagner's ultimate failure can be explained in relation to the self in time and the values it holds. I think that it is plausible to argue that Wagner lost his Dionysian passion, he became more aware of himself as a 'self' and how he was perceived in the eyes of the others. In other words, he lost his status as the exceptional individual not concerned with the opinions of others and became one of the herd desperate to please it and so to belong to it. His will to power was gradually dispersed and attenuated because his concerns became those of the herd; its affirmative qualities were replaced by herd tendencies. This negative development is an example of conflict experienced by members of the herd that leads to disharmony. They must suppress any individual values in order to comfortably identify with the values of those around them. Nietzsche argues that in all individuals the three types of moralities, master, slave and herd, co-exist; with time's passage the balance of these can fluctuate.

Wagner's gradual deterioration as a Dionysian artist can be explained in the following terms. Nietzsche argues that we derive the knowledge of ourselves as agents:

From the realm of the celebrated 'inner facts', none of which has up till now been shown to be factual. ... Of these three 'inner facts' through which causality seemed to be guaranteed the first and most convincing was that of will as cause; the conception of a consciousness ('mind') as a cause and later still that of the ego (the 'subject') as a cause are merely after-products ... The inner world is full of phantoms and false lights: the will is one of them.¹⁰

Nietzsche argues that there is no substantial 'self' capable of separation from the body. A human being cannot be understood as two separable 'worlds', the inner and the outer. They cannot be neatly delineated in a Cartesian sense; there is no inner world the existence of which can guarantee the existence of the 'self' as a pure knowing subject capable of unconditioned knowing. For Nietzsche, knowledge is only possible as the result of interaction between the

¹⁰ *Twilight of the Idols* VI: 3.

world and the individual. He maintains that no distinct boundaries separate them. The 'self' cannot be constituted by one's consciousness of himself either. As will be shown later, what is considered as the 'self' would exist as we 'know' it even if there existed no such entity as 'consciousness'.

Nietzsche's discussion of the case of Wagner as the ultimately failed Dionysian hero illustrates both his descriptive and evaluative use of the terms referring to the 'self'. The second, evaluative sense used by Nietzsche to refer to the 'self', however, appears to pose problems for a consistent interpretation of his work on questions regarding selfhood. By his emphasis on the powerful 'selves' of superior individuals, he seems to contradict the arguments for the non-existence of the 'self' as the substratum of all experiences outlined above. Many of his writings, after all, deal with descriptions of the characteristics of the exceptional individuals who are differently constituted from the multitude.

The Personal Identity of Zarathustra and Other Heroes

Nietzsche illustrates the confusion surrounding personal identity in time in one of the early discourses of *Zarathustra*. Sailors off Blissful Islands where Zarathustra is living see him flying through the air 'like a shadow'.¹¹ The narrative then proceeds like the New Testament stories of Jesus Christ. The devil carries Zarathustra off to the desert where he remains for five days and has discussions with the 'fire-dog'.¹² This conversation leads Zarathustra to conclude that he has 'seen truth naked, truly!'¹³ This truth relates to the role played by the church and the state in the shaping of the personal identity of the individual; these institutions hold no importance for him because they are 'weak with age and virtue'.¹⁴ Nietzsche, then, overturns the conventional thinking according to which age and virtue enhance the importance not only of institutions but of an individual. He does not consider this as worthwhile growth; the identification of oneself with arbitrary conventions and the value derived from these are mere hypocrisy. In other words, these are the values of the herd whose members lack any individuality. They focus on 'stable' institutions in their effort to maintain the *status quo*. In contrast to these 'Infernal-racket[s]', 'the

¹¹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 18.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

inventors of new values' proceed '*inaudibly*'.¹⁵ By inaudible progress Nietzsche means that the inventors do not have to explain nor justify themselves to the members of the herd. Neither do they need to attract attention to their work nor seek the approval of their inferiors for it.

In spite of his apprehension of some truths about the relation of the individual to institutions, Zarathustra questions the existence of his own self in the end of the discourse. If the man seen flying through the air was truly Zarathustra, then the individual contemplating him may be nothing more than a 'ghost'.¹⁶ Five days absence has dislocated his sense of both time and space, he is left wondering what to make of it all.

The following interpretation of the discourse on Zarathustra's identity is more plausible. Nietzsche argues that the 'self' is no more permanent nor tangible than that of the ghost or the shadow. It cannot be bolstered by external means such as joining a group or an institution. Nor can it be enhanced by making a lot of noise about it; it is as strong as the positive values it is able to create from within, from the 'invulnerable, unburiable inner core'. It is important to note that Nietzsche never uses the words 'self' or 'soul' to relate the encounter of Zarathustra with the fire-dog.

Napoleon, 'who remained throughout one of [Nietzsche's] greatest heroes',¹⁷ rises above the masses to a position of command because his 'soul' knows no boundaries. He can engage with the world of politics and war because he has no 'self' separate from it. He was able to accomplish most and to stamp himself on history by not sparing himself: 'the history of the effect of Napoleon is almost the history of the higher happiness this entire century has attained in its most valuable men and moments'.¹⁸

Nietzsche's appeal to the individual qualities of Napoleon are an example of his use of the terms 'self' and 'soul' both in their descriptive and evaluative senses. Napoleon represents a particular type of man, of which Caesare Borgia would be another example. In both the will to power appears to have no bounds, they variously concentrate it and expend it. They are however, able to expand beyond mere types because of their uniqueness; they are at the same time a symbol and an individual.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Nehamas, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

¹⁸ *Beyond Good and Evil* 199.

It is patently incorrect to characterize Napoleon's presence on the European stage as inaudible in the ordinary sense of him attracting no attention. It is, however, accurate to say that his progress was inaudible in Nietzsche's terms. He stood above the church and the state without having to proclaim his uniqueness at every turn; his actions spoke louder than his words. His early victories, particularly during his Italian campaigns, as well as his loss of the battle of Waterloo are without a doubt turning points in European history; they are moments with a depth not achieved by many others. In this sense he is like the Dionysian artist with his individuality united with time; he creates history as new values as well as being an integral part of it. He is both a creator and destroyer; on the one hand he respects nothing just because of its age, on the other he removes works of art from Italy to France because he values them.¹⁹ It is also interesting to note the many works of art for which he has been an inspiration. He is an example of the will to power in all its diverse forms, for instance, of the ability of power to concentrate more power to itself: 'his countenance assumed a divine expression. In such moments the man was more than man'.²⁰

Apart from the lack of boundaries between the 'soul' of Napoleon and its environment, it is distinguished from the enduring, 'pure soul' of the dissembling Romantics because of its multifariousness:

Like a last signpost to the *other* path, Napoleon appeared, the most isolated and late-born man there has ever been, and in him the problem of the *noble ideal as such* made flesh—one might well ponder *what* kind of problem it is: Napoleon, this synthesis of the *inhuman* and *superhuman*.²¹

Nietzsche emphasizes the homogeneity of the members of the 'herd'. Here it can be seen that his criticism of conformity extends to the 'souls' of the herd and is contrasted to the 'soul' of the exceptional individual. The latter is distinguished by his unique 'becoming' which is likely to attract the disapprobation of the multitudes. He is isolated from society because his ways of living exceed the boundaries of 'human' as it is conventionally defined.

¹⁹ In retrospect, however, his judgements regarding the value of artworks and his treatment of them has been deemed mistaken. His burning down of the *Bucentaur* when he took possession of Venice in 1797 may be an expression of a naked will to power, but has nothing of Dionysian artistry about it. Similarly, his stealing of the iron horses of St. Mark's Cathedral was an act of vandalism, rather than of art appreciation. Napoleon's impact on Italian art is detailed in Joseph Fattorusso(ed.), *The Wonders of Italy*, 10th ed., Florence: Medici, 1937, pp. 88-192.

²⁰ Augustus J.C. Hare, *Days Near Paris*, New York: Routledge, 1888, p. 85.

²¹ *On The Genealogy of Morals* I: 16.

The other terms Nietzsche uses to evaluate the exceptional 'self' possessed of passion and overflowing energy are the 'will' and the 'spirit':

A great man - a man whom nature has constructed and invented in the grand style - what is he? ... he has the ability to extend his will across great stretches of his life and to despise and reject everything petty about him... He rather lies than tells the truth: it requires more spirit and *will*. There is a solitude within him that is inaccessible to praise or blame, his own justice that is beyond appeal.²²

Nietzsche argues for the existence of this exceptional, solitary 'self' as the initiator of events and as the source of value in the world. He also seems to argue, contrary to my claims above, that the individual with more spirit and will is someone detached from his environment, not someone to whom boundaries do not exist. There are two significant ideas in this passage. Nietzsche raises the idea of individual justice that is beyond the herd morality's concepts of praise and blame. This individual, then, is detached in the sense of not worrying about the opinions of the herd. He is not bound by Kant's categorical imperative against lying, for him there are no extrinsic rules of reason.

Detachment and involvement in the world are not mutually exclusive concepts. They simply mean that in order to interact with the world in the manner that most enhances his will to power, the exceptional individual has on occasions to view it from a detached perspective. Even if Nietzsche demands that the 'great man' create his own values, he does not claim that this man has created *himself* as the exceptional individual. This has been done by nature; it has 'constructed and invented' this man, just as it has shaped and arranged the constituents of every other being in the world. In the case of man, the will to power is concentrated in a higher degree in the 'great man' in comparison with his contemporaries. In other words, he is the product of biology. In this sense man is no different from any other species on earth; he still retains his animality. On this account his personal identity has two sources. First, if man is different from animals only in degree rather in kind, then his sense of self could result from his understanding of his body. Some of Nietzsche's claims about the primacy of the body lend credence to this interpretation. As will be seen in the next section, Nietzsche regards appeals to the self-consciousness of humans as futile. He argues that we act and live in exactly the same way without its presence; it is over-rated and unnecessary.

²²*The Will to Power* 962.

Secondly, man's sense of 'self' may plausibly be interpreted as the result of his close relationship with his environment. The example of the Dionysian artist has already been quoted. There is no independent 'self' but, paradoxically, the better the individual is merged with the flux of 'becoming' the more able he is to enhance his individuality to stand out from the herd. His inner core, however, must be impervious to the masses. It should not be like that of Wagner, who caved in to the opinions of the herd. If these are part of the flux of becoming, then it could be argued that there is nothing wrong with immersing oneself in them. Nietzsche's counterargument would relate to the order of rank: it makes no sense to dissipate one's will to power in search of mediocrity when one can strive for excellence.

In spite of some of Nietzsche's claims about the primacy of the body, it must be noted that nowhere in the narrative of *Zarathustra* is the protagonist described in terms of his bodily size or looks. Why, then, does Nietzsche focus on the importance of the body in this text and in his other works? I assess the answers to this question below.

Nietzsche's Arguments For and Against The Body as The 'Self'

Some of the problems of personal identity related to a conception of non-material 'soul', 'will' or 'spirit' have been outlined above. In many places Nietzsche argues that these terms are used by people simply in order to label the functions of the body. It is important to note that he approves of this practice because it is nothing more than shorthand for the convenience of communication, it does not necessarily entail any ontological commitments. It is less erroneous than the attribution of metaphysical entities to the physical. The difference is that in the latter case the entities become real for the users of language.

Nietzsche claims that those who have a more 'enlightened' way of looking at the world, can recognise that the 'self' is only an illusion, that it is only a projection of the body:

'I am body and soul' - so speaks the child. And why should one not speak like children?

But the awakened, enlightened man says: I am body entirely, and nothing else beside; and soul is only a word for something in the body.

The body is a great intelligence, a multiplicity with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a herdsman.

Your little intelligence, my brother, which you call 'spirit', is also an instrument of your body, a little instrument and toy of your great intelligence.

You say 'I' and you are proud of this word. But greater than this - although you will not believe in it - is your body and its great intelligence, which does not say 'I' but performs 'I'.²³

Zarathustra addresses his speech to the despisers of the body. Who are they? They are religious people such as the Christian ascetics and also scholars such as the philosophers who place more value on the mind than the body. They would use the mind as a guide to what Nietzsche criticizes as illusory: notions about the 'self' as something capable of separation from the body. They consider the animality and physicality of the body as a hindrance to this 'higher' understanding of reality.

Nietzsche argues that people's way of dividing things in the world into material and spiritual is an erroneous perspective; the mind-body distinction is one example of this erroneous perspective. Neither does he accept the materialist explanation of the body as any more plausible than the dualist account. In the latter, 'the body is spirited away'; the functions of it are explained in terms of the functions of the mind, which takes priority over it. In the case of materialism, 'it [the body] is realised and conceptualized and objectivized'.²⁴ The functions of the mind and all expressions of the 'spiritual' are explained in terms of neurobiological reactions. In other words, the dualist accounts emphasize the immeasurability and complexity of the mind-body relationship, whereas the materialist accounts aim for measurability and simplification. Neither account can capture the richness of the meaning of human existence in time.

If we talk about the height of an individual, for instance, we can only do so either by comparison with other people or in terms of actual measurements. We cannot express it in terms that are specific to that particular individual. We fail to account for the multiplicity of the numerous bodies that do not fit within the parameters of 'body' as a hypothetical entity. All we can do is to set up further categories, such as male/female, young/old, healthy/sick, to describe these bodies in more detail. What we cannot do is to describe one individual in a way that takes into account everything that makes him what he is. We must ignore the personally most significant features of him as *himself* in order to furnish an explanation that conforms to conventional patterns of description:

²³Thus Spoke Zarathustra I: 4.

²⁴ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

Neither of the two explanations of organic life has yet succeeded: neither the one that proceeds from mechanics *nor the one* that proceeds from the spirit. I stress *this last point*. The split is more superficial than we think. The organism is governed in such a way that the mechanical world, *as well as* the spiritual world, can provide only a symbolical explanation.²⁵

Nietzsche's claim regarding the failure of both 'mechanistic' and 'spiritual' explanations reinforces the point already made about the understanding of 'self'. He emphasizes again the importance of an explanation; human beings possess a 'will to knowledge' that demands satisfaction. This will, as stated earlier, is exhibited in varying degrees in different individuals. Those explanations that he considers defective are lauded as most acceptable by those whose purposes they serve. Thus the religious focus on 'spiritual' explanations that focus on the eternal life of the soul and which 'despise the body'. The materialists, in contrast, search for explanations in terms of physiology to support their own world-view. Nietzsche objects to these explanations because of their poverty, they do not help people to understand the world any better; they merely express the limits of the materialists' ignorance. Characteristic of both factions is the narrowness of their perspectives, anything more complex would be a threat to 'selves' that want to simplify and schematize the world according to their fears and desires.

Nietzsche's references to the unsatisfactory explanations of individual existence so far imply that more satisfactory interpretations of it are both desirable and possible. He cannot, however, claim that the best perspectives are those that come closer to uncovering the substratum to which individual qualities adhere. Neither can he argue that there is only one, best explanation that holds for all times. If everything is in a process of constant change, then explanations must change accordingly. The interpretations, after all, depend on the impermanence of the things to be explained and of the 'selves' doing the explaining.

Nietzsche appears to argue, however, that a unique comprehension of human existence is possible for the exceptional individuals who possess qualities that ordinary people are not endowed with. These individuals are therefore capable of adopting the best possible perspectives on the world. At the same time they are also most aware of the need for a constant revision of these perspectives. In other words, they do not cling to any dogmatic conceptions of the self because their 'selves' are least threatened by uncertainty posed by the transience of all human existence.

²⁵ *La volonté de puissance* I, p. 257, 188, quoted in *Ibid.*

An Australian metaphor illustrates the exceptional individual's unity with time and the environment particularly well: 'Individuals do not control waves, but ride them'.²⁶ Most ordinary individuals hope for calm seas, they do not want to 'make waves', even less to be precariously balanced on top of them at the risk of drowning. But neither will they ever capture the momentary splendor of the view from the crest of the highest wave. This metaphor also captures the unity of mind and body, for the successful surfer they are one. It is exactly the same as the case of the tightrope walker in *Zarathustra*: once he becomes aware of himself and of those watching him, he steps falter and he falls to his death. The surfer metaphor also captures Nietzsche's naturalism well; not only are the person's mind and body one, he is also one with nature without a conscious awareness of this. In other words, he is one with the moment at all levels.

Although Nietzsche does not argue that the 'self' is the body, his emphasis on the primacy of the body is used for a particular purpose. It further underlines his arguments against the erroneous separation of it from the mind and the consequent overestimation of the latter. His references to the concepts of 'mind' and 'body' in various contexts are used to criticize the inconsistencies of dualism and particularly of Kantianism:

The body, in contrast to the evanescent Ideal, is apparently more real; the empirical phenomenon would be, in metaphor and in general, closer to reality, the foundation for an Ideal that itself is immaterial and nebulous.²⁷

It seems more likely, then, that the perplexity encountered by those who divide the world into appearance and reality is based on the inexplicability of the connection between the two. If there is, on the one hand, bodily pain, there must, on the other hand, exist, according to the dualists, something that 'experiences' it. The experiencing 'thing' constituted by one's consciousness of pain is labelled as the 'self', and it is separated from physiological suffering.

Man thinks he is different from animals because of this consciousness of a 'self' behind all affects and acts, that it is something fundamental to human beings. Nietzsche, however, argues that it is '*superfluous*',

²⁶ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives and Public Policies* 2nd.ed., New York: Harper Collins, 1995, p. 225.

²⁷ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

For we could think, feel, will, and remember, and we could also 'act' in every sense of that word, and yet none of this would have to 'enter our consciousness' (as one says metaphorically). The whole of life would be possible without, as it were, seeing itself in a mirror.²⁸

Nietzsche argues that people have a metaphysical need to attribute some deeper meaning to thoughts and feelings and therefore they invent the 'self' as something that unifies the atomistic sensations. He uses terms like 'body' and 'mind' or 'soul' to criticise other people's negative attitudes to time in the following ways. Those who desire permanence and who resent change are soothed by the postulation of a 'soul'. The materialists are determined to deny the existence of any metaphysical entities. Ordinary people settle for the simplest explanation rather than go out of their way to search for answers that involve 'danger, disquiet, anxiety'.

Nietzsche appears to argue that focusing on the body as a source of understanding has the advantage of clarity and simplicity:

Essential: to start from the body and employ it as guide. It is the much richer phenomenon, which allows of clearer observation. Belief in the body is better established than belief in the spirit.²⁹

It must be noted, however, that Nietzsche does not argue that the search for understanding should be limited to the body. He argues that coming to terms with the animality, impermanence and decay of the body is only the beginning, that the body is only a guide. To what purpose, then, is the body employed as a guide? What does Nietzsche mean by his claims that the body is a richer phenomenon than the 'spirit'? For him, the body is a more appropriate guide to the understanding of the world because it is a material part of it. It is real, it exists in the world of phenomena unlike the 'spirit'. As a phenomenon it expresses nature as it is: a body comes into existence, it goes out of existence and meanwhile it changes constantly. It undergoes aging, pain and suffering, and pleasure. Within itself it contains a multiplicity of functions and sensations; it is at the same time unique and shares everything in common with all existence.

Nietzsche's claims for the primacy of the body, then, serve the following function. They are used to show how futile the denial or 'spiritualization' of the body by the ascetics is. The 'mind' cannot be improved upon by these means simply because it is in no way separate from the body. From this it follows that there cannot be an ontological 'self' that can be identified with any arbitrarily categorized aspect of human existence. There is only the 'self' at one with the

²⁸*The Gay Science* 354.

²⁹*The Will to Power* 532.

moment on the crest of the wave, continuously becoming more itself. What Nietzsche means by this process of becoming is the subject of the final section of this chapter.

Nietzsche's Exhortation to 'Become Thyself'

So far Nietzsche's arguments against dualism and materialism and have been outlined. It has also been stated that in spite of these arguments against generalisations, 'otherworldliness' and other metaphysical tools, Nietzsche attaches importance to the development of the exceptional individual. These exultations of greatness may lead the reader to infer that there is an underlying 'self' that becomes ever more 'developed' in ways that Nietzsche criticises elsewhere. There is, however, a more plausible interpretation of the idea of greatness. In accordance with Nietzsche's arguments for the inseparability of the mind and body, and the arguments for the primacy of the body, the 'self' may be something that is *created* and that changes constantly in the process of non-teleological development.

Nietzsche has arguments for some kinds of individual development and arguments against other kinds of development. The arguments against what Nietzsche views as undesirable development have been discussed in some detail in Chapter Three. In summary, he argues that becoming a rational adult may deprive an individual of life-enhancing spontaneity, either because the development is too one-dimensional or if it is too superficial in many different ways. In the first case, the adult does not acquire the ability to see the world in new and fresh ways; his creativity and *joie de vivre* are inhibited because of his rationality. In the second case, such development lacks cognitive and affective depth and breadth, it does not aid in true growth of the individual.

Nietzsche does not advocate that people should remain ignorant like children, either. Although he argues that adults should retain some of their spontaneity and ability to be absorbed in the moment, they should at the same time become more aware of the world around them than children. With this developing awareness more options and more freedom to choose open for them, provided that they are strong and independent enough to exercise these choices.

By strength and independence Nietzsche does not just mean the individual's combined physical or intellectual prowess, but also artistic creativity, the ability to see reality in entirely different terms:

Let us add at once that, on the other hand, the existence on earth of an animal soul turned against itself, taking sides against itself, was something so new, profound, unheard of, enigmatic, contradictory, *and pregnant with a future* that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered.³⁰

It is important to note the juxtaposition of the words 'animal' and 'soul'; to couple these seems counterintuitive, just like the claim that a child can distinguish between the mind and the body. This is where Nietzsche's naturalism comes in. I argued earlier that, on the one hand, Nietzsche does not claim that we should be like animals who just eat and sleep. But, on the other hand, he argues, humans are not that different from animals; they do not have a 'mind' or a 'soul' posited by the Christians, or 'selves' that separate them from other nature.

In talking about an 'animal soul turned against itself' Nietzsche refers to the development of 'bad conscience'³¹. This development he regards as 'the serious illness'.³² It is the negative aspect of development that deprives man's actions of their spontaneity. Although an adult has more choices open to him than a child, 'bad conscience' may limit his ability to exercise these more drastically than childish ignorance would. In other words, although the adult has gained knowledge that only amounts to guilt and bad conscience, it does not enhance or enrich life. Neither is it knowledge that has the potential to change whole societies and cultures by changing people to 'philosophers, artists and saints'.

It is, however, important to acknowledge that Nietzsche does not see this '*internalization* of man'³³ as an altogether negative development. On the contrary, he is quick to emphasize that 'the aspect of the earth was essentially altered because of it'. So he is able to analyse, as in so many other instances ignored by lesser philosophers, all dimensions of 'philosophical anthropology'.³⁴ The possession of 'bad conscience' may prevent the individual from acting on his drives and impulses without a moment's hesitation. But it may also channel his energies into unforeseen directions and produce unexpected, positive results. For instance, instead of fulfilling his sexual impulses a poet may sublimate his desires by writing a sonnet that will be read by numerous individuals for centuries to come. This product of 'bad conscience' can enrich and enhance many lives to a much greater extent than the momentary pleasure of one or two individuals would have done. It may even be argued that it can have a transformative function on

³⁰*Genealogy of Morals* II: 16.

³¹*Ibid.*

³²*Ibid.*

³³*Ibid.*

culture and society; it may guide people towards new perspectives on romantic and sexual expressions of love between the sexes. These may result in the entirely novel ideas of philosophers and artists that then add further value to the world.

Nietzsche's expression '*pregnant with a future*' also indicates that the change brought about by the '*internalization* of man' is an ongoing process. Humanity has been acquainted with some of the transformations that have taken place so far, such as works of music and literature. But the possibilities for more profound changes are still open:

The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited.³⁵

Nietzsche argues that it is possible at least for some to 'Become what you are!'³⁶ This apparently dualistic idea of individual development, however, runs counter to the argument he puts forward in *Zarathustra*, that only ignorant children think in terms of a separate mind and body. There is no doubt, however, that he rejects dualism as an erroneous perspective on the world. He argues that it based on the desire for stability and permanence, even if 'he does not do so in the name either of classical materialistic or idealistic reductionism, or of some such Spinozistic double-aspect monism'.³⁷ Schacht argues that Nietzsche 'seeks instead to develop a naturalistic conception of human reality'.³⁸ In other words, he does not rely on the conceptual schemas used by earlier philosophers, but adopts a completely different perspective on what 'becoming yourself' is about.

Rosen makes some important observations on Nietzsche's statement. He underlines the fact that Nietzsche has 'edited Pindar's assertion "Become what thou art through understanding"'.³⁹ Rosen interprets Nietzsche's omission of the concept of 'understanding' to mean that we cannot overcome 'our humanity'⁴⁰ by intellectual means but by 'a return to nature'.⁴¹

³⁴Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, London: Routledge, 1992, p. 267.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* IV: 1.

³⁷Schacht, *op. cit.*, p. 271.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*

⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 13.

In the above I have discussed several means by which one can return to nature. One should not separate the mind from the body nor overemphasize the former at the expense of the latter. One should not let one's nature be stultified by artificial concepts of selfhood which do not express the reality of human existence. One should experience unity and harmony in the face of conflict around one. One should create one's own sense of justice that evolves as a result of the strength of one's inner core. This is not the same as the 'self' because the inner core is not a static concept like the 'self'. Rather, it is an expression of concentrations of the will to power. In the exceptional individual these are found in higher degrees than in ordinary individuals. Because of this the unique person has the potential to attract ever higher concentrations of power to himself as well as to disperse it, depending on his environment.

Conclusion

Nietzsche does not outline any arguments either against traditional dualism or materialism to support his case for the 'natural' dependence of the mind and the body in *Zarathustra*. But based on the evidence of his various statements on their relationship, such as the primacy of the body over the soul of the tightrope walker, I have argued that he does not hold either of the traditional views.

Nietzsche rejects the 'self' that is posited as a 'real substance' or the 'subject', 'mind' or 'ego' of dualism that can be separated from the body. He argues that only the ordinary, weak individuals with their desire for permanence have a need for this concept. It is a fiction amongst many other fictions such as 'God' and 'guilt' that they hypostatize contrary to evidence in their search for the unchanging individual 'self' in a world of chaos and constant change. No permanent values can exist in this state of flux. But this flux, however, gives the exceptional individual the opportunity to become himself and to create his own values in every moment.

Nietzsche, then, accepts the 'self' of the exceptional individuals just because it is the opposite of the concept conjured by needs, fears and desires. Where the 'self' of the weak individuals is the result of a deficit, the 'self' of the exceptional individuals is the product of superfluity or of overflowing energy. This self is therefore not a stable, permanent entity in which certain qualities must inhere; it is a 'self' with no boundaries and with no desire for self-preservation. It is a re-embracing of all the natural that the fictional, resentful 'self' of a weak individual rebels against because of its threat to it.

Chapter Five

Solitude and Time in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Introduction

Zarathustra is forty years old at the beginning of *Zarathustra*. He has spent the previous ten years alone in the mountains: 'Here he had the enjoyment of his spirit and his solitude and he did not weary of it for ten years.'¹ This brief sentence contains two claims regarding solitude. First, it emphasises the positive value of solitude. Being alone is good because it is conducive to the spiritual endeavours of life. Solitude is so enjoyable that Zarathustra has not wearied of it for a whole decade. The second claim focuses on the negative aspects of solitude. Nietzsche implies that weariness will result from the wrong kind of detachment from the world; for instance, that of the ascetics.

In the positive sense, Nietzsche equates solitude with self-sufficiency and courage. He ranks men according to their attitudes to loneliness. Exceptional individuals have the strength to transform loneliness into solitude. Through this process they truly become what they are. Most importantly, in solitude they also gain insights into the true nature of the world. The fundamental task of the philosopher, as well of philosophy in general, according to him, is to search for this truth. For this reason Nietzsche associates solitude with the intellectual integrity that he values highly.

There is, then, a connection between positive attitudes to time and to solitude. The exceptional individual neither fears time's passing nor worries about time hanging too heavily in his hands. Because of this he can spend his time in solitude in order to examine his values, to confront truths about human existence and grow in intellectual and affective strength and integrity as a result of this. He does not feel abandoned by anyone or anything if he has to spend time on his own. His solitude, then, is not the same as withdrawing from the world in order to avoid the pain and suffering that results from interactions with it. In other words, his solitude is grounded in a positive attitude to being alone and it is conducive to the creation of positive values.

An expression of intellectual honesty is to admit that even if there is a 'truth' in the sense of a superior understanding of the world for a rare individual, it cannot be related to permanent values. To postulate any such values, according to Nietzsche, amounts merely to using

¹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 1

metaphysical concepts to simplify the world. To use the word 'truth' at a mere linguistic level while pretending that it refers to something beyond language amounts to intellectual dissimulation. Nietzsche's truths, then, are simply about the impermanence of everything, of the inevitability of decay and death.

The 'herd' and the slaves, according to Nietzsche, are not capable of honesty regarding the world and its values; their use of language in particular ways reflects their motivations. The members of the 'herd', for instance, prefer the sociable ideas of others. The slaves fear the passing of time because they lose their hold on the past and because they cannot control what the future may bring with it. Similarly they fear loneliness because they do not have the strength to face up to truths about their condition. For them and the 'herd' the only 'truths' that matter are the lies of linguistic 'truths'; these are denials of facts about the world of flux. They have no capacity to spend time in solitude in a way that would add value to their individual existences or to the world.

In this chapter I will first discuss the difference between loneliness and solitude. I will then show how Nietzsche distinguishes between the exceptional and the ordinary individuals based on their attitudes to loneliness and solitude. I argue that these attitudes are parallel to those that they have towards time. The exceptional individuals who see themselves as parts of time or as pieces of fate, can not only reconcile themselves to solitude but can use it creatively. For those lacking in Dionysian artistry loneliness is an enemy that makes time pass slowly; it is a threat to the values of the 'herd' and the 'slaves'.

My conclusion is that Nietzsche regards both loneliness and solitude as resources in *Zarathustra*. They are on the same continuum of human existence, not opposites, one of which can be avoided by certain modes of living in time. The discussion and clarification of these questions also provides an answer to the question of the relationship of the exceptional individual to society which I have raised in Chapters One and Three. The solitude of the exceptional individuals is necessary for the creation of new values. It is the most plausible way of transforming whole societies through great ideas whose timeliness can only be assessed by those who take a detached perspective on the travails of the herd and the slaves. In Lampert's words, Zarathustra's teaching is an existential message on individual freedom and responsibility: one must create one's own values and live by them.

Differences Between Loneliness and Solitude

Loneliness and solitude, as Nietzsche uses the terms, can be portrayed as balances on a scale.²

Loneliness is negative, it weighs one down. Solitude is positive, it swings one up into the air of lightness. Loneliness is something experienced only by the timid, those worn out by life.

Solitude is enjoyed by those who are self-sufficient, who see life as a challenge to learn to fly.

Can the exceptional individual ever feel lonely? I think that Nietzsche would answer this question in the affirmative for the following reason. Loneliness can be likened to pain and suffering because it has similar attributes. Most people regard it as a negative condition; it is something to be avoided just like pain and suffering. The values of the herd and slaves are focused on the elimination of these. The values of the masters, however, encompass all aspects of human existence. They would never shy away from a challenge because of the risks it poses. In the same manner they would not try to evade loneliness because of its psychological burden. I will later argue that loneliness and solitude are both on the same continuum of human existence rather than balances at the opposite ends of the scales. For now I will illustrate the contrast by the latter metaphor.

Loneliness for most ordinary people is a negative condition not only because it is an emptiness, an absence of other human beings. It is an unbearable burden to many because it is an enemy of pleasure or happiness

Who is ever alone? The timid man does not know what it is to be alone: an enemy is always standing behind his chair. - Oh, if there were someone who could tell us the history of that subtle feeling called solitude.³

The image of the 'enemy behind the chair' implies something that is to be feared because it is unseen and unknown. Being simply alone is not frightening. What is frightening is to perceive this condition as one of vulnerability, being left without defences, deprived of the shielding company of others. In other words, this is a condition one has no control over; one has been abandoned by those to whom one has most tried to cling. In this position of vulnerability one cannot view one's existence from any more positive alternative perspective.

² In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 9, Nietzsche uses two different German words to distinguish between solitude and loneliness. For 'solitude' he uses the word *Einsamkeit* which simply means 'to be on your own'. For loneliness he uses the word *Verlassenheit* which has the connotation of being abandoned by others. The former implies choice which is not present in the latter.

³*Daybreak* 249.

Being alone as such is not being deprived of anything; it is not necessarily associated with negative values or threats of vulnerability. Fear of loneliness, however, deprives the person of peace of mind, of being able to live each moment to the full. This fear of unknowable enemies has two opposite causes. On the one hand, the past is an enemy that creeps up on the person alone, and past experiences aggravate feelings of regret and resentment. On the other hand, the future creates anxiety in the mind of the 'timid'. To be temporarily alone, when the sight of companions is at hand, is hardly a worrying prospect even for the young men of an idiotic predisposition. The thought of facing months and years of loneliness, without an end in sight, however, is worse than the prospect of being face-to-face with a real-life enemy.

Nietzsche's famous introduction to the doctrine of eternal recurrence brings out this aspect of loneliness as the enemy in a most striking fashion: 'What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness...' ⁴ Being alone as such does not matter, what matters is the fear of an ordeal one may be exposed to when alone. Demons created by fear and imagination can be ignored in the company of many, but they are always lurking in the shadows when one is alone. They impose on the individual who cannot escape them 'the greatest weight'. ⁵

The unbearable weight of one's loneliest thoughts is a product of both the individual's past and the future. Past negative experiences teach the person to 'watch his back'; those demons that have 'stolen after him' in the past will be able to do so any time in the future when he is left alone. For this reason, he would not choose solitude; it equals vulnerability and defencelessness. Future experiences, although not yet real, will impose a burden of equal weight on the individual. Particularly if the demon insists that the future will be no different from the past, then the weariness of the past will only be amplified in the future.

So far I have referred to loneliness as a negative condition, very much like a sickness that should be avoided; or, if it is contracted, it needs to be cured as soon as possible. The conclusion of Nietzsche's introduction to the doctrine of eternal recurrence, however, makes another interpretation possible:

⁴ *The Gay Science* 341.

⁵ *Ibid.*

Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? ... Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to *crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal?⁶

Here Nietzsche draws attention to the possibility that loneliness and solitude are not negative and positive weights on the scales of life. He points out that they are not two mutually exclusive aspects of existence but that loneliness in many instances must be a precursor to solitude.

Zarathustra's ascent from the lowlands of Motley Cow to the cold air of the mountain can be interpreted as the journey from loneliness to solitude. Zarathustra undertakes an 'odyssey into himself'.⁷ Before he develops the most affirmative attitude to time, before he learns to enjoy solitude, he has many experiences of utter loneliness. These show how his resentment of the past makes him sick with fear of the enemy, time:

I dreamed I had renounced all life. I had become a night-watchman and grave-watchman yonder upon the lonely hill-fortress of death.

...

Brightness of midnight was all around me, solitude crouched beside it; and, as a third, the rasping silence of death, the worst of my companions.

...

When the wings of the door were opened, the sound ran through the long corridors like an evil croaking; this bird cried out ill-temperedly, it did not want to be awakened.

But it was even more fearful and heart-tightening when it again became silent and still all around and I sat alone in that malignant silence.⁸

Nietzsche equates loneliness with death in a striking manner. Loneliness inflicts the most undesirable companions on Zarathustra; it is so frightening because it is 'evil' and 'malignant', it is death. The silence of loneliness does not fill one with peace and tranquillity, it causes physical and mental angst. What are the origins of this anguish? Can the sources of Zarathustra's fears be expressed in other terms apart from these deathly metaphors?

Jean-Paul Sartre provides answers to these questions in terms of human freedom:

I do not and can not have recourse to any value in opposing the fact that it is I who maintain values in being. Nothing can protect me against myself. Cut off from the world and from my own essence by this nothingness that I am, I must realize the meaning of the world and of my essence: I make my decision concerning them - alone, without justification and without excuse.⁹

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 19.

⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness: An Essay in Phenomenological Ontology*, trans. Hazel E. Barnes, New York: Washington Square Press, 1966, pp. 76-78.

For many people loneliness means being cut off from the world; the channels of communication with other people are shut down. The world of the lonely is an uncomfortably quiet world; the noises from the outside are not present to still the inner voice speaking of the nothingness and meaninglessness of existence. Sartre claims that in this situation the individual must make his own decisions concerning the meaning of life and his own selfhood in the absence of any essence. As will be seen in the next section, Nietzsche distinguishes between the ordinary and extraordinary individuals according to their responses to anguish. In other words, some feel free to choose under these circumstances, others are paralysed by the straitjacket of loneliness and are thus incapable of making any choices.

Nietzsche's influence on Sartre's thought is obvious. He argues, following Nietzsche, that man, not God, is the creator of human values.¹⁰ 'Sartre's thinking comes around in the end to join Nietzsche's in his 'final appeal to the will to action'.¹¹ Both philosophers emphasize the necessity of acting, not just of thinking of the existential problems of man. Both agree on the role of philosophy: it 'is precisely to live the problems as problems and to delineate that fundamental problem raised by its own existence'.¹² Philosophy, for Nietzsche and Sartre, is about living in time as finite beings. In spite of one's knowledge of this finitude and of the death of God, this very understanding must act as the intrinsic, motivating force to action. The two philosophers, however, differ in their understanding of what this force or will to power can accomplish. Sartre, on the one hand, emphasizes the striving that is constantly frustrated. This frustration will lead one either to nihilism or to a retreat into the imaginary as in *Nausea*. Nietzsche, on the other hand, focuses on the affirmative capacities of those individuals whose will to power can transform their attitudes to transience.

Nietzsche's autobiographical notes refer to the necessity of both loneliness and solitude to the creative process. He describes a personal experience of existential *angst* in vivid terms. He 'merely put up with life' in Rome when he conceived of the idea of *Zarathustra*. He listened to 'a melody of unspeakable melancholy' during this period of weariness and loneliness.¹³ He goes on to explain, however, how this experience was transformed to one of perfect vigour and well-

¹⁰ William Barrett, *Irrational Man: A Study in Existential Philosophy*, New York: Anchor Books, 1990, p. 244.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 247-8.

¹² Francis Jeanson, *Sartre and the Problem of Morality*, trans. Robert V. Stone, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980, p. 107.

¹³ *Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra' 4.

being once the fruitful inspiration to create the book 'the like of [which] has never been written'¹⁴ has taken root in his imagination. This would not have been possible without the preceding period of 'the horrible silence one hears around one ... new desolation, no glance offers a greeting'.¹⁵

Nietzsche shows in *Zarathustra* that the attitudes of at least some individuals towards time can be transformed in such a way that they can live for the moment in a way that incorporates what is best in the past and the future. On this reading, then, the graveyard scene is more than a metaphorical expression of abstract ideas about human life; it is the description of the author's intensely felt personal loneliness and its resolution through art. In other words, Nietzsche's autobiographical notes support his advocacy of a more positive attitude to loneliness in *Zarathustra* in a way that the narrative by itself would not do if its background was not known to the reader.

The slaves or the herd try to avoid ever being in the situation of desolation by loneliness; their way of life is about ensuring that there will always be familiar glances offering familiar greetings around them. But as they never experience the 'horrible silence' of thoughts of death, they will never have the opportunity to create gifts for mankind for the millennia, as Nietzsche does.

Nietzsche's emphasis throughout *Zarathustra* is on the exceptional individual who has the capacity to withstand loneliness. Only he has the ability to transform it by affirming the transient, which is feared by others. Individuals can be ranked according to their attitudes to loneliness in a way corresponding to their attitudes to time.

Nietzsche's Ranking of Individuals According to Their Attitudes to Loneliness and Solitude

Nietzsche offers alternative conceptions of loneliness and solitude to illustrate a particular aspect of individual evaluations of human existence. To confront loneliness and to transform it into solitude is yet another test of an affirmative attitude towards existence. Only those who see being alone as a resource are able to benefit from solitude; only they are able to learn and, therefore, gain Dionysian insights not accessible to ordinary individuals.

¹⁴ *Ibid.* 8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 5.

The most profound insight that any individual can gain in solitude is to accept his oneness with time and destiny, to overcome the ideas of separateness and permanence. In other words, the final test of affirmation set by Nietzsche in *Zarathustra* is that of developing an understanding of the relationship between life and death, between infinity and finitude.

Nietzsche's portrayal of Zarathustra's solitude indicates that he views it not only as natural but also thinks that periods of it are necessary for the human being who wants to become what he really is. The need for solitude is a need similar to that for nourishment. Human beings who never withdraw from society to spend time alone are trading in the market-place of superficialities: 'there is too much foreground in all men - what can far-seeing, far-seeking eyes do *there!*'¹⁶ To live entirely on the surfaces of life is to lead a constricted, blinkered existence. The masses, however, need to deceive themselves about the world in order to survive, they are too feeble to look further into it:

As a means for the preserving of the individual, the intellect unfolds its principal powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker individuals preserve themselves - since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle for existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey.¹⁷

The slaves try to avoid loneliness because they fear its negative burden. They also escape from themselves because they fear their own natures as beasts of prey. They delude themselves into thinking that loneliness, and those who favour solitude, are the enemy. For them, it is better to label people or circumstances as 'evil' than to engage in the battle for existence. This involves confronting facts about their own nature as 'beasts of prey' who are concerned with survival, devoid of 'morality' or permanent values.

Solitude enables those who are willing to look further and deeper into human existence to gain insights into its real meaning. Zarathustra can only become a teacher with a worthwhile message because he has apprehended 'the meaning of the earth'¹⁸ during his absence from the world. Paradoxically, Zarathustra can contribute to the world more because he does not belong to it entirely.¹⁹ Similarly, there is a connection between healthy, natural attitudes to time and to

¹⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 9.

¹⁷ 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense', trans. Daniel Breazendale in Richard Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche Selections*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1993. p. 46.

¹⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologue 3.

¹⁹ It should be evident by now that by 'contribution' I do not mean that Zarathustra adds 'happiness' or 'pleasure' to the world in the utilitarian sense, but precisely the opposite. Because of his detachment Zarathustra can add values not considered in utilitarian cost-benefit analyses. He creates his own values which affirm transience and therefore cannot be measured by tools based on the assumption of permanent values.

solitude. For the courageous individual time does not exist as an enemy, he lives in time and time lives in him.

The members of the 'herd' want to conform, they want to maintain the status quo. They do not want time to bring about any changes in their situation nor in their communal values. There is an attitude of contentment with what is. This contentment is the result of living in a community of like-minded people.²⁰ From this it follows that they would not wish to spend time alone. The mere thought of solitude is enough to weary them. For them, time passes slowly if it is not filled with the company of others. Since they are not concerned with developing an understanding of anything more than the foregrounds of things, solitude is a burden to be avoided, not something to be chosen voluntarily.²¹

The slaves, in comparison, are not content with what is. Their reaction to solitude is predominantly negative.²² They resent the past because they cannot change it, they despise the present because they are not masters of it, they fear the future because of what it may bring. The anger of the slaves is focused on those individuals whose attitudes underline their impotence in the face of the inevitable:

And be on your guard against the good and just! They would like to crucify those who devise their own virtue - they hate the solitary.

...

I love him that wants to create beyond himself and thus perishes.²³

The slaves who resent change and who desire permanent values regard themselves as 'the good and the just'. Their 'goodness' and 'justice' depend on the existence of unchanging, objective standards of The Good and The Just. In other words, for them there must be an 'otherworldly Truth', the same for all people at all times, in all places. Therefore, they resent anyone who challenges this perspective on the world. Nietzsche obviously regards the postulation of otherworldly, permanent truths as erroneous. He loves the individual who the 'herd' or the slaves regard as the opposite of 'good' or 'just'. This individual is more powerful because he can see the impossibility of unchanging entities in the world; he can call the bluff of

²⁰ Sleinis, *op. cit.*, pp. 62-4.

²¹ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 14, makes comparisons between the solitude of Jesus and Zarathustra. The former had it imposed on him as a test and as a temptation, the latter enjoyed the choice.

²² Sleinis, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-2.

²³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 17.

the metaphysicians. He is stronger because of his ability to stand apart from the 'herd' and the 'slaves'; he does not need others or the values they represent.

The hatred of the courageous by the 'timid',²⁴ arises from fear and resentment of what the challenger of 'otherworldly values represents. He reminds them of what they most want to avoid, their own inevitable decay and death. Worst of all, he has come to understand the impermanence and contingency of existence through his independent efforts. By being himself he has created beyond himself. Through this process of risk-taking he may well perish, but he has accomplished something the 'herd' or slaves never would: he is self-sufficient. He is to be feared most of all because he raises the unwelcome suspicion in the mind of his foes that he is right and that those who lack his understanding are wrong. In other words, he is in a position of superiority because he does not join the multitude. Not only does he refuse to adopt their negative values, he is powerful enough to create his own positive ones:

If one wants to represent a hero on the stage one must not think of making one of the chorus, indeed one must not even know how to make one of the chorus.²⁵

The herd and the slaves are anxious to blend into the chorus of the nay-sayers. They neither know how to sing a solo nor would they ever want to be placed in a situation where they would have to do so:

... they have never been allowed time to choose a course for themselves; on the contrary, they have been accustomed from childhood onwards to being given a course by someone else... - they were employed, they were purloined from themselves, they were trained to be *worn out daily* and taught to regard this as a matter of duty - and now they cannot do without it and would not have it otherwise.²⁶

The young men whom Nietzsche characterizes as 'idiotic and childish'²⁷ have neither the will nor the capacity to be heroes. They will never get below the surface of life because they have never had time to realise that they are operating only at this level; they do not understand that living ought to be about more than duty dictated by others.

Sartre explains the same distinction between the heroes and the unheroic masses in terms of freedom and responsibility:

²⁴ *Daybreak* 249.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 177.

²⁶ *Ibid.* 178.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

I am responsible for everything, in fact, except my responsibility itself, for I am not the foundation of my being. Thus everything takes place as if I were required to be responsible. ... I never encounter anything except myself and my projects, such that ultimately my abandonment, that is, my facticity, consists simply in my being condemned to be wholly responsible for myself.²⁸

Only a few individuals can face up to their responsibilities for their own projects. They, as I argue in the next section, become aware of their task in life and take responsibility for it. They do not fear loneliness because they are prepared to encounter even the worst aspects of existence. One significant aspect of any encounter with questions of existence is to meet with death in every moment. Each moment is therefore both a moment of loneliness and of solitude. In solitude arises the commitment to the task at hand for which one lives. At the same time this moment is one of loneliness because of the abandonment of the task to transience in the knowledge that it will never be completed in time. As such it can only possess the value given to it by the individual who is not concerned with the judgement of others nor about time's inexorable passage.

The immature young men, in contrast, are like the child who cannot reach over the hedges of the past and the future; they lack any historical understanding.²⁹ They are more idiotic than the child because they still allow themselves to be directed in adulthood. The child is not in a position to know anything different; he lives in the present, unaware of time. The young men, if they were stronger, would by now know themselves. They would desire the creation of their own values; they would have grown more self-sufficient.

The child is unaware of the hedges of past and future; he is also unaware of time's passing while playing alone within the hedges. The idiotic adults, in contrast, want the security of company delineated by the hedges in order to avoid boredom and loneliness. They do not desire time alone, all they are concerned about are 'their "holidays" - as they call this idleness-ideal of an overworked century in which one is for once allowed to laze about'.³⁰ The child is living life to the full in the moment; the adults divide life into segments, each as unsatisfactory as the next. There is no satisfaction either in solitude or in present company. These adults, then, are slaves whose attitude to time's too slow passage is one of resentment; their values towards the world and other people is negative because of their powerlessness.

²⁸ Sartre, *op. cit.*, p. 710.

²⁹ *Untimely Meditations* II: 2.

³⁰ *Daybreak* 178.

The attitude of resentful slaves can be contrasted with that of the members of the 'herd' who are content when in the company of others of their own kind. The contentment arises from a uniformity of values; this in its turn is a result of the mistaken perception of time's passage in a uniform manner. Everything appears predictable and measurable for those who have no desire for anything beyond the thresholds of familiarity.

The differences between the solitude of the child and the leisure of the idiotic young men have parallels to the case of Zarathustra. He resembles the child in ways that are valued by Nietzsche. He and the child both work in their solitude, to them it is a fruitful preoccupation. They engage with the present, they do not wish it away. They live in the moment in the right way.

Zarathustra's solitude results in his becoming aware of his mission: 'he is on the way to his "greatness", his "destiny"'.³¹ This destiny compels him to share his understanding of the nature of this world as one of change with others willing to listen to his message. Neither the child nor Zarathustra, however, strive for any particular goal while they are alone. They do not use the present only as a bridge to the future. But it is precisely because of this apparent ease and lack of effort that they achieve more. The child grows into an adult simply by not trying to do so. Zarathustra does not go into the mountains looking for duties that others expect of him. He has been drawn to solitude because of his own nature just like the child, and as a consequence he finds himself. His destiny is not related to an external task that he discovers; it is to do with what he has known all along but only now acknowledges to himself:

It is returning, at last it is coming home to me - my own Self and those parts of it that have long been abroad and scattered among all things and accidents.³²

For the child and for Zarathustra, loneliness does not exist as an enemy. The child feels content in the moment; he simply does not reflect on time as something outside of himself. Zarathustra experiences a feeling of strength in the moment because for him everything has become 'perfect'. Neither the absence or presence of others can diminish this sense of perfection.

The child has not yet developed a sense of the self; the weary young men consist only of scattered parts; they divide themselves according to their duties, and their time is partitioned in a

³¹ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 158

³² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 1.

similar fashion. Their world is one of discrete things and accidents floating on the surface of life below which they are never able to dive. For them, there will never be a journey to the high ground of existence. The thought of such a hard ascent would repel them because of its loneliness.

To the young men, loneliness is a paralyzing, negative condition that they have themselves created through their fears and their lack of courage. To them, it is better to be weary on the lowlands of idleness than to perish in the cold height of the mountains, even if the latter enables one to see both further into the world and deeper into the self and into the task confronting one. At the top of Nietzsche's hierarchy are those individuals who have the courage to transform their loneliness into solitude in the cold air of the highest mountains.

The Value of Solitude for the Exceptional Individual

So far I have argued that those who fear loneliness consider it a negative condition to be avoided at all costs. I have also claimed that the exceptional individual who enjoys solitude is aware of it as a resource; it gives him the feeling of self-sufficiency; he 'feels himself to be the *highest species of all existing things*'.³³ I have qualified this interpretation of loneliness and solitude as opposites by acknowledging that for Nietzsche one is often a precursor of the other. The person with the strongest constitution is able to transform paralysing loneliness into productive solitude. The mastery of loneliness and its transformation to creative activity again increases his sense of power, and he is able to cope with more loneliness. The strength gained thereby will make him more creative and add to the affirmative quality of his will to power. A negative condition is transformed first into a positive feeling of self-sufficiency and through it into diverse creative acts.

If loneliness and solitude exist on a continuum, then it is also possible that solitude is a precursor of loneliness. It can become loneliness if it is not used creatively. One can withdraw into solitude with positive motivations but then not be able to endure the encounter with oneself because of some defect in understanding. One may then spend one's time unproductively worrying about the opinions of others and feel abandoned if these exclude one from their company. In other words, one simply becomes fearful and lonely because one wants to belong to, rather than stand out from, the masses. Zarathustra recognizes in solitude the paradox of his

³³ *Ibid.* III: 6.

existence and of all individual existence; he felt more lonely and abandoned amongst other people than by himself. Only those individuals who understand that they are responsible for their feelings of loneliness can transform them into the positive feeling of solitude and feel at home in it.

The individual's power to overcome loneliness exemplifies what Nietzsche means by his exhortation to 'Become what you are'. Nietzsche's own approach to loneliness is exemplary. One can only find one's true, creative self if one is prepared to undertake the journey through the depths of loneliness into solitude:

If only I could give you an idea of my feeling of loneliness! I have no one to whom I feel related, as little among the living as among the dead. This is unimaginably terrifying. Only constant exercise in learning how to bear this feeling, and a step-by-step development from childhood on in my capacity for bearing it - this alone helps me to comprehend how I have not as yet perished on account of it.³⁴

Here Nietzsche describes loneliness as a terrifying feeling rather than as a condition. There is, however, a difference between how he experiences loneliness and how it would be perceived by ordinary people to whom it is a permanent condition. Nietzsche's description highlights these differences.

At first glance, it may seem that Nietzsche is no different from the average person who fears loneliness. After all, he admits that he finds the feeling of loneliness 'unimaginably terrifying'. But what is different in Nietzsche's case is the way in which he deals with his ordeal. He does not try to escape to the company of other people, but confronts it head on in spite of his intense fear. His acknowledgment of his feeling of loneliness sets him on the road to solitude and thus makes loneliness into a feeling that is the precursor of creative solitude. An awareness of the unavoidability of the loneliness of the exceptional individual transforms a permanent condition to a feeling with plural meanings. The exceptional individual is lonelier amongst people with whom he does not share anything either intellectually nor affectively than when he is actually alone. This, however, is not a cause of despair for him, but a challenge he can meet only by facing up to loneliness, not by avoiding it. Therefore, the latter form of loneliness, that of being alone in a crowd, demands more individual courage for its transformation into solitude than being really alone. For the exceptional individual, being alone

³⁴ Nietzsche's letter to Franz Overbeck 5.8.1886 quoted by David Farrell Krell, *Interpreting Nietzsche*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996, p. 229.

is a natural condition. Its overcoming requires the combating of his own fears only, rather than the futile effort of helping to lessen the fears of others who want to cling to them. In other words, one's own fears create less conflict than those of others. Because the unresolvable conflict enhances loneliness, it is harder to overcome.

Nietzsche feels that he builds up strengths as a result of his loneliness; he feels that he is not enervated by it as another individual would be. He is conscious of both his struggle in loneliness (not against it) and of the results of it; he gets satisfaction from the realisation that he has been able to bear intense loneliness since childhood without perishing. In other words, combined with the feeling of loneliness in his mind is a positive feeling of self-sufficiency that will never exist in the minds of most people.³⁵

This feeling of self-sufficiency is in its turn combined with an insight into a special mission that requires loneliness and solitude for its completion:

For the rest, the *task* for the sake of which I live confronts me clearly: it is a *factum* of unimaginable sadness, albeit transfigured by the consciousness that there is *greatness* in it, if ever greatness dwelled in a mortal's task.³⁶

It is in the nature of Nietzsche's mission that he can only achieve greatness if he sticks to his own path, unassisted by others. He must live with 'unimaginable sadness' as well as with 'unimaginably terrifying' loneliness if he is to stand above the multitude. To him, sadness and loneliness are unavoidable facts of life. It must be noted, however, that these facts are made bearable by his strong sense of destiny; to live like this is worthwhile because to live otherwise would not be living at all. To search for palliation of these feelings in the company of others would be to avoid becoming oneself.

It is significant that when Nietzsche writes to his friend about his sense of loneliness, he refers both to the living and the dead as those human beings he feels alienated from. At first glance, this appears to contradict his many claims regarding the continuity that he perceives between himself and the past generations. His work, and particularly *Zarathustra*, is an anticipation of further continuity between himself and future generations.

³⁵ Nietzsche's collapse in 1888 suggests that this feeling of strength did not pervade his being permanently.

³⁶ Nietzsche's letter to Franz Overbeck 5.8.1886, in Krell, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

Nietzsche's response to this accusation of contradiction might be that a perfect continuity is the kind of illusion desired only by those who want to delude themselves. He is aware of continuities in the sense of being committed to his mission by organising

the chaos within him by thinking back to his real needs. His honesty, the strength and truthfulness of his character, must at some time or other rebel against a state of things in which he only repeats what he has heard, learns what is already known, imitates what already exists ...³⁷

In other words, Nietzsche's approach to history is critical; he is not interested in continuity in the sense of preserving past monuments for their own sake, or for the sake of assuaging his loneliness. He is at all times honest, even if it means acknowledging his total alienation from his own age and from most of the past and future:

... assuming, that is, that there will be any future ages in the cultural sense. But it is precisely this fact which evokes in us a grave doubt. Close beside the pride of modern man there stands his ironic view of himself, his awareness that he has to live in an historicizing, as it were a twilight mood, his fear that his youthful hopes and energy will not survive into the future.³⁸

Nietzsche is concerned to show how arbitrary and transient any cultural developments have been; he doubts any 'facts of history' offered by those for whom these provide solace in their present loneliness. The only form of continuity he values is that of constant questioning, refusing to conform. The strong individuals of history before him have shared his loneliness and alienation. This 'wildness and strangeness'³⁹ has set them apart in a way that makes us remember them. From them we can learn not to fear loneliness and to value solitude. In this sense, they are our companions in a way that the ordinary, living persons of our actual acquaintance never could be. They stand apart from both the living and the dead, just as any exceptional individual must.

Loneliness teaches a wanderer like Zarathustra lessons that can only be appreciated in solitude:

O Zarathustra, I know all: and that you were lonelier among the crowd, you solitary, than you ever were with me!

Loneliness is one thing, solitude another: you have learned that - now! And that among men you will always be wild and strange.⁴⁰

Zarathustra understands that loneliness has nothing to do with being on his own. He is lonelier in the crowd than he is in his own company. Withdrawal from people

³⁷ *Untimely Meditations* II. 10.

³⁸ *Ibid.* II: 9.

³⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

offers the solitary individual the company of a friend. Solitude is the best friend for the person who does not feel the pressure to conform, for him solitude is 'my *home*'.⁴¹

Those who want to conform to the opinions of the masses fear that by setting themselves apart from the majority they may be seen as unacceptably 'wild and strange'. Zarathustra, on the other hand, has learnt to gain strength from this feeling of difference:

With happy nostrils I breathe again mountain-freedom! At last my nose is delivered from the odour of all humankind!

My soul, tickled by sharp breezes as with sparkling wine, sneezes - sneezes and cries to itself: Bless you!⁴²

The ordinary person who prefers mediocrity to freedom considers any deviations from the norm as undesirable; to be different is 'bad' or 'evil'. Zarathustra, however, equates difference with freedom; he is free to choose his own path above the bad smells of the multitude. For him, freedom and solitude are not to be feared, they are a blessing. Their sacredness cannot be appreciated by those choking on the stale air of the lowlands. Solitude contains a spiritual dimension of existence that only the few can reach.

If Nietzsche chastizes the ascetics who pursue the hermit's 'spiritual' way of life, how can he at the same time deem 'spirituality' as something positive? The answer relates to Nietzsche's insistence that life should be evaluated in aesthetic, not moral, terms:

There are ages in which the rational man and the intuitive man stand side by side, the one in fear of intuition, the other with scorn for abstraction. The latter is just as irrational as the former is inartistic. They both desire rule over life: the former, by knowing how to meet his principal needs by means of foresight, prudence and regularity; the latter, by disregarding these needs and, as an 'overjoyed hero', counting as real only that life which has been disguised as illusion and beauty. Whenever intuitive man, as for instance in the earlier history of Greece, brandishes his weapons more powerfully and victoriously than his opponent, there under favourable conditions, a culture can develop and art can establish her rule over life.⁴³

Those who abandon majority values are regarded by it as imprudent and irrational. They are seen as destroyers rather than as creators of art and culture. The individual who embarks on uncharted seas will single himself out as different and strange to those who only value mediocrity.

Nietzsche argues, however, that only when the utilitarian need for survival is overridden can art and culture flourish. This can be ensured only by the unique man's irrational drive to 'brandish his weapons' at the risk of perishing, when victory is by no means assured. In other words,

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense' 2, in Schacht, *Nietzsche Selections*, p. 46.

risk-taking, not prudence, enriches the worlds of art and culture, even if it entails losses on an individual level. Prudence is stagnation, recklessness 'establishes rule over life' even when it results in death. One of Nietzsche's heroes, Byron, is an example of this lack of prudence and Dionysian exultation of recklessness unto death. He not only wrote poetry about the importance of individual freedom but was prepared to fight for the freedom of others. I think this makes him a better person and a better poet than he would have been if he had merely stayed at home. This claim, which may be taken to conflict with the ideal of solitude, can be reconciled with it in the following way. Philosophy, according to Nietzsche, as well as Sartre, means living and acting, not just thinking. Byron would have needed solitude in order to conceive of his idea of personal freedom. He could have made this only the topic of his poetry. The fact that he made it the reason living and dying emphasizes the value of solitude more, not less.

The outstanding individuals who transform the world of culture are regarded by others as egoists. As their spirituality does not take account of others in the form of altruistic acts they are condemned by those who benefit from the selflessness of others. Such acts, however, while they alleviate the pain of another, will not result in the creation of artworks that have value beyond the utilitarian.

Both good art and good philosophy have intellectual and affective integrity in common. Good artists and good philosophers acknowledge the complexity of the world around them and try to express this in their work. They do not try to teach others by offering simplistic explanations of human existence; this is the reason for Nietzsche's criticism of much of philosophy and of religious doctrines. Instead, the good philosopher encourages the reader to develop his or her love of wisdom because of the difficulty of the search that it entails.

Scholars and philosophical labourers, in contrast to the philosopher, are one with the herd in their lack of insight into the true nature of the world. They

belong to the spiritual middle class, [who] can never catch sight of the really great problems and question marks; moreover, their courage and their eyes simply do not reach that far - and above all their needs which led them to become scholars in the first place, their inmost assumptions and desires that things might be such and such, their fears and hopes all come to rest and are satisfied too soon.⁴⁴

Nietzsche's criticism of the scholars' disinterest in the great problems of life is also pertinent to how the questions of loneliness and solitude are understood by different individuals.

⁴⁴ *The Gay Science* 373.

Those who skate on the surfaces of life ask the wrong questions; instead of accepting loneliness as a natural aspect of human existence, they evade it as if it was the worst enemy of humanity. They are more concerned about 'warding off misfortune' than 'gaining any happiness ... by reap[ing] from [their] intuition a harvest of continually inflowing illumination, cheer and redemption'.⁴⁵ Looking over one's shoulder in fear of the unseen enemy prevents an individual from looking ahead towards various opportunities that would grant the kind of joy that the mere evasion of misfortune never will.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of rank ordering and his insistence on the ability to grapple with the most desolate thoughts without descending into nihilism sets the 'spiritual aristocrats' apart from the 'spiritual middle classes'. A plurality of lifestyles is available to the former. There is no one right way of transforming loneliness into solitude; there is no one right way of asking the important questions about existence nor one fixed way of approaching problems beyond the level of surfaces. What is important about 'spiritual plurality' is precisely that all options are courageously explored; no alternatives are shunned because of fear of failure or because of the fear of appearing to be 'different'. They

... sit upon high masts of knowledge ... to flicker like little flames upon high masts: a little light, to be sure, but yet a great comfort to castaway sailors and the shipwrecked!⁴⁶

What matters to Nietzsche is that there exist individuals who have risked their lives in order to 'sit upon the high masts of knowledge'. To become a solitary shipwreck or a castaway in a storm is better than never to have left dry land in the first place.

The timid individual considers it safer to try to tame the familiar beasts of loneliness on land rather than to sail out to the uncharted, perilous seas. Setting out into the unknown territory without borders, however, gives the strong individual unlimited choices:

The earth still remains free for great souls. Many places - the odour of tranquil seas blowing about them - are still empty for solitaires and solitary couples.

A free life still remains for great souls. Truly, he who possesses little is so much the less possessed: praised be a moderate poverty!⁴⁷

Again Nietzsche makes a connection between solitude and freedom, and between solitude and cleanliness from contamination. The 'great souls' are free to pursue their own paths because they

⁴⁵ 'On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense', in Schacht, *op cit.*, p. 34.

⁴⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 11, 2.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, I: 11. Nietzsche's words for 'solitaires' and 'solitary couples' are *Einsame und Zweisame*.

are free from the pressure to conform. They are also free from the constraints of time because to them it is not the rigid divider of life into finite segments. It will merely be punctuated by those moments when a flicker of light is seen from the highest mast.

This is the only passage in *Zarathustra* where Nietzsche refers to pairs as well as individuals in the context of solitude. It contains an optimism lacking in the discourse on Zarathustra's homecoming. Zarathustra is more lonely with people than by himself; he is very much alone with his task - he cannot share it with anyone else. The reference to two great souls raises the possibility that two individuals could share the same previously empty location on earth and in philosophy and undertake a search for truth together; it also underlines the value of relying on Nietzsche's letters for a deeper understanding of his philosophy. In his letter to Overbeck describing his utter loneliness he contrast sadness with greatness. In other words, he can share both his loneliness and his productive solitude with another because the other has also experienced them and can express them in his terms. Loneliness and solitude are productive because they are not necessarily barriers to communication but can assist in the communication of the most important matters of human existence. In this passage Nietzsche, then, hints at better modes of interpersonal interaction.

The 'great souls' pursue freedom without the constraints of past because they are free from resentment. They are spiritually and personally capable of confronting the most dangerous and painful aspects of their past. They are willing to apprehend the truths of the abyss and do not try to escape to the merely linguistic truths of the lowlands. They enjoy a freedom of movement in time as past, present and future for them are not separated by borders or conventions but they form an accessible whole. For them solitude is not a negative condition, but entails a diversity of positive feelings that motivate them to action.

Solitude as a 'Subtle Feeling'

So far I have characterised solitude as a human condition that may either be the opposite of loneliness or on a continuum with it. Nietzsche calls solitude a 'subtle feeling'.⁴⁸ What does he mean by this? I propose that subtlety of feeling refers to the richness and complexity of *inner* experiences, the multiple aspects of solitude experienced by the 'spiritual aristocrat'. I emphasize the inner quality of the experiences of the 'great soul' for the following reason. The strong

⁴⁸ *Daybreak* 249.

individual's experiences are the results of his self-reliance and strength, he is responsible for shaping them. His experiences do not conform to values imposed on him from outside, he creates his own values and his own inner world. He returns to his solitude as to a favourite companion; he is at home with himself, he does not desire to change anything. He can affirm every experience as his because he has willed each one.

The experiences of the 'spiritual middle class', in comparison, have been entirely shaped by external influences. Past resentments colour the way the less strong and self-reliant individual sees his present and his future. Servitude to the opinions of others and the constraints of time, perceived as fixed segments, leave no room for the creation of new perspectives. The focus on past ills excludes any prospect of becoming aware of more positive alternatives. Therefore, time spent on one's own will always be regarded by the timid individual as negative loneliness rather than as valuable solitude.

In Nietzsche's mind, this subtlety of feeling is also associated with the kind of inspiration that is the hallmark of the work of the true 'spiritual aristocrat':

The concept of revelation, in the sense that something suddenly, with unspeakable certainty and subtlety, becomes visible, audible, something that shakes and overturns one to the depths, simply describes the fact.⁴⁹

Nietzsche portrays solitude as the source of spiritual inspiration. Its value is in terms of the possibilities it opens up and, therefore, of what it enables the individual to accomplish. According to him, things become visible in sudden flashes just like a beacon of light at the mast of a ship on the horizon.

Solitude is a subtle feeling for the exceptional individuals for two related reasons. First, the sense of solitary existence is a natural source of strength for them. They paradoxically both draw their sense of the self from it and at the same time lose any desire to cling to a self as a result of this feeling. In other words, the feeling is pervasive, but not static; it fluctuates according to the circumstances one is placed in. A positive, creative sense of solitude is the appropriate response to being alone or being among people for the second reason that makes it a feeling, rather than a condition. Apart from its pervasiveness, the feeling of solitude is also characterized by its immediacy. The pervasiveness and immediacy of the feeling of solitude enables one to live spontaneously; the relationship between strong feelings and Dionysian

⁴⁹ *Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra', 3.

passions makes one an artist of living. Zarathustra's development can be characterised in terms of increasing affective maturity; he becomes whole once he reconciles his desire to pass on his message with the fears that it creates in him initially.

On a general level Zarathustra's destiny is that of all human beings who must make choices. They all deal with these in different ways and as has been seen, some never become equal to their task but choose to spend their time trying to conform to the values of others. Their way of existence is unauthentic or untruthful; they will never be able to appreciate the subtle feeling of solitude. Sadler is correct to call the values revealed by solitary contemplation 'universal'; they must preoccupy everyone willing to be on his or her own. Everyone has a specific individual destiny to fulfil.

Solitude and Destiny

In his solitude, Zarathustra becomes ever more aware of his destiny. Nietzsche's description of the process of Zarathustra becoming who he truly is, is akin to Sadler's reference to the exceptional individual who apprehends 'a Dionysian truth'. When an exceptional individual reaches an understanding of what his destiny is, of what he is required to become, this understanding is at the same time unique to himself and also common to all those who face their destiny. In this sense there is indeed an 'absolute truth' that cannot be intellectualized, that cannot be put to practical use. It is an artistic, 'alternative way of expressing truth'.⁵⁰ The timid and the exceptional individual are distinguished from each other by the way they experience being on their own; it has been argued that this experience relates to their individual attitudes to time. These differences also shape their attitudes to destiny.

For the majority, living in society, practising a particular religion and conforming to particular external values are matters of mere utility. They are all conventional ways of measuring or passing time, of relinquishing control of your destiny to others. Thus the dull young men or the shopkeepers chastised by Nietzsche are not only unable, but also unwilling to understand their destiny. Or more precisely, they are not willing to admit to themselves that they are only pieces of fate. They derive their illusory self-importance from banal activities in the process of which they learn nothing. Zarathustra, on the other hand, is 'on the way to his

⁵⁰ Sadler, *Nietzsche: Truth and Redemption*, p. 31.

"greatness", his "destiny".⁵¹ What are the factors that make him different from the inhabitants of Motley Cow? How has he become aware of his destiny? What is the link between destiny and greatness, are they always connected?

The answer to these questions relates to the positive aspects of Zarathustra's solitude. He has been self-sufficient enough to withdraw from the world, and, as a result of his quiet contemplation, he has gradually become aware of his destiny as the messenger of the death of God and the arrival of the Superman and the new values he represents. In spite of the setback he suffers in the beginning of his journey, when his message is not taken seriously by the crowd in the marketplace,⁵² he is committed to his mission and therefore continues on his chosen path.

Zarathustra's sense of mission is strengthened both by what he learns of the past and by how he understands his future as a result of his critical contemplation of the past. As a result of this, he is more able to live for the moment. He is no longer compelled to search for illusory permanence because he comes to understand the erroneousness of it. He is neither lonely nor does he hold people in contempt because his solitude has a meaning:

I call it evil and misanthropic, all this teaching about the one and the perfect and the unmoved and the sufficient and the intransitory

All that is intransitory - that is but an image! And the poets lie too much!

But the best images and parables should speak of time and becoming; they should be a eulogy and a justification of all transitoriness.

...

Yes, there must be much bitter dying in your life, you creators! Thus you are advocates and justifiers of all transitoriness.

...

But my creative will, my destiny, wants it so. Or, to speak more honestly: my will wants precisely such a destiny.⁵³

The most significant difference between how the ordinary individual and the exceptional one view their destiny is underlined here. The former want to escape their destiny because to them it appears to be contrary to what they want. They want 'the perfect and unmoved', they will not accept nor admit that this is never possible. Therefore, they evade or rebel against their destiny; to them it is an external enemy, just like time and solitude.

⁵¹ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 158

⁵² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Prologues 3 and 9.

⁵³ *Ibid.* II: 2.

Zarathustra, however, has gained the insight that destiny is not something that is separate from his will; he comes to understand that the two are one and the same. He is not divorced from his destiny any more than solitude and time are external to him. He is his own destiny because of his own willing, and this takes place in time, in solitude. As argued earlier, this insight is a Dionysian, non-intellectual apprehension of the transient nature of the world. Zarathustra is, however, able to put his positive experience of willing his own destiny into words because his companion Solitude equips him with intellectual and verbal skills:

For with you all is open and clear; and here even the hours run on lighter feel.
For time weighs down more heavily in the dark than in the light.

Here, the words and word-chests of all existence spring open to me: all existence here wants to become words, all becoming here wants to learn words from me.⁵⁴

Zarathustra describes his insight as a sense of unity and oneness with time and all becoming. He is not putting into words an experience of separateness from existence. On the contrary, he is able to speak of the wonder of existence precisely because he speaks for it as an integral part of it. He has not gained his understanding of the 'clearness and openness' of existence as a result of prolonged, purposeful withdrawal from the world. Rather, the insight has come to him because of his interaction with the world and the subsequent return home to solitude. Loneliness has been a precursor to the insights which now dispel all loneliness.

As Lampert points out, solitary contemplation and the insights that arise as a result of it can lead either to greatness or to madness.⁵⁵ Accordingly then, solitude is a challenge that can either kill one or make one stronger. In Lampert's words, 'those who go into the desert take upon themselves what is hardest' and, therefore, they are able to gain 'refinement'⁵⁶ of the spirit not possible for others. *Zarathustra* contains tests that the individual must pass in order to become himself. One must be able to contemplate the weightiest thoughts of existence in the most abject loneliness and transform it to the solitude that is one's home. This home is transient and it contains no comforts offered by permanent entities. Yet it provides the individual with the greatest resource for authentic living, that of a transparent truth - if he is prepared to open his eyes to it.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.* III: 9.

⁵⁵ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 102

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

The connection between greatness and destiny can now be explained. It is not the case that greatness arises from the successful completion of a task. *Zarathustra* concludes without the reader finding out whether the protagonist's message has been taken seriously by anyone. Nietzsche defines the greatness in a person as consisting of autonomy and the ability to demand more from himself. The connection between destiny and greatness, then, is that a person will pursue his destiny in spite of the disapproval of the world. He will listen to the demands of his own will rather than the demands of others; he will be strong enough to live with the conflict this creates because to him the opprobrium of the church or the people does not matter. He sets himself willingly apart from the masses, but he never feels lonely.

In the same situation, the timid man would willingly bow down to the demands of his society; he would seek for conventional greatness, as it is defined by prevailing institutions. He would lack any autonomy or ability to create new values, and his greatness is merely due to conformity to old values. In other words, he has no will or vision of his own, his behaviour is reactive rather than active. His world-view is fragmented; there are many enemies like time and loneliness; he perceives himself as the victim of circumstances rather than the victor over them.

Apart from autonomy, Nietzsche values endurance and patience in those he regards as the great men of history:

On education. - I have gradually seen the light as to the most universal deficiency in our kind of cultivation and education: no one learns, no one strives after, no one teaches - *the endurance of solitude*.⁵⁷

Because of their capacity for patience and endurance the exceptional individuals have a different ability for learning. Through this learning, they gain further insights that enhance further capacities for patience and endurance. In other words, because they possess the will to power that ordinary individuals are devoid of, they are able to become conscious of their destiny. The result of this further increase in understanding is, of course, an increase in their will to power:

But I and my destiny - we do not speak to Today, neither do we speak to the Never: we have patience and time and more than time. For it must come one day and may not pass by.

What must come one day and may not pass by? Our great Hazard, our great, far-off empire of man, the thousand-year empire of Zarathustra.

⁵⁷ *Daybreak* 443.

How far may that 'far off' be? What do I care! But I am not less certain of it on that account - I stand securely with both feet upon this foundation, ...⁵⁸

Ordinary individuals become impatient and frustrated if they cannot attain their mediocre goals because of the unpredictability of existence in the form of time and change. The foundations of their convictions are easily shaken because they are not autonomously chosen nor cultivated. Zarathustra's patience, in contrast, equips him to wait for his destiny for ever because he is one with time and destiny. In other words, he is sustained by his Dionysian insight into the meaning of existence:

Zarathustra is a dancer - how he that has the hardest, most terrible insight into reality, that has thought the "most abysmal idea", nevertheless does not consider it an objection to existence, not even to its eternal recurrence - but rather one reason more for being himself the eternal Yes to all things, 'the tremendous, unbounded saying Yes and Amen' - 'Into all abysses I still carry the blessings of my saying Yes' - But this is the concept of Dionysus again.⁵⁹

Where the ordinary individual keeps well away from the abysses of doubt and uncertainty, there the 'great man' goes actively out of his way to find the deepest abysses in order to test his strength and his will in them. Whether he survives or perishes in so doing does not matter to one who is a piece of fate, a seamless part of the abyss that is existence.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have explored Nietzsche's use of the concepts of loneliness and solitude. Firstly, I dealt with them as the opposites of each other. I argued that loneliness is regarded as the enemy by those who fear it; they see it as an entirely negative condition. For them it is a concrete entity that threatens their concept of themselves which is formed in the company of others. This reliance on others as the source of self and value, according to Nietzsche, deprives the 'timid' of opportunities for development that are possible for those who are able to transform their loneliness to creative solitude. For the exceptional individuals, solitude brings out the positive aspects of existence, it is a welcome friend rather than an enemy.

From this developmental account of how loneliness can be transformed into solitude I concluded that they can function as precursors to each other. The creative individual can transform his loneliness into solitude; the first is a prerequisite for the second. I argued that Nietzsche's own creative life is an example of such transformations, and that *Zarathustra* is one

⁵⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* IV 1.

⁵⁹ *Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra', 6.

of their fruits. The less able individuals may be able to cope with brief periods of solitary existence, but because of their lack of creative abilities, any prolongation of these can only be regarded by them as threatening loneliness.

I have argued that solitude is a subtle feeling rather than a static condition because of its relationship to the authentic, passionate Dionysian mode of living. It is a feeling because of its pervasiveness and immediacy; it enables the exceptional individual, who has a positive attitude both to his finitude and to time's passing, to respond spontaneously rather than dogmatically to all events, both 'positive' and 'negative', in time.

Nietzsche emphasizes the positive value of solitude most of all because of its relationship to truth. Only in solitude can one develop an understanding of the meaning of human existence. Only based on this understanding can the exceptional individual create his or her own authentic values which celebrate the transience of existence. In other words, for this individual the very thing which robs other lives of meaning gives the opportunity to create unique meanings.

I have argued that Nietzsche does not refer to any mystical conception of the meaning of life. He simply argues that in solitude one is confronted with the finitude of human existence, the thought of which many people escape to the company of others. In his mind, then, there is an obvious connection between the fear of loneliness and the fear of transience. Those who fear death fear loneliness; those who accept death in every moment are comfortable with living alone in solitude. It is important to note, however, that this is not the same as the ascetic's withdrawal from the world of problems. Rather, it means that solitude is necessary for the gathering of strength for action. Authentic living in a finite world requires that the individual attempts not only to understand but also to help to solve the problems that are due to ignorance and negative attitudes to time. The most insurmountable human problem associated with transience is that of death; I will discuss it in the next chapter.

Chapter Six

Time and Death

Introduction

In this chapter I deal with the ultimate test of attitudes towards the finitude of time for all individuals: the challenge posed by death. I discuss the four possible ways in which death, according to Nietzsche, may not be regarded as the end of life.

Firstly, a different understanding of death is possible if it is recognised that death is not only the end but that it is present in every moment of life. From the moment an individual is born, he starts a journey towards death. This perspective on living is founded on a particular conception of the self promoted by Nietzsche. If one acknowledges that the self is not a stable, permanent entity in life, its dissolution in death is only the last stage of a process that has been going on throughout each individual existence.

The second way in which death may not be seen as the end of an individual life relates to Nietzsche's discussion of the value of history for life. It provides a way of not viewing individual deaths, even one's own, as the end of events. A critical understanding of the contribution of the great figures of history provides one with another special sense of the self. Through the appreciation of history the self gains extra depth. When it is seen as a product of millennia, it is viewed as continuous with the selves of previous generations. This identification of the present self with the selves of the historical past, however, also provide it with less stability because in this case it cannot be strictly located in one time and at one place.

Thirdly, the sense of self in Nietzsche's thought is connected to the way in which an individual views the death of God. Zarathustra announces this to the inhabitants of the village of Motley Cow. Those individuals whose sense of self is derived from their belief in the existence of God begin dying at the news of the death of God. For them future life has no foundations; even the past is deprived of all value if it was not, after all, determined by God. For the independent individuals, however, the death of God means liberation from those negative values that precipitate death in life. The sense of freedom enhances life in every moment. Choices are possible even at the final moment of death, even if it is not coloured by the expectation of an afterlife in another form. Nietzsche argues that an individual should choose the right time to die.

I show that this does not mean that he is a proponent of suicide. Rather, his exhortation relates to the understanding of his task by each individual; the right time to die is when he is fully committed to it even if he does not accomplish it.

A fourth way in which individual attitudes to death may be transformed from fear to affirmation relates to viewing life as an aesthetic rather than as a moral phenomenon. Nietzsche's emphasis on aesthetic perspectives towards existence are discussed in detail in the final chapter of this thesis.

It is an obvious fact of biology that death is present in every moment of human existence. On the individual level, aging takes place; cells die and are not replaced. On the level of any society, deaths of others are witnessed by the living; it is an inescapable fact of life. Nietzsche, however, argues for more than this. He demands that one should live affirmatively in spite of life's transience.

Nietzsche values both art and the critical understanding of history for their ability to transcend the finitude of individual existence in the world. He makes a strong case for their superiority as authentic, truthful approaches to living. He contrasts their power to enhance life with the inferior understanding of it furnished by the idea of God and the related metaphysical concepts of illusory permanence.

Nietzsche postulates two concepts of eternity, the 'Heraclitean' and the 'Dionysian' in order to deal with the problem of death. The Heraclitean concept relates to the world of flux; if death is simply part of the constantly changing scenes of existence, it cannot be separated from them as something different or special. In other words, on this conception death does not exist as a stable entity or a goal to be reached at the end of life. It is therefore an attempt to negate the existence of death in life.

Nietzsche's Dionysian concept of eternity is the superior to the Heraclitean one because it relates to an affirmative aesthetic response to the presence of death in every moment. In other words, death as an integral part of life is not negated but rather celebrated. It therefore requires a fundamental transformation of attitudes towards finite existence, whereas the Heraclitean concept requires no such transformations. The Dionysian moments' insights into the nature of death are unique and therefore add value to the world.

In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche uses several death scenes which are parodies of those in religious texts in order to highlight the misunderstandings promoted by the interpreters of these texts. At the same time these scenes serve to illustrate the possibility of alternative attitudes to death.

The Significance of the Death Scenes in *Zarathustra*

There are several death scenes in *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche uses these as a philosophical and literary device to 'invert' traditional values. The meaning of each death, as it is explained by him, is the opposite to the way the meaning of death is conventionally understood as a harm.¹

The first death in *Zarathustra* follows the accidental fall of the tightrope walker in the beginning of the narrative. Zarathustra tells the man dying of his injuries that his soul will be dead before his body, thus reversing the Christian teachings on death and the preservation of the soul.² For Christians, the death of the body does not matter if the continuity of the soul in the next life is assured. Why does the soul of the tightrope walker, then, die before his body? Nietzsche would answer that his soul began dying when he lost confidence in his ability to reach the other side. The faltering of his steps and the subsequent fall are evidence of the failure of his spirit.

Nietzsche's second 'inversion' of traditional doctrines concerns the relationship of death to eternity; as such it functions as a criticism of religious doctrines, just like the example of the tightrope walker. References to eternity in religious works emphasize the care of the soul that will persist into infinity. The predominantly negative aspects of life on this earth must be endured for the sake of a future eternal life. For the believer, his life does not end in death. Rather, it becomes timeless and as such possesses all 'positive' values associated with permanence and none of the 'negative' ones associated with change.

Nietzsche emphasizes the challenge posed by adversities which the strong individual must meet to become stronger. In the same way he insists that '*Death* has to be reinterpreted! We thereby *reconcile* ourselves with what is actual, with the dead world'.³ Living for the moment means living in the actual, each moment of it contains both joy and suffering. The dead world is also present in the actual; the reinterpretation of death requires the reconciliation of it with the

¹ See, for instance, Julian Lamont, 'A solution to the puzzle of when death harms its victims', *Australasian Journal of Philosophy*, vol. 76, No. 2, pp. 198-212.

² Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Prologue 6.

³ KSA 9: 11, 70, quoted in Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

actual, seeing both life and death as integral aspects of it. Every moment of living is also a moment of dying. Every individual is at every moment balanced on a tightrope between life and death. In other words, if this is the case, then there cannot be anything permanent in life. Each individual is at every moment caught in the flux and precariously balanced on the verge of extinction. Nietzsche offers several solutions to the overcoming of nihilism in spite of this; one of these is the doctrine of eternal recurrence.

Eternal Recurrence as a Solution to the Problem of Death

The metaphor of the tightrope changes to the metaphor of the gateway later in the narrative of *Zarathustra*; it depicts a moment in circular time.⁴ Death, as portrayed by Nietzsche, is another gateway from which lanes run into eternity. It is not the end of life, but merely a stage in a life that will be repeated for ever.

The postulation of the doctrine of eternal recurrence as a means of overcoming the harm of death may plausibly be contrasted with traditional religious approaches to it in the following ways. First, it could be likened to doctrines of reincarnation common in Eastern religions. According to these, death is not the end of any individual's life, but rather the commencement of the same life in another form. What form the next life takes will depend on how the previous life has been lived. The better the previous life, the better the future; a bad life merits a worse rebirth. In other words, the doctrines of reincarnation emphasize the continuity of life - no-one ever truly dies - and thus provide both practical and metaphysical comfort to the believers.

There are, of course, also some parallels with the Eastern doctrines of reincarnation and the Christian view on death:

In all its precepts this ancient wisdom holds that wakefulness exists for the sake of sleep, or, by extension, that life is to be lived for the sake of a good death or a good life after death.⁵

The religious doctrines of the past two millennia have the same precept: this life is no good, after this life comes a better life that will not have the negative features that make it so unbearable on this earth. A 'heavenly' existence will not contain any pain nor suffering, eternal life is granted to the redeemed. Those who lead a 'sinful' existence on earth and who do not repent of their wrongdoing are condemned to eternal suffering and death. The emphasis is again

⁴*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, III: 2, 2.

⁵ Lampert, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

on the continuity of existence; the worldly, imperfect existence is merely a prelude to a perfect, eternal life as a compensation for all prior pain and suffering. Metaphysical comfort is gained in the form of 'the idea of enduring forever in a static heaven'.⁶

Rosen argues that among its various functions the doctrine of eternal recurrence is intended to have a particular function in relation to the attitude of the exceptional individual to death:

In order to live the life of the highest individual, which Zarathustra represents by the expression 'superman', I must not simply be a noble, creative, courageous person; my personality must itself be overcome in its self-expression as the release of energy toward a higher goal. This release of energy is my extinction as a personality. The doctrine of eternal recurrence is intended among its various functions to recompense me for my loss of personality, to render me secure against the fear of death.⁷

The fear of death can only be overcome if the self is not seen as a stable entity. For those who do not cling to the 'self' of dualism to provide them with metaphysical comfort, its preservation through time is a matter of complete indifference. Though in an odd way, it could provide even greater comfort. If no self exists, there is nothing to lose by death.

Rosen argues further that to believe in the doctrine of eternal recurrence is 'no worse' than to believe in a static heaven. To him both beliefs amount to similar metaphysical comforts aimed at 'indemnification against fear of death'.⁸ In other words, the preservation of the self indemnifies one against impermanence. This argument, however, fails to take into account Nietzsche's many arguments for the value of impermanence and his arguments against the worship of non-existent ontological entities.

Rosen, then, argues that the doctrine of eternal recurrence does not provide a successful alternative to the Christian or Hindu doctrines of reincarnation. All three, according to him, teach that the desired aim of all actions in life is the perpetuation of the individual forever, albeit in different forms. All of them contain the same teaching on death: 'Death at the appointed moment is the price I pay to live for ever'.⁹ The doctrine of eternal recurrence, according to Rosen, assists the atheist contemplating it to overcome his fear of death in exactly the same way that a Christian believer of church doctrines would. For each death is not the end of life, nor the end of

⁶ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Ibid.*

the self, but rather a stage of living and becoming the person you truly are. 'If life eternally recurs, I do not in fact die.'¹⁰

In summary, Nietzsche deals with the problem of death through eternal recurrence in the following way. His emphasis is on the effect of the thought of return. How would you live in such a way that if not only your life but also your death recurred, you could affirm each moment, including the last moments of dying with maximum value. The thought of eternal recurrence, in other words, is a direct confrontation with the prospect of death. It cannot be ignored, but rather must be welcomed with fervent craving.

Lloyd argues that the idea of eternal recurrence is 'radical' if it is understood as moments each of which contain every aspect of living. According to her, it must not be interpreted 'as a substitute for the belief in immortality'.¹¹ She argues that Nietzsche is concerned with motion rather than with immobility.¹² I agree with Lloyd - the doctrine of eternal recurrence can be interpreted as a unique description of reality in which each moment has a particular depth. Conventional ways of describing time cannot take this depth into account; Nietzsche's alternative is successful to the extent that it does take it into account. Lloyd compares it with 'the image of the insect in amber';¹³ it captures both the impermanence of the moment and its eternity in one.

The religious concept of immortality refers to existence in a state of immobility, the individual 'soul' is fixed permanently in another world beyond reality. Nietzsche, however, insists that the world should be understood as an on-going process. Lloyd shows how Zarathustra's animals - and some readers of *Zarathustra* - convert 'the idea into the relatively unthreatening cycle of death and renewal'.¹⁴ In other words, the animals and careless readers draw the conclusion that the doctrine of eternal recurrence is not substantially different from Christian teachings on death and immortality. If this were the case, then there would be nothing more affirmative about welcoming eternal recurrence than there is to desire death as a Christian martyr: '... some of the first Christians sought an early death in an effort to get to heaven as soon as possible ...'¹⁵ For the martyr, death is not frightening because of the prospect of infinite

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. 118.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁵ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

heavenly rewards. For the contemplator of eternal recurrence, death is not the end because of the prospect of constant renewal of this life.

There is, however, a significant difference between the ways in which the ideas of Christianity and eternal recurrence force an individual to contemplate his own death. Christian doctrines are a system of values that are externally imposed on the individual; they have to be believed rather than understood. The value of earthly life must be denied without question in order that eternal life can be valued. Death must be seen as the gateway to a better life - no alternative interpretations are permitted.

Nietzsche was able to take a different perspective on death because the idea of eternal recurrence came to him as a blinding insight - he did not learn it from anyone else. Parkes argues that this kind of understanding of death as the actual component of living, and the psychological stamina to reconcile oneself with this experience, 'would seem to derive from less than ordinary experience of being-in-the-world'.¹⁶ He refers to Nietzsche's sudden understanding of the idea of recurrence at Sils Maria. His 'immersion in the landscape' produced a 'remarkable outpouring of cosmic feeling'.¹⁷ As well as experiencing a spatial unity with the world, Nietzsche became aware of 'the temporal dimensions of the constitution of experience'.¹⁸

Death, then, is not a gateway at which each person arrives and passes through; it is an integral part of the lane on which each of us must travel. In other words, it is not the end stage of life at which one suddenly arrives. It is not the opposite of life, a black horizon at the end of a white foreground. Rather, its many colours are blended with the many colours of life in a way that makes one indistinguishable from the other. If, as Nietzsche argues, there is no essential self at any moment of living each of which is also a moment of dying, then death does not obliterate anything irreplaceable.

One of the concepts related to death that does not readily lend itself to either linguistic expression or to linguistic analysis is 'eternity'. For Nietzsche it means a dimension of every moment in time, not an infinite moment out of time. I will now turn to Nietzsche's concepts Heraclitean and Dionysian concepts of eternity discussed by Sadler.

¹⁶ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 300.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 301.

Nietzsche's 'Heraclitean' and 'Dionysian' Concepts of Eternity

Sadler is concerned about the apparent incompatibility of two different concepts of eternity in Nietzsche's thought, the 'Heraclitean' and the 'Dionysian'.¹⁹ He shows how Nietzsche argues in his earliest works for 'Heraclitean eternal Becoming ... [which] could be endless Becoming without repetition'.²⁰ This shapeless flux does not pose any challenge to attitudes towards time, and it cannot generate any values in relation to it. Nietzsche, however, later becomes concerned with ranking individual values according to attitudes to time. He therefore presents the doctrine of eternal recurrence in his later works as a test of the most affirmative, Dionysian attitude. The Heraclitean model of eternity as becoming makes it impossible to affirm something that is in a constant state of flux, something that never exists as an entity that stands outside it. How can there be any individual, affirming acts 'if there is nothing one can hold before oneself as some kind of "object"?'²¹

Sadler claims that Nietzsche posits the doctrine of eternal recurrence as an 'object' worthy of Dionysian affirmation: 'by affirming the return of the same "things" ... all recourse to another world or transcendental ground can apparently be avoided'.²² But even if the problem of having to appeal to transcendental entities is overcome, the problem of "things", ... "fictions" which are unfaithful to Becoming' still remains.²³ Nietzsche, however, emphasizes that what is affirmed is life and death in every moment, not as separate 'objects', but as unique insights which transform the ordinary way of seeing existence as 'things' to be dealt with and to be overcome. In other words, Nietzsche posits a positive, holistic perspective on transience which necessitates no recourse to metaphysics. Rather, it represents a successful way of overcoming the constraints of metaphysical thinking.

Higgins takes a very different approach: she conflates the Dionysian and Heraclitean aspects of the doctrine of eternal recurrence. She implies that the Dionysian moments are only arbitrary instants in what is a seamless flow of recurrences. These moments do not exist as real entities in the Heraclitean flux:

¹⁹ Sadler, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 151.

²³ *Ibid.*

'The past' and 'the future' are only relative designations on Nietzsche's cyclical model, and ultimately they are not distinguishable from one another. The present moment is the only moment in time that stands out from the swirl of recurrence.²⁴

The present moment stands out from the others simply because of its immediacy; it is neither superior nor inferior to any other moment. Death as the 'final' moment, on this reading then, can only harm the dying person for an instant. It cannot harm anyone else; neither can it harm this person *antemortem* nor *postmortem*.²⁵

If the moment of death is merely an instant separated from the 'swirl', then Heraclitean Becoming provides a plausible solution to the problem of death. If death is seen as a 'thing' or as an 'object' on the Dionysian model, it cannot be seen as an integral part of every moment. It has to be separated from living if it is to be made an object of affirmation. If it is contained within the Heraclitean flux of existence, however, it does not pose a problem because of its separateness. The problem of how it then functions as a challenge to attitudes towards finite time still remains, however, because in this case it has no existence.

Another problem posed by the inclusion of death in the Heraclitean flux is the following. It appears to entail negative connotations for all life as portrayed by Nietzsche in *Zarathustra*. The 'Preachers of Death' reject life because of the suffering that they witness everywhere.²⁶ The majority of people are a captive audience to this preaching on the misery of all existence. Nietzsche argues that both the preachers and the listeners are more dead than alive while still living because of their inability to evaluate life in more positive terms. Many of the scenes and metaphors associated with death raise a question about alternatives to the nihilism experienced by ordinary people through contemplation of it. On a personal level, death represents failure to the individual; life is perceived as meaningless if death is everywhere.²⁷ In this case it seems to make no difference whatsoever how an individual life is led because no achievements are permanent. All projects and goals are not only evaluated negatively at the end of life, they do not have any significance at any stage of life. In this case it makes no difference when an individual dies.

In summary, Nietzsche's Dionysian concept of eternity is superior to the Heraclitean concept for the following reasons. It is more likely to elicit those positive responses to life and death that are demanded by his exhortations to live for the moment and to become what one is. It

²⁴ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 175.

²⁵ Lamont, *op. cit.*

²⁶ Thus Spoke Zarathustra I: 9.

is closer to Nietzsche's concept of 'great health', the stage at which an individual has overcome the sickness of nihilism and has gained the highest level of mastery over existence.²⁸ In other words, it is more closely related to his valuations of art and history as those features of life that enable one to meet his demands for authentic living. One aspect of this is the right time to die: I now turn to the analysis of this claim.

When Is the Right Time to Die?

Nietzsche argues that some people die too late, others die too early. According to him, each person has the right time to die; this time should be chosen by him voluntarily:

I commend to you my sort of death, voluntary death that comes to me because I wish it. And when shall I wish it? - He who has a goal and an heir wants death at the time most favourable to his goal and his heir.²⁹

Nietzsche's exhortation to die voluntarily at the appropriate time raises many questions. For instance, how can anyone know when the right time to die is? Nietzsche argues that the life of an individual is about understanding his particular mission in life. Once it is understood, the person sets about fulfilling it. To die at the right time does not necessarily mean that the person must accomplish a particular task successfully. He may well perish in the attempt; to live and to die at the right time and in the right way involves living and dying for an individual purpose. The opposite of this is to drag out an existence on conditions dictated by others. In other words, the value of a particular life or death cannot be measured by its length nor by its 'usefulness' to society. To die at the right time does not make an individual life meaningless even if there is no afterlife. On the contrary, to die at the right time is, in Nietzsche's terms, an integral part of a truly meaningful life. An eternal life after death robs all existence of meaning; to live for it is to live on someone else's terms.

The second question posed by Nietzsche's advocacy of voluntary death is that it appears to make him a proponent of suicide. Although this interpretation has some merit, his views on suicide differ significantly from other spokesmen for suicide such as the Stoics who, according to Nietzsche, argued for 'emancipation from the self'. If there is no stable self that one needs to get rid of, then it makes no sense to escape from it through suicide.

²⁷ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

²⁸ *Human, All Too Human*, Preface 3-6.

²⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 21.

Nietzsche's many examples of dying while courting danger emphasize the rightness of dying at a time when one is most fully engaged with life and when one consequently finds it most pleasant. He would also not approve of suicide due to personal distress - to him this would mean a cowardly escape from life. To exit from living because of personal unhappiness induced by the state of the world would lend credibility to those preachers of death who argue that life is refuted because it contains pain and suffering. Nietzsche's approach to the problem of pain and suffering is to affirm them and thus to transform them creatively; he searches for an aesthetic justification of existence.

As well as arguing that for each individual there is the right way to live and the right time to die, Nietzsche also claims that some people should not have been born at all. On the one hand, their mere existence is undesirable because their lives have no value to themselves. On the other, they contribute nothing to the world. If this is the case, then does Nietzsche argue that some lives are in the final analysis meaningless? Do his statements regarding the undesirability of these lives simply lend support to those who claim that he was a nihilist? This claim can be refuted by the consideration of Nietzsche's insistence on the necessity of rank ordering. He argues that some lives have no intrinsic value because some individuals do not possess characteristics that add value to the world. They may, however, have instrumental value for the more superior individuals who in their turn enhance the positive aspects of existence. I do not mean that some individuals should merely serve as slaves to the masters. I think that some of these 'slaves' may, for instance, become topics for valuable works of art which they could not produce themselves. *Zarathustra* is an example of such a work, its inspiration are partly the small, last men. Without them to provide the contrast, the praise of the qualities of the Superman would make less sense. Not even the basest lives, then, are entirely futile if they contribute to the value of an exceptional life and thus add value to the world as a whole.

The members of the 'herd' are incapable of benefiting from the lives or deaths of others because they cannot transform their negative attitudes to finite existence to more positive ones; they cannot compose elegies nor write tragedies in order to celebrate it. Death, then, can only be a challenge to those are different. For the rest, Nietzsche implies that it is feared because of the unpredictable harm it causes. Paradoxically, only those individuals who acknowledge the

presence of death in every moment, can live it to the full. Only they can live truthfully in the moment.

The 'Realm of Death' in Every Moment

There are parallels between an individual's attitude to time and his attitude to death. Both the passing of time and the inevitability of death are seen as 'something terrifying' by most individuals, this is 'the normal human attitude toward death'.³⁰ Most people fear the passing of time and the approach of death because these related aspects of living are unknown to them and because they are entirely beyond their control. The passage of time draws each person inevitably closer to death, the only certainty in life.

The apparent connection made between an individual's fear of time and fear of death must be qualified in two ways. First, although the connection is obvious, it is not necessary. A person at the prime of his life, for instance, may fear time's passing because he is always short of time; there are not enough hours in the day for all of the tasks his employer expects him to accomplish. The thought of death may never enter the mind of this person under pressure of time, in spite of the fact that he may well die of an unexpected heart attack.

A second qualification needs to be made in relation to both attitudes to time and to death. In between the extremes of actual fear or intense affirmation, there exist degrees of anxiety, curiosity, and also total indifference towards either the passing of time or the prospect of death. A particular individual may encounter all of these emotional experiences; these will, of course, depend both on circumstances and individual dispositions. Those who are closest to death often have the least fear of it because they have become accustomed to it, especially if it follows a prolonged illness.³¹

Nietzsche maintains that the things which cannot be made simpler or more familiar are those which we most fear and resent. In other words, he argues that there are standard responses to the standard problems of existence. However, most individuals respond to death with fear because it is not a standard problem. For those for whom it is a daily fact, it may not be an object of fear. The terminally ill person, for instance, has become used to its presence for months,

³⁰ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

³¹ I make this observation as a nurse involved in the care of the dying.

sometimes years. In other words, both their concept of themselves and of time have undergone changes as a result of their experience of fatal disease.

Lloyd discusses the coalescence of life and death through the novels of Virginia Woolf. In these:

Death is not a sudden transition from solidity to shadow. ... Our lives are insubstantial. It is not as if we lose at death a solidity we assuredly have during life.

Virginia Woolf's novels grapple with issues of the continued reality of the past - of the continued presence in life of the dead.³²

Nietzsche argues similarly against the solidity of the 'self'. He maintains that only by risking this 'self', by courting danger and death, can one truly become what he is. The dead are constantly present in his work as a writer. He discusses heroes of the past as if they still lived in his own life. The memory of his father's death still 'lives on' in *Zarathustra*: the dog howls at Zarathustra just as it did at the child Friedrich at the time his father died.³³

Parkes agrees that life and death co-exist in every moment:

The underworld as the realm of death - a psychological realm that we inhabit every moment of the day and night, rather than an eschatological realm reached only at the end of our days - enriches experience by rounding life out on the far side at every moment.³⁴

Death in every moment enriches life in every moment is correct. If death did not exist as a component of our lives, we would hardly need to meditate on the lack of solidity of our personalities. This ephemeral nature of existence may not pose a problem for the unreflective mind. For the thoughtful, however, it is not only a source of fear, but a source of creativity. It adds another dimension to life because of the way it raises questions about the meaning of life. It is hard to imagine life without the many creative responses to death that enhance it in the form of requiems, elegies and paintings. Our lives are richer because of the presence of death; in this I also include the lessons taught by the dying to those who care for them.

The uniqueness and richness of life would be diminished without the 'realm of death'.

Parkes quotes Rilke to support this argument:

Like the moon, so life surely has a side that is constantly turned away from us, and which is not life's opposite, but its completion to perfection, to plenitude, to the truly whole and full sphere and globe of *Being*.³⁵

³² Lloyd, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

³³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 2.

³⁴ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

³⁵ Rainer Maria Rilke, *Briefe*, Frankfurt, 1950, 806-7, 896, quoted in *Ibid.*, n44, pp. 412-3.

Rilke goes further than Parkes in his praise of death as part of life. It does not merely enrich his life; life without death could not attain diversity nor perfection in diversity. This assertion runs counter to the conventional view of existence; life would be perfect if it contained no pain and suffering nor death. Nietzsche's depiction of Zarathustra's extraordinary state between life and death implies, however, that life is more complete in the shadow of death:

He [Zarathustra] fell down like a dead man and remained like a dead man for a long time. ... At last, after seven days, Zarathustra raised himself in his bed, took a rosy apple in his hand, smelt it, and found its odour pleasant.³⁶

Zarathustra sees the world in different terms because his ordinary faculties were temporarily suspended. He has held an apple in his hand many times before; this is not a unique experience. What makes it unique in this instance, however, is the transformation of his perceptions as a result of his 'near-death' experience.

The autobiographical components of Nietzsche's writings indicate that his ideas of affirmation in ordinary life are focused on pain and suffering. He implies that illness is a state in which a person has 'a foot in both camps', in both life and death. A return to health is preceded by a period of convalescence characterised by acute visions of life's precariousness and fragility on the one hand and its uniqueness and perfection on the other:

From this morbid isolation, from the desert of these years of temptation and experiment, it is still a long road to that tremendous overflowing certainty and health which may not dispense even with sickness, as a means and fish-hook of knowledge, to that *mature* freedom of spirit which is equally self-mastery and discipline of the heart and permits access to many and contradictory modes of thought - ... that superfluity which grants to the free spirit the dangerous privilege of living experimentally and of being allowed to offer itself to adventure: the master's privilege of the free spirit!³⁷

Nietzsche argues that those who have been closest to death are those who are most likely to have overcome their fear of death. Having seen it face-to-face, they have understood that it is not something separate from their lives; it is, at the same time, their past and their future, as Higgins and Parkes also argue.

The individuals who have overcome sickness and have reached '*great health*'³⁸ through convalescence come to accept that to die at the right time is to die at any time, simply because, for

³⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* III: 13, 2.

³⁷ *Human, All Too Human*, Preface 3-6.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

them, there is no wrong time. For those who fear death, it will always come too soon; from Nietzsche's perspective, they die too late, because they cling to a life that is 'life's opposite'.³⁹

Furthermore, the strong individuals who possess great health do not depend on God for its achievement or maintenance. The average individuals, in contrast, cannot attain a state of self-sufficiency as long as they delude themselves that God exists. The death of God, according to Nietzsche, is necessary for the physical and intellectual integrity of an individual.

The Death of God

So far it has been argued that people generally fear death because it means the final loss of the self. With the loss of self all control over events is lost, there is no more future for the individual to exert his influence over. The future may even become a matter of indifference for those who no longer enjoy the prospect of participating in it.

I turn now to the connections identified by Nietzsche between the fear evoked by the thought of one's own death and that of God. The death of God obviously matters most to those individuals whose self-concept and value systems are most closely founded on the posited existence of God. There are several interconnected ways in which the death of God diminishes a 'timid' individual's self-concept even further.

First, the presumed orderliness and purposefulness of the world depends on the existence of God. Many people, including philosophers, have been convinced that behind all the apparently purposive features of the world, such as the human eye, there must be a beneficent designer. This being 'despite appearances ... arranges things so as to maximize good'.⁴⁰ The self-worth of a Christian is enhanced in two ways as a result of his belief in the 'watchmaker'. He is able to see himself as an integral part of the purposeful design of the world, he has been put on earth to serve a special mission assigned to him by God. He has been selected because of the contribution he can make as God's emissary, for instance.

The major flaw of the design argument is that the comparison of his works to a man-made object points to a God that is less than all-powerful. In spite of this problem, those who believe in his omnipotence hold themselves to be allied with the creator of all order and purpose:

³⁹ Rilke, *op. cit.*

⁴⁰ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 31.

... by devoting yourselves with enthusiasm and making a sacrifice of yourselves you enjoy the ecstatic thought of henceforth being at one with the powerful being, whether a god or a man, to whom you dedicate yourselves: you revel in the feeling of his power, to which your sacrifice is an additional witness. The truth of the matter is that you only *seem* to sacrifice yourselves: in reality you transform yourselves in thought into gods and enjoy yourselves as such.⁴¹

According to Nietzsche's diagnosis, behind the seemingly selfless sacrifice of those who look towards God to give meaning and value to their lives there is always the will to power. Unlike the genuinely powerful individual whose source of power is his own will, those who are less powerful must search for an external source in whose glory they can bask. They resent time's passing because it is likely to diminish what little earthly, contingent power they may have. They may, for instance, be in a position of authority because of the work they do. They lose every bit of it when they become unemployed. They therefore need to turn to an unchanging, eternal source of power that cannot be taken from them. The contemplation of their enhanced power as the 'chosen people' provides them with a source of enjoyment that no earthly misfortune can lessen.

In other words, those who cannot create power nor attract more power, must create an illusion of an otherworldly power. Those who are able to concentrate more power in their own person do not have any need nor interest to focus their gaze blindly elsewhere. They are able to see the illusory nature of permanent, unchanging entities as the beings who confer value and meaning to existence. They have 'power to make [them]selves what [they] are in the present'.⁴²

As mentioned earlier, Nietzsche acknowledges the hard life of those who attempt to follow their own path in spite of the pressures of society. He has Zarathustra declare that even he was initially misled by the 'deluded fancy' of the existence of God:

Then the world seemed to me the work of a suffering and tormented God. ...
Then the world seemed to me the dream and fiction of a God; coloured vapour
before the eyes of a discontented God. ... this world, the eternally imperfect, the
eternal and imperfect image of a contradiction - an intoxicating joy to its
imperfect creator - that is what I once thought the world.⁴³

Zarathustra's declaration, however, deviates from the doctrines of Christianity in significant ways. These make it clear that even at his most deluded he has not accepted much of the 'ancient wisdom'. The latter commonly attributes to God the qualities of omnipotence, omniscience and perfect goodness. From these perfections can be drawn the logical conclusion that the being

⁴¹ *Daybreak* 215.

⁴² Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

⁴³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 3.

possessed of them could not have helped but to create a perfect world, if he created the world in his image as the teaching goes. For Zarathustra, *his world becomes perfect* ⁴⁴ once he overcomes his fear of transience, once he reaches great health and can affirm the world as it is. In other words, there is only one world of pain and suffering without any extrinsic meaning. Zarathustra, however, creates a world of his own by transforming the meaning of these by creating his own values which affirm transience and death.

Zarathustra highlights the selective attention paid by the religious to their doctrines. Although people who want to believe in God commonly seek proofs of his existence in the world, they are yet keen to ignore proofs to the opposite. Zarathustra argues that if there is a God, then this being must be one in the image of man and the world, 'a discontented, imperfect creator' who was powerless to create anything better. In order to escape his powerlessness he surrounds himself with 'colored smoke'. ⁴⁵ In other words, God's lack of omnipotence and omniscience leads him not only to deceive human beings but also himself. He is human in his incapacity to look either the world or himself squarely in the face; each is made tolerable only through colored smoke:

The creator wanted to look away from himself, so he created the world. It is intoxicating joy for the sufferer to look away from his suffering and to forget himself. Intoxicating joy and self-forgetting - that is what I once thought the world. ⁴⁶

Much of the narrative of *Zarathustra* describes the search for original alternatives to nihilism. These alternatives are required to counter and replace religious doctrines in a more substantial way than nihilism. Nietzsche does not regard the latter as a plausible alternative to the crisis of values; he claims that ultimately they promote nihilism because of their lack of foundation in world which they, on the contrary, denigrate.

Once the foundation provided by an external power is removed as a consequence of loss of faith, the former believer will feel totally powerless because the source of order and purpose in his world is removed. Higgins points out that 'low sense of self worth is [also] promoted by the Christian doctrine of human sinfulness' ⁴⁷ unless it is counteracted by a doctrine of redemption. The fluctuating low and high tides of a self-concept tied up with various Christian doctrines have parallels with the principles of utilitarianism and the associated petty shopkeeper mentalities

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* IV: 10.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.* I: 3, Kaufmann's translation.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

attacked by Nietzsche. Just like the utilitarian, the religious believer is compelled to keep his eyes for ever on the balance sheet, he must weigh up the gains and losses of the past against those of the future.

These careful calculations play no part in the actions of those individuals who are confident in their own strength to fulfil the goals they have set for themselves. They are willing to perish in pursuit of these, and they do not look for external rewards.

Another connection between the self-concept of an individual and the existence of God has been implied above. It relates to other diverse superior qualities represented by God: as well as being the ultimate source of order and meaning in the world, God's existence guarantees that permanence which is the opposite of the constant flux resented by those who are unable to cope with it. In a world of constant change everything, including the individual, perishes. Being part of God's world makes existence more stable and secure; only God can guarantee the fulfilment of one's desire for immortality. Nietzsche criticises this attitude both as deluded and as immodest:

So you want this lovely consciousness of yourself to last *forever*? Is that not immodest? Are you not mindful of all the other things which would then be obliged to *endure you* to all eternity, ...?⁴⁸

The desire for a permanent soul, according to Nietzsche, is a vain hope for several reasons that again illustrate the inconsistencies of religious beliefs. The very same 'preachers of death' who reject all life and who preach meekness and submission are yet arrogant enough to wish for an everlasting life in the shadow of an eternal transcendental being.

Those who preach the importance of acceding to the will of an all-powerful God at the same time rebel against him for having created finite beings like themselves. In order to disguise this unholy state of affairs, they must postulate the duality of existence as body and mind. In Nietzsche's terms, to want to change one thing is to want to change everything. In other words, those who resent the world as it is also resent God as he is and want to transform him.

The real connection between the significance of the death of God and that of the individual can now be revealed. What matters is not that God created man in his own image, what is important is that God conforms to man's image. If God dies, so do men, because their values die:

⁴⁷ Higgins, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

⁴⁸ *Daybreak* 211.

... if one is a Christian and is possessed by such a longing [to dissolve into something '*outside*'] one's goal is to be dissolved into God, to 'become wholly at one with him'.⁴⁹

God's existence is important to those who are not able to create their own values; they have to align themselves with God for the sake of power and related values. They need an object to which they are able to attach their impoverished values and which they can then claim as its source. God is, therefore, posited, for instance, as the omniscient being who despises the weaknesses of the flesh. He has, therefore, redeemed us from its burdens by endowing us with an eternal soul. One of the inconsistencies of the design argument for the existence of God is now apparent: you cannot on the one hand appeal to some purposeful features of contingent beings whose other similar features you refute as despicable. You cannot, for instance, appeal to the perfection of the human eye, while at the same time ignoring the human reproductive system as something 'dirty' and undesirable.

In contrast to those who need God to prop up their self-image, there are the 'aristocrats of the spirit' who do not depend on outside forces for their strength. They are capable of following their own paths: 'if one is Shakespeare one is satisfied only with being dissolved into images of the most passionate life'.⁵⁰ Nietzsche considers in this context whether both the religious and artistic ways of life are not 'at bottom flight from oneself'⁵¹ but decides elsewhere that this is not the case. Shakespeare is not dependent on the values handed down to him by god or his Christian society; he is an individual who can create his own by balancing the Apollonian and Dionysian aspects of his nature.

There are then, two kinds of individuals. There are those who depend on God for their values. Both God and the values associated with him must be eternal if they are to support the two-world framework which functions as the foundation of the self of these individuals. The world of bodily transience can be ignored if it will in future be substituted by one which offers a place for the everlasting soul. Those who cannot believe in this illusion have two alternatives: they can either conclude that the world has no meaning or they can create their own meaning through history and art. If Zarathustra is the representative of the latter kinds of individuals, then does it make any difference whether he lives or dies at any particular time?

⁴⁹ *Daybreak* 549.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

The Death of Zarathustra?

At the end of the narrative, Zarathustra tells Life that he is leaving her. This passage represents the final inversion regarding the meaning of Life. Zarathustra answers 'Yes' in reply to her inquiry 'O Zarathustra, I know it, you think of leaving me soon!'⁵² Taken literally, Zarathustra will die at the conclusion of the story. Alternatively, his departure from Life may be the beginning of another life.

One obvious, literal interpretation is that Zarathustra now heeds his own teaching and commits suicide because he has decided that for him this is the right time to die. If this was the case, then there must be good reasons for Zarathustra's decision. Some may argue that he decides to leave life because his mission among people has failed. At the conclusion of the narrative, the reader gains negligible evidence that he has been able to convince anyone of his message. Many people will continue to hold on to their belief in God and persist in their search for otherworldly, permanent values. Many will not be able to affirm the possibilities offered by the doctrine of eternal recurrence. They will abhor the thought of repetition as much as they will continue to abhor the prospect of death. They will go on resenting the past and fearing the future; the present will never be anything more than a bridge between those two points of time. The number of those who can live for each moment will not increase as a result of Zarathustra's teaching.

The arguments against the view that Zarathustra leaves Life because of disappointments and failures are stronger than the arguments for it, in spite of the lack of evidence of successes provided by the narrative. As discussed earlier, Nietzsche would not advocate the Epicurean solution of committing suicide when life becomes intolerable. Instead, he advocates that difficulties should not only be overcome, but seen as positive challenges. He argues that time, life and death must be reinterpreted in such ways that their recurrence can be affirmed. One of the themes in Nietzsche's writings is the importance of taking risks and attempting even those tasks that appear doomed to failure.

Judged, then, on the basis of worthwhile attempts, Zarathustra's mission has not been a failure. He has travelled far and wide, both in terms of metaphorical geographic locations and in terms of periods of solitude and companionship, in order to teach and also to learn. In other

⁵² *Ibid.* III: 15, 2.

words, he has used his time well; he has lived for the moment at least some of the time and gained invaluable insights as a result of this capacity.

It must be remembered that, according to Nietzsche, the rare individual who is able to create his own values is an individual who does not concern himself with the opinions of others. Therefore, the possibility that Zarathustra would commit suicide because of the censure of the herd must be completely discounted. His assertions that he can now see the world as perfect point to the fact that he regards his journeys from mountains to valleys and back again as success on his own terms.

Parkes argues that Zarathustra is departing life because his mission is accomplished. He refers to the many vegetal images of growth and ripeness contained in the narrative:

An abundance of loving care has rendered the vine of Zarathustra's soul fully ripe. The plant's flowering or ripening into the fullness of the fruit is often a sign that it is about to die, a death that may be the condition for the scattering of the seeds of new life. For Zarathustra as creator it is not just that everything ripe dies, but rather that 'All that is ripe - *wants* to die.'⁵³

In emphasizing the sunny aspects of Zarathustra's existence in the latter images of *Zarathustra*, Parkes ignores Nietzsche's earlier descriptions of the 'tree on the mountainside'.⁵⁴ The tree puts down stronger roots as a result of the adverse conditions it is subjected to: it grows and develops because of these, not in spite of them. In another context, Parkes refers to the strain of 'Buddhist renunciation' in some of Nietzsche's earlier writings.⁵⁵ In those, he argues that death has the advantage of making one invisible to others, removes one from their judgements. But as I argued above, the opinions of others do not matter to the exceptional individual. He would, then, not want to take advantage of the peace of mind offered by suicide.

The metaphors of ripeness can be interpreted in two different ways. One of these appears rather teleological: each organism has it in its nature to grow and develop towards a predetermined goal. This is an image of linear progress in linear time; phases of it can be distinguished and separated from each other. As such it is not compatible with Nietzsche's doctrine of eternal recurrence, nor does it represent the kind of uniqueness he seems to intend for the rare individuals. At times he refers to them as exotic plants which are more likely to perish without ever producing seed.

⁵³ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 200.

⁵⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 8.

⁵⁵ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 303.

In defence of Parkes, it can be argued that the cycle of growth that culminates in the production of seed and the death of the origin of those seeds is a most appropriate image of the eternal recurrence of the same. What I have argued above is that Nietzsche gives examples of diverse conditions in which this development takes place; both trial by adversity and unusually advantageous circumstances play a role in the emergence and recurrence of rare plants.

In summary, Parkes is wrong in arguing that Zarathustra's departure is due to the accomplishment of his mission. This explanation is too teleological; it implies that Zarathustra could only have developed in one, predetermined way towards one, predetermined goal. In spite of Nietzsche's frequent use of vegetal imagery, man is more than a plant that can only develop in one direction. Nietzsche's arguments point to the various options open to the exceptional individuals who have the courage to test themselves through adversity.

I will now outline a third interpretation of Zarathustra's death at the end of the work. I argue that he does not die or commit suicide either due to the perceived failure or accomplishment of his task. He simply departs life as the individual who has lived until now and commences another life as a transformed being. There are three plausible ways of interpreting the nature of his transformation. I outline the first two briefly in order to show that although they are consistent with some of Nietzsche's statements in *Zarathustra*, they do not accord with his demands for the transformation of human beings.

The first way of accounting for Zarathustra's transformation is that he actually dies and is then resurrected. This would accord with the interpretation of *Zarathustra* as a parody of the life of Jesus. For instance, it is supported by many references to him, the same age of the protagonists and the trials that each has to go through. Zarathustra's resurrection as a being superior to humans would continue this theme. It would also re-introduce the Superman as the solution to the problem posed by death. This interpretation fails, however, because it is not an account of a human transformation in this life. Nietzsche's claims regarding more positive attitudes to time can only be tested against the evidence that some human beings can develop their own values as a result of these.

Secondly, it is also possible to postulate that Zarathustra is transformed through reincarnation, he lives as a different person in another life. The quality of this new life is determined by his actions in the previous one: the present is better than the past because of the

choices he made in it. This would in a sense accord with the doctrine of eternal recurrence, if one takes it to mean that all choices become more important if their consequences are replicated *ad infinitum*. Nietzsche, however, insists that each event is repeated exactly as it is, in which case any choices are merely apparent. The idea of Zarathustra reincarnated may also be read as Nietzsche's parody of Buddhism. This would be in line with Nietzsche's previous references to Buddhism in the narrative, such as Zarathustra's encounters with the old, sick and dying. A new life of reincarnation as the reward of a previous life lived according to extrinsic precepts, however, does not leave any room for the creation of new values by an independent individual. Neither does it provide a solution to the problem of death.

The narrative of *Zarathustra* does not provide a conclusion; this is not plausible in a tale that concerns itself with eternal recurrence of the same. It has, however, provided ample evidence of the nature of Zarathustra's transformation. It has been argued above that Zarathustra has had experiences out of the ordinary. He has been in a condition between sleeping and waking, and once he has gained full awareness again he sees and hears differently. He has been endowed with an acuity of perception not possible for most individuals.

The most plausible interpretation regarding the nature of Zarathustra's transformation is that he leaves both his previous form and Life as he has known her. He has regarded her as enigmatic, but he has now come to know her true nature. He no longer has to function as the teacher who must classify people and epochs of history; he dies to his old life. He no longer searches for alternatives to the pettiest and ugliest features of existence because he does not regard life in these terms any more. Its perfection is a result of pain and suffering as much as of its joys. In other words, Zarathustra is in a sense 'redeemed' by truth; he cannot remain the same once he has understood the true nature of human existence. He has overcome his human-all-too-human condition simply by regarding it no longer as an unbearable burden, but as the source of all joy.

Zarathustra does not, however, return for the second and the third time to deliver the same message about the death of God. His contribution is unique and adds value to the world precisely because it is not repeated. In other words, if his life recurred innumerable times, this would not enhance either his life or that of anyone else to any degree. If it is possible for one to

gain the maximally affirmative attitude to human existence in one life, the doctrine of eternal recurrence loses its importance for such an individual.

Conclusion

I have argued that Nietzsche's concept of a 'Dionysian' eternity captures his claim that attitudes to death can be transformed from negative to positive by the affirmation, not the negation of it. The concept celebrates the presence of life and death as well as eternity in each moment. Those individuals who acknowledge this as the truth about human existence are liberated from their fear of transience and death; they are redeemed by it so that they can become what they are. They can live authentically in the moment and create their own values in full awareness of the impermanence of everything in the world. It is this very impermanence that allows room for human transformations.

The insightful individuals will not want to merely exist for as long as possible, but recognise that for them there is a right time to die. This does not relate to the attainment of a particular goal, but rather to a unique conviction that because life is perfect in every moment it can be left at any time. I have argued that Nietzsche does not advocate suicide, but insists that a life that is not lived fully is not a life worth living. He criticizes those whose routine existence amounts to nothing more than a slow suicide. I have argued that Nietzsche regards the death of God as an opportunity for the exceptional individual to create his or her own values. Once God is dead, the authentic individual has the best chance of living fully in the moment.

The reader who engages in the pursuit of knowledge through the pages of Nietzsche's work does not only gain an understanding of his philosophy through repeated readings. He or she also gains an understanding of Western philosophy in the previous millennia; through this he or she may adopt philosophy as a worthwhile project for the future.

Death will certainly bring an individual's pursuit of a project of philosophy to an end, but it will not be the end of that project for those who come after him or her. Just as doing philosophy gave meaning to Nietzsche's life, it now gives meaning to the lives of those who read him; the philosophical enterprise of trying to understand the transience of human life greatly adds value to the world of transience. Because of this continuity and community of ideas, death and time need not be feared by those who are able to share ideas. As emphasized throughout this

thesis, these ideas are expressed in history and art. Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy, to which I now turn, is best understood through his views on aspects of intellectual life and culture.

Chapter Seven

Nietzsche's Affirmative Philosophy in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Introduction

Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy in *Zarathustra* has several aspects; all of these are concerned with transformation of individual attitudes. He argues that it is possible, at least for the unique person, to transform his predominantly negative attitudes towards life to more positive ones. The examples he gives in the text are the new perspectives that some individuals are able to adopt on the consequences of transience, such as the immutability of the past, the decay and death of the body and the impermanence of all values.

In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche does not offer practical examples of how the reader should live his life for the following reasons. First, Nietzsche is more interested in the genealogy of morals, the motivation behind the systems of morals that have had a powerful influence on Western thought. He does not try to set up another system of moral rules to replace the traditional ones. This leads to his second reason for not offering practical examples: he argues that each person should find his way. He cannot posit an ultimate goal towards which all human activity should be directed. He does, however, indicate by way of his discussion of the characters of history, the musicians and the poets, what kinds of activities he values over others. He emphasizes individual strength, vigour, uniqueness, independence and the unique individual's willingness to confront the new and the strange.

There is a tension in *Zarathustra* between Nietzsche's 'timely' and 'timeless' values. On the one hand, he argues that nothing is permanent in the world of flux, including values. In other words, 'timely' values are subject to constant change, they are either perpetually evolving or may be abolished at any moment and be replaced by new values which arise in an instant. On the other hand, he insists on the superiority of some values as a basis for his rank ordering. These 'timeless' values, then, if not good for all times and for all peoples, must nevertheless possess some permanent status.

I conclude that the tension between these two sets of values does not amount to a contradiction; the world of flux allows for change which in turn enables the exceptional

individual to transform himself and his values. In other words, affirmation is only possible in a world of flux. Its impermanence poses both a challenge and an opportunity for individuals to respond to it creatively. The positive values that enhance life and add to the quality of the exceptional individual's will to power are in this sense more 'permanent' than the negative values that need to be overcome.

I discuss Julian Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's affirmative 'techniques'. His conceptual framework is useful for the understanding of Nietzsche's concern with the transformation of attitudes to time from negative to positive. I conclude, however, that Young fails to explain Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy as a coherent whole. He focuses on alternative metaphysical perspectives on negative events rather than on an entirely different mode of being free of metaphysics; I argue that this is Nietzsche's intention.

To support the thesis that affirmation is a different mode of being in time, I discuss Nietzsche's examples of individuals who have succeeded in affirming life in the most important sense: they have lived their lives authentically precisely because of their finite existence. In *Zarathustra* the protagonist matures in his understanding of both the nature of existence and of his mission in the promotion of a transformed attitude to it. The Superman as the higher being gives the reader an example of the maximally affirmative attitude to existence.

Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy is successful to the extent to which it holds an alternative other than nihilism for the contemplation of the individual who can no longer live his life believing in God, and for whom death is present in every moment. In other words, the journey of Zarathustra can be undertaken by ordinary individuals at the end of the twentieth century and in the next.

Nietzsche's 'Timely' and 'Timeless' Values

There is a constant tension in Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy between 'timely' and 'timeless' values. He argues, on the one hand, against teleological interpretations of the world and criticises those who search for permanent, 'otherworldly' purposes to their lives. On the other, he sets goals for individuals living in a world without any meaning. Implicit in the ideal of the Superman, and in his frequent exhortations for exceptional individuals to become what they are, are values that may be characterised as 'objective'. Nietzsche spells out his precise views on the

personal attributes that his ideal individual should possess; he is equally forthright regarding the undesirable qualities of the 'herd'.

Nietzsche argues, on the one hand, that values associated with change, with the body and the earth, are higher than the permanent or transcendental. He argues that the latter are an illusion. In other words, he ranks naturalistic values higher than metaphysical values. On the other hand, Nietzsche has to use metaphysical concepts in order to explain his rank ordering. After all, if no generalised classifications of things in the world are permitted, then what is one meant to affirm and how? To reply that everything should be affirmed sheds no light on Nietzsche's philosophy. After all, Nietzsche selected particular features of the world, such as the body over the mind, as objects of his affirmation. Nietzsche may reply that we should affirm the body because it is 'real' in a way that the projections of those searching for 'otherworldly' metaphysical comforts are not. But even while arguing for the reality of the body, he has to resort to some idea of the 'self' in order to extol the superior values associated with the body. As Heidegger argues, even Nietzsche's arguments against metaphysics are grounded in metaphysics:

Nietzsche's countermovement against metaphysics is, as the mere turning upside down of metaphysics, an inextricable entanglement in metaphysics, in such a way, indeed, that metaphysics is cut off from its essence and, as metaphysics, is never able to think its own essence.¹

What does Heidegger mean by his claim that Nietzsche is the last metaphysician of the West,² that he has not been successful in effecting a break with traditional metaphysics? This means that Nietzsche, in spite of his claim to the contrary, has not been able to come up with a positive alternative to the 'nihilistic' thinking he criticises. His philosophical project, therefore, remains at the level of deconstruction of old edifices. He is unable to build anything new in their place.

What would Nietzsche reply to this charge? He may reply that 'any new building' is impossible for one who asserts the impermanence of everything. This reply, however, invites further critical comments, the most central of which are investigated in this chapter. They all take the same form: if nothing is stable, does it make any sense to affirm mere instability of existence? What does existence mean on this account anyway?

Eric Blondel highlights a problem with Nietzsche's criticism of Christian morality on the one hand, and his exhortation to affirm every 'slow spider' and each 'desolate moonlight' on the

¹ Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, p. 61.

² Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. II, 'The Eternal Recurrence of the Same', trans. David Farrell Krell, New York: Harper and Row, p. 7.

other. If you have to affirm everything, then does this also include those aspects of life you are most critical of? 'For instance, should decadent morality be affirmed as well as strength, should Christianity be ... affirmed as a necessary antipode of Dionysiac affirmation?'³ This question can be answered in two ways that appear incompatible with each other. First, Nietzsche may argue that a rare individual can transform a negative experience to its opposite. But how is one to do this? Nietzsche provides no clear explanation of the process that one must undergo to effect such a transformation.

His suggestion that the negative experience can be transformed into a positive one appears to contain a contradiction, anyway. Can the exceptional individual legitimately label pain and suffering, for instance, as 'negative' experiences? If not, how should he describe them? If he does not describe them, after all, then how can any transformation be validated? Nietzsche may reply to this that the experiences only matter to the individual concerned, not to anyone else. But this leaves the exceptional individual in a solipsistic world that cannot provide any examples to the less affirmative people. This is, however, precisely what Nietzsche offers to his readers by his many discussions of the famous men in history.

In *Zarathustra* Nietzsche does provide examples of how a negative experience, such as loneliness can be translated into solitude; it becomes a source of creativity. According to this logic, negative Christian doctrines may be regarded as antecedents to Dionysiac affirmation. Therefore only those people who have previously relied on the existence of God for the meaning of their lives, can truly appreciate the spiritual liberation that results from the death of God. This is especially so if an intermediary stage of abject pessimism is gone through on the way to affirmation. This answer to Blondel's question is not satisfactory because of its implication that the path to 'great health' must always be through sickness. It implies that one can only become an exceptional individual through suffering. Although this argument has obvious autobiographical merit for Nietzsche, it contradicts his depiction of the Superman as superior to ordinary humans because he lack these negative capacities.⁴

The second answer to Blondel's question of what should be affirmed is more plausible. In relation to life and death, for instance, if life is affirmed as a totality, then the two aspects of

³Eric Blondel, 'Nietzsche's Style of Affirmation: The Metaphors of Genealogy', in Yirmiyahu Yovel (ed.), *Nietzsche as Affirmative Thinker*, Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1986, p. 133.

⁴Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Prologue 4.

existence cannot be separated from each other and death is affirmed with life in every moment. Must then the life-denying doctrines of Christianity be affirmed as a 'component' of Dionysian experience? No, because according to Nietzsche, the Christian doctrines have no connection with reality; they are not another, inseparable side of life. Christianity, then, cannot be a necessary antipode of Dionysiac affirmation.

Another question regarding Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy concerns his focus on the earth and the body as the prime objects of affirmation. In answer to the question of why the earth and the body should be regarded as superior to the heaven and the 'soul', it may be argued that, true to his claims about the positive value of dangerous pursuits, he has chosen to investigate the possibility that certain aspects of life labelled by the majority as 'bad' or 'evil', such as pain and suffering, may turn out to be those most worthy of affirmation. In other words, he has embarked on this apparently 'impossible, dilemmatic course'⁵ for very specific reasons. He is concerned with the possibility of fundamental transformation in the attitude of at least some individuals. It has been argued that this transformation is a return to what actually is; an individual becomes himself by not clinging to his 'self'. He becomes self-reliant by abandoning questionable metaphysical constructs and by creating his own naturalistic values based on the will to power, the ultimate component of this world and everything in it.

Parkes calls Nietzsche's philosophy of affirmation 'Dionysian religion', 'polytheistic pantheism' and an 'inversion of the Platonic-Christian worldview'.⁶ He gives examples from several of Nietzsche's texts to support this interpretation. These will be discussed in this chapter with a particular reference to the relationship of 'Dionysian' affirmation and Nietzsche's criticism of rationality in *Zarathustra*. I have chosen Parkes' interpretation because of his interest in Nietzsche's view of psychology. He captures best the link between Nietzsche's philosophical views on what man should become and his genuine attempts to become such a man. These attempts were, furthermore, results of his admiration for Emerson, a historical figure and an artist who exemplified the possibility of attitudinal transformations.

The final question regarding aspects of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy is the most difficult one: has he risen to his own challenge and constructed a successful philosophy of affirmation? Has he been able to do so without the support of metaphysical structures? What can

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

he 'ground'⁷ his constructive philosophy on, what can the foundation of moral and religious ideals be replaced with? Can Nietzsche's doctrines of eternal recurrence, will to power and Superman be taken seriously as practical guides to living or should they be rejected as mere rhetoric and hyperbole whose time has never come? Even if the affirmation of 'everything' does not include metaphysical entities, Nietzsche's positive philosophy still poses problems. Some actual entities must be more worthy of affirmation than others; Nietzsche would reply that these can be ranked according to their will to power. In this case those with exceptional qualities, because of their affirmative will to power, recognize others who do and the development of affirmative attitudes is least possible for those who most need it: those whose power can merely be expressed in the resentment of others. In other words, no fundamental transformations are possible if this presentation is accurate. Those who are affirmative possess an enduring positive attitude to existence while for the majority the perpetual adherence to negative values remains the only possibility.

Blondel argues that Nietzsche's search for an affirmative, secular philosophy highlights 'a radical, inescapable dilemma in Nietzsche's thought'.⁸ He questions whether such a philosophy is possible: 'How and what can Nietzsche affirm after the death of God, without stumbling into arbitrary and nonsensical speech?'⁹ He concludes, however, that Nietzsche's arguments for the death of God and the ensuing philosophy are 'no empty, quixotic slogan',¹⁰ but a genuine attempt to find an alternative to the metaphysics of the West. He argues for 'the coherence of Nietzsche's poetry and thought';¹¹ this coherence does not rely on 'an abstract, quasi-metaphysical independence' nor on the 'hypostasis of the imaginary'.¹² According to him, then, Nietzsche offers an alternative, transient picture of a transient reality that can nevertheless be captured by him as the writer and by us as the readers. He must do this in a way that does not rely on general metaphysical concepts but that in spite of this, or rather because of it, gives us a deeper understanding of reality. By giving us this picture of transient reality he highlights the paradox of metaphysical concepts; they purport to be about something beyond the surfaces, but by doing so they prevent us from looking below the surface of existence. On the one hand, they

⁶ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

⁷ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

give time depth and dimension it would not otherwise have. They facilitate the kind of reflection on human values which would not be possible in their absence. On the other hand these 'thresholds' limit the range of creative responses to living in time.

The paradox of metaphysical concepts is illustrated in the ways in which transient reality, according to Nietzsche, can be affirmed. These entail the overcoming of conceptual categories - without the will to power necessary for this overcoming affirmation would not be possible.

Young and Blondel interpret Nietzsche's attempt to overcome metaphysics in different ways. I have already referred to Young's failure to capture Nietzsche's intent. Blondel's interpretation is more plausible because he is more aware of the difficulties confronted by Nietzsche in his effort to express new transient values in a new language free of metaphysics. Blondel's discussion of Nietzsche's metaphors related to the senses is particularly insightful in this regard; it is also most consistent with the spirit of *Zarathustra*. We may 'hear' and 'smell' eternity without being able to describe it in conventional language.

Nietzsche's 'Techniques' of Affirmation

Both Young and Blondel agree that Nietzsche's affirmation amounts to more than empty rhetoric. Young describes four 'techniques' of affirmation used by Nietzsche in order to transform negative events to their opposites. He questions whether Nietzsche's 'method of disposing of the metaphysical' is not merely a case of 'more and less subtle uses of rhetoric'.¹³ He gives a detailed reading of Nietzsche's method of affirming existence in relation to art and argues that he ultimately fails in his affirmation and remains a philosopher of pessimism.¹⁴

Young outlines Nietzsche's use of four 'techniques for accommodating the "questionable"' which I will discuss in detail in the following sections.¹⁵ These are concerned with one's ability to see the negative aspects of life in more positive ways. The first of these is to see providence in one's life. This interpretation fails because it contradicts Nietzsche's many claims against teleology and imposes a systematic unity on his thought which in my view it does not have. It also implies a moral duty to live one's life in a certain way which is an anathema to Nietzsche.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 67.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

In contrast to Young, I hold that Nietzsche is consistent in his claims regarding the relation of time and values. This consistency relates to his rank ordering of individuals according to these values: the exceptional individuals are the strongest and therefore can create the most positive and unique values for themselves. This rank ordering, however, does not amount to the postulation of systematic categories: even if we know that some values are more positive, we cannot classify them for a simple reason. If new values arise constantly, they cannot fit into static categories that take no account of change in time.

The second 'technique' is to see negative events as *parts* of the good.¹⁶ This interpretation has more merit than the first because it presents negative events as challenges and takes into account the character, rather than the morals, of the individual. It fails, however, because the transformation of attitudes is limited to specifics. It does not describe a fundamental transformation in one's orientation to existence as something to be celebrated as a whole.

Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's third 'technique of affirmation' relates to one's ability to view life as a whole, the incorporation of adversities into one *pleasing* picture.¹⁷ This interpretation fails because it presumes that one's life can only be assessed at its conclusion and further, that one's life should have a particular goal. The final technique is that of not taking negative events seriously but of simply forgetting them.¹⁸ This interpretation has an obvious problem: if negative events are not serious, they cannot act as challenges; they cannot be objects of affirmation.

Young is correct to argue that to forget about negative events is not the same as living like the child or an animal. His characterisation of these events as '*prima facie* evils',¹⁹ however, lends them an importance that is not warranted on Nietzsche's account. Nietzsche argues that some events are forgotten by the exceptional individual because of their lack of significance. Young also fails to appreciate the impact of significant adverse events in the life of the mature adult: the experiences of the past give richness and depth to the moment that it would not otherwise have.

Young provides a useful conceptual schema which can assist in the understanding of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy. They fail, however, to illustrate the practical unity of

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche's vision which should be the criterion of success of his philosophy. They focus on 'techniques', mechanistic ways of dealing with each individual problem as it arises. As such they do not capture Nietzsche's idea that any negative event can be dealt with by the individual whose attitude to life as a whole is authentic. This individual does not try to avoid or forget challenges but rather seeks truths about existence and as a result gains great health. In other words, Young's interpretation describes the responses of the slaves and the members of the herd to life's adversities, not the mastery and strength of the exceptional individuals.

Blondel warns against reading any unity into Nietzsche's thought and argues that this exists at the level of language only. He and Young agree that Nietzsche's attempt to affirm existence goes beyond rhetoric. They have, however, failed to show how he does this without resorting to traditional concepts of metaphysics. In what follows, the possibility of this in terms of an aesthetic, rather than a moral evaluation of life, is outlined.

Blondel argues that Nietzsche's failure to construct a unified philosophy is the hallmark of his success as an anti-metaphysical thinker.²⁰ He draws the reader's attention to the function of 'unity' as a metaphysical concept which does not correspond to any real ontological entity. However, at the same time he remains caught in the trap of metaphysics when he argues that Nietzsche's success can be measured by his failure to construct a unified philosophy. Blondel, in spite of his arguments to the opposite, evaluates Nietzsche's work at the level of mere theory, of how the concepts he postulates either fit or fail to fit together as concepts, even if he argues that Nietzsche did not build up a system of thought equivalent to that of Plato or Kant, that his role as a philosopher was to demolish any such systems. The most important question posed by this thesis is whether his negative task also entailed a positive task of putting something in their place. The answer to this question is that the unity of Nietzsche's thought comes from his genuine endeavor to combine theory and practice in a holistic way in *Zarathustra*, in the search for an authentic way to live.

Blondel claims that Nietzsche's constructive philosophy is grounded in language. On the one hand, he criticises the language of morals, the language used to reinforce beliefs in non-existent entities. On the other hand, Nietzsche's philosophy of 'critical affirmation' is distinguished by the efforts he makes to forge new connections between 'life, the body, reality,

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

on the one hand, language, thought and/or reason on the other hand'.²¹ Nietzsche uses metaphors that refer to 'reading, hearing and smelling' in order to demonstrate a 'hidden, indirect or distant presence of a material origin'.²² In other words, Nietzsche uses language in an attempt to transmit his - what he regards as more truthful and therefore superior - understanding of the world to his readers.

Nietzsche's 'new ways' of expressing a different understanding of the world are, in a sense, a return to the 'old ways' of interpreting life. His writing is an attempt to show how the world would have appeared to those individuals whose perspectives were not contaminated by metaphysics. In other words, his is the more 'naturalistic' perspective of a child who is not aware of dualistic concepts such as 'mind' and 'body' or to whom time does not exist as the past, present and future.

At the same time Nietzsche acknowledges the psychological difficulties involved in affirming the earth and the body. These difficulties are due to the thinking of an adult being thoroughly contaminated by metaphysics. Therefore, Nietzsche's affirmation is 'built on tensions'²³ created by the desire to return to a child-like way of interacting with the world while at the same time insisting that true affirmation is only possible as a result of the experiences of a mature adult.

Nietzsche's First 'Technique' of Affirmation

Nietzsche's first 'technique' of affirmation discussed by Young is the ability to see 'a personal providence in one's life',²⁴ the skill of putting a positive interpretation on even the most negative events of it:

Personal providence. - There is a certain high point in life: once we have reached that, we are, for all our freedom, once more in the greatest danger of spiritual unfreedom, and no matter how much we have faced up to the beautiful chaos of existence and denied it all providential reason and goodness, we still have to pass our hardest test.²⁵

Although Young interprets Nietzsche's meaning correctly in the sense that 'there is no divine meaning in the world', he concludes from this, incorrectly, that 'we are to seek to put in its place

²⁰ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 135.

²⁴ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

²⁵ *The Gay Science* 277.

the vision of a “wonderful harmony”, a “personal providence”²⁶ Nietzsche’s test of individual attitudes to fate involves the opposite of what Young claims. He interprets it as the ability to see that ‘apparent evils, apparently harmful events’ are ‘means to subsequent goods’.²⁷ Nietzsche, however, insists that one cannot make sense of one’s life in this way. One should not be

... seduc[ed] and tempt[ed] to renounce one’s faith in the gods of Epicurus who have no care and are unknown, and to believe instead in some petty deity who is full of care and personally knows every little hair on our head and finds nothing nauseous in the most miserable small service.²⁸

An individual should affirm life in spite of its lack of purpose, precisely because it has no ‘providential reason and goodness’. Instead of looking for a god, even a ‘personal’ one of his own making, who should give life some meaning, a strong individual should rely on himself to create his own meaning:

... we should leave the gods in peace as well as the genii who are ready to serve us, and rest content with the supposition that our own practical and theoretical skill in interpreting and arranging events has now reached its high point.²⁹

A rare individual may arrange events in such a way that he does not risk the ‘spiritual unfreedom’ of returning to the fold of the religious in order to find meaning for his life. But Nietzsche cautions the self-reliant individual, and also his readers, that the superior capabilities should not be interpreted as the capacity to defy one’s fate. We should not

... dare to give the credit to ourselves. Indeed, now and then someone plays with us - good old chance; now and then chance guides our hand, and the wisest providence could not think up a more beautiful music than that which our foolish hand produces then.³⁰

It is interesting to note that Nietzsche inverts the usual meaning of providence. The religious equate it with a designer god who has ordered everything in a way that best suits those who believe in him. For Nietzsche, providence simply means fate, ‘the beautiful chaos of existence’,³¹ not god as the determiner of every ‘evil event as a means to subsequent goods’.³²

Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of careful ‘reading’ of the world. He chastizes his compatriots for their lack of care, their lazy ways of reading:

²⁶ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 104.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

²⁸ *The Gay Science* 277.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Young, *op. cit.* p. 105.

... the German who *reads* books! How lazily, how reluctantly, how badly he reads! How many Germans know, or think they ought to know, that there is *art* in every good sentence - art that must be grasped if the sentence is to be understood!³³

Nietzsche argues that one should not be lazy in one's relation to the world. One should engage with it in every moment rather than withdraw from it. This passage provides another explanation of why forgetting adversities, Young's fourth 'technique', does not work. One must not be involved with the world in a reluctant manner, nor should one live badly. Rather, one should find art in every moment of living; only when this is understood can life be understood at all. In other words, parts can be separated from the whole at an analytic level, but not at the level of experience. The best experiences demand engagement with the world as a whole.

The metaphor of reading is applicable to attitudes to life. It can only be affirmed as a whole; its form and content are one and cannot be separated. Nietzsche argues that those who view life from the 'moral' perspective do precisely this. The moralists view life through abstract principles that lack any foundation in life itself. They are nevertheless eager to make all life conform to these unnatural shapes which hinder any true understanding of the world.

Young's reading of Nietzsche's references to providence is flawed because he appreciates neither the form nor the content of the passage he quotes in support of his argument. The most striking aspect of the form of the 'providence' passage is the juxtaposition of freedom and unfreedom at the high point of life which is also the point of highest danger. Even if one has passed tests to come this far one is still to 'pass his hardest test'. In other words, even if one comes to understand the role of providence, this does not mean that one has reached a particular goal. Rather, one has merely become part of an ongoing process with its highs and lows. In other words, one is continuing to be balanced on the tightrope until one falls. Or to use another metaphor from *Zarathustra*, one has not moved away from the abyss, but has come closer to it.

Nietzsche criticizes utilitarians and their happiness principle in numerous contexts. If Young were correct, Nietzsche would have painted, in a most inconsistent manner, a picture of life-affirmation as a continuous set of consequentialist calculations. This picture does not illustrate a fundamental change in an individual's attitude towards evils because in this case no real transformation of how one sees the world would be necessary. Nietzsche holds that true

³³ *Beyond Good and Evil* 246.

affirmation of all life is possible only if a fundamental transformation of attitudes and modes of life can be forged from exceptionally rich inner resources.

In other words, resentment must be overcome to accommodate affirmation. On Young's account, resentment is merely temporarily disguised. Events that are initially seen as 'harmful' or 'evil' have their attributes superficially, rhetorically, transposed for the sake of a fleeting external 'good'. Instead of a world of 'beautiful chaos' in the present, Young postulates a future world of utilitarian, petty 'happiness'.

Young is correct in his argument that the affirmation of transient life is only possible through the transformation of perspectives on existence. He fails, however, to understand how fundamental this transformation is in Nietzsche's thought. It is not a transformation aimed at a particular goal, but the transformation of every moment as part of an entirely different mode of existence. Young suggests that this may be possible if negative events are seen as parts of the good, an interpretation to which I now turn.

Nietzsche's Second 'Technique' of Affirmation

Nietzsche's second 'technique' of affirmation described by Young is that of 'exhibiting problematic attributes and events not as *means to* but rather as *parts of the good*'.³⁴ Compared with the first technique of 'counting' bad things as constituents of a finite, overall good, after they have been labelled differently, this account seems more consistent with Nietzsche's philosophy. Instead of the utilitarian 'means to ends' calculations, negative problems are now perceived as positive challenges that contribute to the 'good'.

Young supports this argument by referring to Nietzsche's appeals to the rare individuals to become what they are. He considers this as an example of Nietzsche's technique of integrating all aspects of one's character to one affirmative 'self':

One thing is needful. - To 'give style' to one's character - a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been removed - both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime.³⁵

Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's ideal character with a style of its own appears correct.

Nietzsche would agree that even the best individuals have their weaknesses and ugly aspects that

³⁴ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

have to be overcome for the sake of unity of character. He would also propose that this 'shaping' of character requires a degree of will to power possessed only by the rarest individual.

Young, however, gives inappropriate examples of what he considers are the weaknesses or uglinesses that Nietzsche refers to:

So, for example, one might see a character trait that in isolation one might regard as a vice as, in the context of one's personality as a whole, having the necessary function of softening, taking the hard edge off one's virtues, humanizing one's character.³⁵

Nietzsche talks about an individual's life as 'an artistic plan' which the person with self-knowledge 'surveys' critically. Therefore Young's reference to 'vices' and 'virtues' is entirely inappropriate; these refer to the moral aspects of a person's character that would be assessed by those around him. From the perspective of the 'herd', therefore, many character traits of an exceptional individual would appear as vices. Nietzsche, however, considers it a weakness if the free individual exposes himself to the 'danger of spiritual unfreedom' by being tempted and seduced into looking for a meaning to his life outside of himself rather than trusting in his own strength. To be caught up in worrying about what the herd see as vices and virtues is another expression of the same unfreedom. In other words, weaknesses and uglinesses of one's character are those features that are not consistent with power and self-sufficiency. One's character retains something of the ugly in its 'slavish' features, but only if the person does not recognise these. Once the person 'becomes what he is', he is aware of the defect and integrates it into his personality; he does not try to erase it as a vice like an individual who aspires to inherited religious and moral standards of virtue. In other words, he is able to give a particular *style* to himself. The meaning of this concept is explored below.

'Giving Style' to Oneself

The understanding of what Nietzsche means by the 'style' of the exceptional individual is related to his discussion of the three types of morality. It is important to remember that when Nietzsche describes them, he uses them as conceptual tools for a particular reason. They are intended to illustrate the genealogy of particular negative and positive attitudes to existence. The despisers of the body, for instance, are motivated by their desire for 'otherworldly values'. Zarathustra, on the other hand, is connected to the earth. He overcomes his fear of transience learns to affirm his

³⁵ *The Gay Science* 290.

³⁶ Young, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-6.

finite existence. He becomes more adept at teaching his message of the death of God and the possibilities permitted by this to those who want to listen to him.

Zarathustra's mastery, therefore, is not a movement away from the natural values of the earth and the body. The most proficient individual therefore creates naturalistic values; he 'discards interpretations and denials of reality'.³⁷ He is able to create his own 'text' to replace one 'which interprets reality falsely or denies it by inventing a host of fictitious notions'.³⁸ A close reading or writing of a text shows unity of form and content to the extent that they cannot be separated from each other. Similarly, a strong individual is one whose thoughts, actions and feelings show unity. His thoughts and feelings undergo a continuous process of shaping; every aspect of his nature forms his intrinsic style: 'The important thing is *life*: style ought to *live*. Style must believe that one *believes* in one's thoughts, and not merely *thinks* his thoughts but *feels* them.'³⁹

Nietzsche demands of the exceptional individuals that they are honest and consistent in their affirmation. They have a unique, aesthetic way of seeing everything as good, not just as parts of some ultimate good. Young argues that Nietzsche himself did not always meet this exacting standard, because his friendships functioned as a means to an end:

Or one might come to view a period of slavish discipleship to Schopenhauer and Wagner as having the aesthetically necessary function of highlighting the courage and originality of one's later career.⁴⁰

Nietzsche's early 'discipleship' could be interpreted as a life lived by moral evaluations, particularly if we take the claim of its 'slavish' nature seriously. This assertion, however, makes the process from spiritual unfreedom to 'virtuosity of life' difficult, if not impossible, to explain.

How does Nietzsche explain the meaning of 'giving style' to oneself? He would most likely argue that the individual surveys his life from an aesthetic rather than a moral perspective. His attitude towards his past is also transformed from one of resentment to one of affirmation. In this case he does not want to change his past but affirms it as it is. The most worthwhile aspects of his present are only possible because of the presence of Schopenhauer and Wagner in those moments of the past that he valued most at the time.

³⁷ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 138.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Colli Montinari Edition of *Werke*, VII. I, 1(109), 1 & 7. Translation by Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁴⁰ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

Heidegger argues that the exceptional individual has from youth possessed the rare qualities that single him out from the majority; a slave does not suddenly become a master:

The world of Schopenhauer and Wagner became questionable to him early on, earlier than even he knew, already at the time he was writing the third and the fourth of his *Untimely Meditations* ... here already we see a struggle for release, though not yet a real awakening. Nietzsche was not yet his own man, was not yet hard by his *own* thought.⁴¹

Does Nietzsche, then, give a satisfactory answer to the question of how independence from discipleship is attained? The most unsatisfactory answer he provides relates to his postulation of the coming of the Superman as a solution to the contemporary value crisis. The Superman is described as someone who is entirely different from present human beings. The difference between him and ordinary people is the difference between humans and apes.⁴² Therefore the Superman is someone who does not need to undergo any transformations; he is perfectly affirmative and perfectly honest; in him there is no room for improvement. The consequences of this interpretation for ordinary people are obvious. If the Superman is interpreted as the only medium through which the world will acquire style and integrity, then it is not in any way possible for ordinary individuals to improve their lot, they will always remain slaves.

Yet Nietzsche quite obviously argues that there are individuals in the world, including himself, who have made the necessary transformations. For instance, it is less likely that Nietzsche would have embarked on his search for alternatives to Schopenhauer's pessimism unless he had identified with the latter's thought in the early part of his philosophical career. The most pessimistic ideas of Schopenhauer may therefore have been the precursors of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy in the same way that his loneliest moments may have led to the most intense appreciation of solitude:

Schopenhauer, the last German of any consequence, is for a psychologist a case of the first order: namely, as a mendacious attempt of genius to marshal, in aid of a nihilistic total devaluation of life, the very counter-instances, the great self-affirmations of the 'will to live', the exuberant forms of life. ... Looked at more closely he is in this merely the heir of the Christian interpretation: but with this difference, that he knew how to make what Christianity had *rejected*, the great cultural facts of mankind, and *approve* of them from a Christian, that is to say nihilistic, point of view.⁴³

Although Nietzsche is critical of Schopenhauer's 'mendaciousness', he nevertheless appreciates the latter as a not entirely 'slavish disciple' of Christianity. Even if Schopenhauer has inherited

⁴¹ Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, vol. 2, p. 178.

⁴² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 1.

⁴³ *Twilight of the Idols* 21.

its two-world perspective that denigrates this world as one of mere 'appearances', he is not blind to the value of its cultural products. In other words, alongside his Christian moral perspective he has at least temporarily adopted an aesthetic, secular one. Schopenhauer's career is an example of both continuity and originality; these attributes can equally well be applied to Nietzsche's work. Unfortunately Schopenhauer's appreciation of art is utilised 'as a pointer to asceticism'.⁴⁴ For him, 'the exuberant forms of life' are not something to be celebrated, but something that need to be controlled and shaped in the service of Christianity.

What distinguishes Nietzsche from Schopenhauer? Can the pupil hold himself up as one who has outgrown his master? When Nietzsche compares man with Superman and himself with philosophers of the past he seems to argue in two contradictory ways. In relation to the Superman he argues for an instant transformation: the Superman arrives on the scene like a flash of lightning.⁴⁵ In relation to people in the world his argument is the opposite, that there are degrees of transformation. The most successful individuals in this respect are those who undergo a complete transformation and give themselves a style which becomes permanent. The least successful individuals experience changes neither in their thoughts nor actions.

The individual style referred to by Nietzsche, then, cannot be described in terms of any specific qualities. At best style can be referred to as a way of living authentically, or living better than those who depend on illusory facts about existence to guide their thoughts and actions. In the above passage concerning Schopenhauer, however, Nietzsche refers to 'great cultural facts of mankind'. What interpretation should be put on his use of the term in the context of art? Young has taken it to mean that in the final phase of his career Nietzsche valued art because of its 'essentially life-affirming character'.⁴⁶ The obvious connection he makes between art and facts raises a very difficult question in relation to his affirmative philosophy. If art has a life-affirming character, then the answer to Blondel's and Young's question as to what should be affirmed appears very straightforward. If the best art is about the real world, as Nietzsche maintains, then we must simply affirm the facts about that world. Could this not mean that the best art affirms the world as it is without distinguishing between aspects of it and classifying some as facts and others as lies? Nietzsche's reply to this would be that the best art must do more than simply

⁴⁴ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

⁴⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Prologue 4.

⁴⁶ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 119.

represent the world as it is. It must transform and enhance our understanding of the world; it must express the artist's novel and unique perspectives on it.

The answer that facts about the world should be affirmed still raises further awkward questions. What are the 'great cultural facts of mankind'? There are two answers to this question. Neither of these appears to accord with Nietzsche's claim that there are no facts, only interpretations. The first answer is that there are absolute cultural facts that are shared by all mankind. There is a set of objective criteria according to which artworks can be judged and included in our common heritage for all time. Does this not amount to Platonism of the worst kind?

The second answer may be that cultural facts change over time and so do the criteria for judging them. Someone must determine what the facts are, but by what standard? Instead of the Platonic alternative men might resort to the utilitarian alternative; cultural facts are those that serve the pleasure of the majority best.

Nietzsche's perspectivism appears to offer a more plausible solution to the question of how 'cultural facts' and the values associated with them change over time. 'The great cultural facts of mankind' could approximate the currently best possible perspectives on art; but better perspectives are always possible. His insistence that art appreciation is not a state of 'disinterestedness'⁴⁷ indicates that aesthetic evaluation is a continuous process. To have individual style in the sense of being a skilled evaluator of the world, then, means passionate engagement with life, an increase in the will to power instead of a mere 'will to live':

'That is beautiful', said Kant, 'which gives us pleasure *without interest*'. Without interest! Compare with this definition one framed by a genuine 'spectator' and artist - Stendhal, who once called the beautiful *une promesse de bonheur*. At any rate he *rejected* and repudiated the one point about the aesthetic condition which Kant had stressed: *le desinteressement*. Who is right, Kant or Stendhal?⁴⁸

Nietzsche would, of course, answer that Stendhal is right and that Kant and Schopenhauer are wrong. Nietzsche identified the same increase of will to power in Wagner at a time when his admiration for the composer was unquestionable:

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ *Genealogy of Morals* III: 6.

... the victorious creator of a work which is itself the epitome of an abundance of victorious artistic deeds. Must it not seem almost like magic to encounter such a phenomenon in the world of today? Must not those who are permitted to participate in it not be transformed and renewed, so as henceforth to transform and renew in other domains of life?⁴⁹

The life-affirming aspects of art are spelt out particularly clearly in this passage. The artist is a hero with overflowing energies of the will to power to affirmation; he is able to transform the way we see the earth and the body. He is even victorious over death by likening it to a 'harbour ... reached after the desert expanse of the sea'.⁵⁰ Wagner creates operas like *Tristan und Isolde* and transmits his magic and its 'profound and solitary mood'⁵¹ to the spectators who as a result experience 'a promise of happiness'.

The spectators, in other words, become more than passive bystanders. Their egos dissolve into the drama of the action and the music, temporarily they do not exist apart from it. The mood of happiness that results has nothing to do with the happiness of utilitarians who measure it as something entirely external.

Giving oneself style, then, does not depend on clinging to particular values as a substratum of this. Instead, one's individual style is distinguished by the responses of the individual to the world of flux. The individual who has most style is the one who is the least concerned with it. He has the superior, most affirmative qualities of the will to power, the most strength of character to adopt himself to the ever-changing circumstances. He has no fear of losing his style because he has no fear of losing himself. He has most style because he only exists as a piece of fate.

Nietzsche's Third 'Technique' of Affirmation

Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's third 'technique' of affirmation relates to one's ability to view life as a whole, the incorporation of adversities into one *pleasing* picture.⁵² Young relates his interpretation to the phenomenon of death. He argues that

its occurrence at a given time as demanded by the pleasingness of one's life as whole, in the way in which the inner logic of a play or a piece of music demands that at a certain point it should stop.⁵³

⁴⁹ *Untimely Meditations* IV: 4.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² Young, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

Young argues that if death occurs at precisely the right time, then it can be affirmed; then it can be best incorporated to make up the most pleasing picture of individual existence. Young's interpretation of the meaning of death in Nietzsche's thought differs from mine in two ways. First, the term 'pleasingness' implies that Young views life in terms of a particular goal, the completion of a picture that is aesthetically satisfactory, especially if viewed from a detached perspective. This perspective is not possible for any individual still living who cannot have the end of his life in view. In this sense a life is not comparable to a piece of music with a distinctive finale.

Nietzsche does not insist that the whole 'pleasing picture' of one's life must be completed if one is to 'die at the right time'.⁵⁴ It is no more 'evil' to die young than of old age; what is important is to die while committed to an independent enterprise entailing risks. Second, life does not contain an 'inner logic' like a piece of music or a play, there is no 'certain point', no goal at the attainment of which death should occur, because death is present in all life:

The thought of death - Living in the midst of this jumble of little lanes, needs, and voices gives me a melancholy happiness: how much enjoyment, impatience and desire, how much thirsty life and drunkenness of life comes to life every moment! And yet silence will soon descend on all these noisy, living, life-thirsty people. How his shadow stands even now behind everyone, as his dark fellow traveller! It is always like the last moment before the departure of an emigrant's ship: people have more to say to each other than ever, the hour is late, and the ocean and its desolate silence are waiting impatiently behind all of this noise - so covetous and certain of their prey. And all and everyone of them suppose that the heretofore was little or nothing while the near future is everything; and that is the reason for all this haste, this clamor, this outshouting and overreaching each other. Everyone wants to be the first in this future - and yet death and deathly silence alone are certain and common to all in this future.⁵⁵

Nietzsche's description of the presence of death in all lives differs significantly from Young's interpretation of what the correct attitude to death should be. First of all, it must be noted how much more fluid Nietzsche's metaphors of time and travel in time are compared with Young's completed artwork. Nietzsche's metaphors bring out the sense of urgency in the scene. In spite of this constant urgent process, much of the unfinished business will never be brought to a 'pleasing' conclusion.

Young's interpretation is a superficial, detached reading of the text that does not take into account the noises and smells of life; he is unable to use his hearing and his sense of smell to further his understanding of the meaning of death in life. Nietzsche's departure, in contrast,

⁵⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 21

⁵⁵ *The Gay Science* 278.

takes place amongst noises, in the darkness of the late hour. He describes his own experience of coming to understand the co-existence of life and death by the use of auditory metaphors:

Then this idea [of eternal recurrence] came to me. - If I reckon a couple of months back from this day I find as an omen a sudden and profoundly decisive alteration in my taste, above all in music. The whole of *Zarathustra* might perhaps be reckoned as music; - certainly a rebirth of the art of *hearing* was a precondition of it.⁵⁶

The important point about Nietzsche's description is the harmony of mind and body as the origin of inspiration: 'Through sound, the body as a *physical* being is affirmed by Nietzsche.'⁵⁷ What is affirmed once again, as in *Zarathustra*, are the earth and the body. But what must also be noted is that the connection between facts and art made in *Twilight of the Idols* does not remain; Nietzsche now refers to an alteration in his musical tastes rather than to his re-appraisal of cultural facts. He comes to understand the nature of existence not by reasoning but by listening, but by using his senses as much as his intellect.

Both *Tristan und Isolde* and Bizet's *Carmen* appealed to Nietzsche because they had the capacity to make one 'more of a philosopher, a better philosopher ... so happy, so Indian, so settled'.⁵⁸ They may even have enabled one to reach 'the first stage of holiness'.⁵⁹ What, then, is this evaluation based on, objective facts or subjective tastes? The latter alternative seems in this case more plausible with the benefit of hindsight. It is unlikely that *Carmen* has made anyone a better philosopher or a better person. On the contrary, its passages are commonly used as ambient music for the masses who do not want to think. The music in this form lacks any passion, any life. To this Nietzsche may, however, reply that what matters was the intention of the composer. If he was concerned with highlighting serious questions about existence, then it is a failing on the part of the masses if they do not engage themselves with these. Their failure is in their desire to be entertained; they have no style and therefore cannot recognise it in others.

Young's third technique of affirmation, that of incorporating negative events, particularly death, into one pleasing picture fails because of its static nature. Even if Nietzsche refers to the right time to die, there is no unique time to die that contributes to the best possible picture of existence. The best one is that in which death is incorporated into every moment. Even if only certain aspects of it may be seen by the viewer, it still manages to confer unique values for him.

⁵⁶ *Ecce Homo*, 'Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for Everyone and No One'.

⁵⁷ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁵⁸ 'The Case of Wagner' 1.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche's Fourth 'Technique' of Affirmation

Nietzsche's final approach to life's problems, according to Young is 'not taking [them] seriously, [but] forgetting about them'.⁶⁰ He quotes Nietzsche's statement to this effect:

to be incapable of taking one's enemies, one's accidents, even one's misdeeds seriously for very long - that is a sign of strong, full natures in which there is an excess of power to form, to mould, to recuperate, and to forget.⁶¹

Young argues correctly that forgetting about the '*prima facie* evils in one's life'⁶² is not simply a case of being oblivious to them, like a child or an animal would be. They cannot affirm life with all its pain and suffering if they are totally ignorant of these. Young argues that only once you have *chosen* who you are, can you will the recurrence of various accidents and misdeeds.

Young's use of the word 'evil' in this context, however, contradicts Nietzsche argument for the value of forgetting. He does not argue that 'evil' should be forgotten, although he argues that the misdeeds of others towards one are forgotten. The reason for forgetfulness in this case is that he simply regards them too trivial to warrant attention. Nietzsche concludes that 'the strong, full natures' can forget any insults levelled at them because they do not regard the people who attack them as enemies. To label trivial incidents as 'evil' is only done by 'the man of *ressentiment*': '... he has conceived "the evil enemy", "*the Evil One*", and this in fact is his basic concept, from which he then evolves, as an afterthought and pendant, a "good one" - himself!'⁶³

Independent individuals can forget trivial harms because their understanding of both the real, '*prima facie* evils' of the world, and of those things the less able individuals label as 'evil', is not coloured by resentment. They do not evade *prima facie* evils because they know that this is not possible; to live is to experience everything life has got to offer. They do not label other people as 'evil' because they have no need to emphasise their superior qualities in comparison with them. For Nietzsche, evil simply does not exist.

Nietzsche undoubtedly uses rhetorical devices to illustrate his understanding of philosophy. He does this in order to distinguish between those features of existence that should be affirmed and those that are not worthy of serious attention. He does not use language in order

⁶⁰ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁶¹ *Genealogy of Morals* I: 10.

⁶² Young, *op. cit.*, p. 106.

⁶³ *Genealogy of Morals* I: 10.

to create illusions but, on the contrary, he uses it to expose falsehoods created and propped up by others.

Young's scheme of Nietzsche's four techniques of affirmation is useful for the understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole in two important ways. First, Young is correct to underline Nietzsche's positive task and present him as the constructor of means of overcoming nihilism, rather than as a mere critic of Western philosophical tradition who has no alternatives to offer. Second, Young highlights the plurality of Nietzsche's techniques of affirming existence. He draws the reader's attention to the multiple perspectives on the world offered by Nietzsche.

Young fails, however, to show exactly why some perspectives on existence are better than others. Although he is correct to emphasize the significance of the aesthetic over the moral evaluation of life, his interpretation of Nietzsche's techniques nevertheless contains aspects of the latter. They emphasize the importance of the right action for the achievement of the right goal, for instance that of 'pleasingness'. He does not discuss the importance of the process of authentic living and dying in every moment but instead separates these aspects of life in a manner inconsistent with Nietzsche's philosophy.

The picture of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy I have presented so far may be read as little more than his exhortation for individuals to carry out spontaneous, irrational acts without any regard for the past or the future. In the next section I explain the connection between affirmation and rationality in Nietzsche's thought.

Affirmation and Rationality

Nietzsche's attempt at a constructive philosophy of affirmation may also be read as a critique of the fragmentation of knowledge. He investigates the genealogy of those psychological needs that compel people to divide the world into various entities that can be weighed, measured and classified. He argues that an individual's sense of the self determines the degree to which he needs this form of metaphysical solace. The most self-reliant individuals can cope with more uncertainty than those whose identity is tied to their need for certainty. The latter need God and permanent values to give meaning to their lives; they arrange their world in this way in order to enhance its comprehensibility.

Nietzsche argues that we should affirm existence on this earth instead of wasting our lives searching for 'otherworldly' alternatives:

Stay loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and entreat you⁶⁴

Zarathustra's entreaty to his disciples on departure indicates that there are particular qualities that Nietzsche regards as necessary for a unified personality. He values the virtue of loyalty, but in contrast to the common exhortations of loyalty for ideals such as God or country, he focuses on loyalty to the concrete, the ever present. Nietzsche combines 'love' and 'knowledge' as individual virtues which will both serve the earth equally. This emphasis on the co-existence of emotion and reason in a well-rounded personality points to another constructive aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Nietzsche argues that philosophers from Socrates onwards have emphasized reason over emotions, and mind over body. In this way they have not kept faith with the earth but have become detached from it. This detachment has reached its culmination in the 'otherworldly' focus of the intellectuals on Platonic forms and that of the Christians on heavenly rewards:

You are tepid: but all deep knowledge flows cold. The innermost wells of the spirit are ice-cold: a refreshment to hot hands and handlers.

You stand there respectable and stiff and with a straight back, you famous philosophers! - no strong wind or will propels you.

Have you never seen a sail faring over the sea, rounded and swelling and shuddering before the impetuosity of the wind?

Like a sail, shuddering before the impetuosity of the spirit, my wisdom fares over the sea - my untamed wisdom!

But you servants of the people, you famous philosophers - how *could* you fare with me?⁶⁵

The famous philosophers such as Socrates and Plato have remained true neither to the earth nor to themselves; they are more concerned with the opinions of their colleagues and about serving the herd, they are tepid and stiff. In other words, they are not free to be philosophers in the true sense of the word because they lack spontaneity and love of philosophy. They have been shackled by their anxieties not to break any conventions of society; they lack the will to criticize any arbitrary rules of right and wrong. They lack original ideas that are needed for the kind of

⁶⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I: 22.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* II: 8.

fundamental reform Nietzsche was after. In other words, the objects of his criticism have turned away from philosophy and at the same time from themselves as true philosophers.

The ability to make connections and to see unity in the world of chaos is not a case of trying to simplify the complexity of the world in order to make the constant flux more manageable. Expressed in Zarathustra's poetic language, it is the rare disposition to see the world as perfect precisely because of its complexity and unpredictability:

A drop of dew? An odour and scent of eternity? Do you not hear it? Do you not smell it? My world has just become perfect, midnight is also noonday, pain is also joy, a curse is also a blessing, the night is also a sun ...⁶⁶

The ability to apprehend perfection, in a world labelled 'imperfect' by those who fear change, is possible only for those who can liberate themselves from the old ways of thinking within certain categories. In other words, only rare individuals can get 'beyond good and evil'. Nietzsche criticises Plato for his lack of instincts; Zarathustra's wonderment at the perfection of the world makes the same point. The earth can only be affirmed if instincts are not stifled by too much reason.

Zarathustra both hears and smells eternity; organs of sense are not restricted to their everyday, separate functions but they provide another kind of unity by taking in scents and sounds together, at once. In other words, the 'sense data' are not intellectually analysed and sorted out into categories. Instead of 'temporal contemplation of eternity' Zarathustra is fully engaged in the 'temporal *experience* of eternity';⁶⁷ he is living rather than just thinking about how to live well.

Nietzsche has Zarathustra compare these philosophers who have 'made of wisdom a poorhouse and hospital for bad poets'⁶⁸ to himself. He is free and untamed by public opinion or social conventions. He is not frightened to set out on his own path; he engages in a practical philosophy for life rather than in rhetoric like his opponents who are unable to acquire any true understanding of existence.

Blondel's interpretation of 'philosophizing with the hammer' continues the theme of affirmation as creation rather than destruction. He argues that the hammer '... is but seldom and secondarily a sledge-hammer or any such instrument used to destroy or break (and sculpt), but a

⁶⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* IV 19, 10.

⁶⁷ Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

⁶⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 8

“music” instrument’.⁶⁹ Philosophizing is therefore like ‘tuning in’ to all sounds around one and composing others in harmony with them. It is the ability to display possibilities, the ability to chart courses through uncharted territories. Expressed in terms of Nietzsche’s types of morality, the Presocratics were masters rather than slaves, intellectual leaders instead of followers of fashions.

In summary, only those individuals who do not separate their intellect from their emotions, who do not separate their knowledge of the world from their love of it, can truly affirm the world as a whole. Their ‘happiness smell[s] of the earth and not of contempt of the earth’, they will ‘laud all earthly things’.⁷⁰

True philosophers and true artists are both ‘aristocrats of the spirit’ who share in their ability to see the world as a ‘totality’. The Apollonian artists and philosophers, in contrast, rely on their

... ‘rational’ faculty of mind which divides the world up into a plurality of discrete, spatio-temporal individuals. ... In a metaphysical sense, Apollonian consciousness is consciousness of the world that is (Nietzsche repeatedly uses Schopenhauer’s terminology) subject to the *principium individuationis*.⁷¹

Nietzsche acknowledges that the Apollonian perspective on the world has many benefits; it serves both the artists and their audiences well. Everything in the world ‘looks simple, transparent and beautiful’ when it is rationally divided into intellectually manageable components; individuals are ‘pacified’ when they feel that appropriate ‘boundaries’ are drawn between them.⁷²

Many of the Apollonian boundaries that individuals draw between themselves and the world have been referred to earlier. Time, for instance, is divided into the past and the future by the boundary of the present. It can now be explained in terms of the Apollonian-Dionysian dichotomy why a child cannot be one of Nietzsche’s exceptional individuals. A child does not draw any of those illusory boundaries around itself that Nietzsche regards as hindrances to our knowledge of ourselves and of the world. As such his way of living in the present has much to recommend it. But he is not a Dionysian artist nor a philosopher because he has not overcome either pessimism or nihilism.

To affirm existence with its pain and suffering is not to be ignorant nor irrational. Neither can pain and suffering be justified out of existence by rationalising them, by conceptualising them

⁶⁹ Blondel, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁷⁰ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* II: 13.

⁷¹ Young, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

and thus making them something less than real. Affirmation demands knowledge of the world in the sense of coming to understand the nature of existence, it is about passionate attachment rather than intellectual detachment.

Dionysian Pantheism as Affirmation

So far I have discussed Nietzsche's positive, constructive philosophy in relation to art and rationality. I have also referred to it as a counterpoint to nihilism. As shown in Chapter Six, nihilism originates from the death of God which leads to a total loss of value and self-concept in the minds of those for whom religion is the foundation of all timeless values. From this perspective it would make sense to have an affirmative philosophy as a counterpoint to Christian monotheism.

Nietzsche intended his affirmative philosophy as an alternative to the doctrines of Platonic Christianity. Parkes interprets Nietzsche's claim for the oneness of humans with nature as a form of polytheistic pantheism:

The Dionysian religion Nietzsche advocated in the face of the death of the One God of Christian Monotheism is a polytheistic pantheism; and if the whole (*to pan*) is not only ensouled (*empsychon*) but divinely so - as Thales is also said to have said - there will be gods all over the place, in natural sites as well as in many places within the human soul.⁷³

Parkes's depiction of the Dionysian, Pre-Socratic influences on Nietzsche's philosophy captures some of its affirmative aspects. It also points to the problem identified by Heidegger and Blondel discussed in the first section of this chapter: is Nietzsche's attempt to get beyond metaphysics nothing more than metaphysics by another name? In other words, is his escape merely at the level of language and not at the level of practical philosophy for life?

The answer to these questions is that Nietzsche has got beyond metaphysics, but that his affirmative philosophy does not represent a break with the Western tradition but remains continuous with it. His endeavor to develop an affirmative philosophy tied to the earth and the body was an attempt to deny the possibility of anything transcendental, 'otherworldly' while at the same time searching for a human meaning of transcendence. In relation to this, Nietzsche's genealogical explanations of why the dualistic ways of thinking have arisen and taken hold are plausible and noteworthy. His success is further reinforced by his suggestions of how

⁷² *The Birth of Tragedy* 9.

⁷³ Parkes, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

individuals can get beyond dualistic perspectives by adopting more naturalistic attitudes to transient human existence.

The continuation of Nietzsche's thought with the Western philosophical tradition has been emphasized throughout this thesis. He refers regularly to his predecessors, sometimes with approval, as in the case of Pre-Socratics. At other times he is critical, as in the case of Socrates and Kant. It is, however, impossible to imagine the work of Nietzsche without the prior existence of these two philosophers as well as others, particularly Schopenhauer.

Nietzsche's thought is also continuous with Western intellectual tradition in its widest sense. His work is full of references to literature of the past and especially of references to music and fine arts. In other words, Nietzsche's work is continuous with what is best, in the sense of the most life-affirming, in Western art and intellectual endeavor. It also represents historical continuity: Nietzsche refers to the great men of the past who have inspired him and amongst whom he counts himself.

In terms of men's religious beliefs, Nietzsche regards Christian monotheism as an aberration, a narrowing of perspectives. One result of it is the stifling of creativity and the lack of original value in the world. In other words, human existence is impoverished rather than enhanced under the influence of Christian monotheism. Parkes is therefore right to point out that Nietzsche regarded 'Dionysian polytheistic pantheism' as superior to monotheism as a way of perceiving the world. But Parkes does not make clear the reasons why the existence of numerous gods should be preferred to the existence of just one, even one who is omniscient and omnipotent. After all, the view of Spinoza, that there is only one God who is ensouled in every aspect of the world, seems akin to Nietzsche's naturalism. Why should many gods be better than one? The simple answer is that for Nietzsche, multiplicity is always better than singularity. If nature is ensouled with many gods it represents a plurality that is not present in the picture painted by Spinoza. Many gods, because of the different values they represent, offer the individual a wide range of opportunities and choices not available to adherents to monotheism.

It is important to note that Nietzsche argues that both the monotheistic God and the gods of polytheism are equally projections of the human mind. But he underlines the differences between these two conceptions and the differences between the attitudes of those who came up with them:

The wonderful art and gift of creating gods - polytheism - was the medium through which this impulse [for an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joys, and rights] could discharge, purify, perfect, and ennoble itself; for originally it was a very undistinguished impulse related to stubbornness, disobedience and envy.⁷⁴

Nietzsche argues that human beings have dealt with their impulses in two main ways: they have either accepted them or they have become 'hostile' to them. The latter attitude has resulted in the Christian morality with its 'one normal human type'.⁷⁵ Contrasted with this hostile perspective of the moralists is the affirmative attitude of the polytheists whose 'gods all over the place' represent '*a plurality of norms*'.⁷⁶

The values of those who affirm plurality are worldly and temporal, they have no need for 'eternal horizons and perspectives'.⁷⁷ The resentful conceive of 'the evil enemy' and '*the Evil One*'; in their place the polytheists of ancient Greece have 'dwarfs, fairies, centaurs, satyrs, demons and devils' whom they themselves have 'invented'.⁷⁸ They do not claim that these creatures represent reality as it is, they create myths and metaphors that enrich life, they rejoice in multiplicity. Those who invent 'evils', in contrast, do not admit that their creatures are only inventions, but maintain that they are entities in the world.

Again Nietzsche paints a dynamic, fluid picture of affirmation in which 'the luxury of individuals [is] permitted'.⁷⁹ This picture, then, is a contrast to the ascetic ideals of Christianity. In summary, in Nietzsche's rank ordering polytheism is placed well above monotheism because of the values it represents. It affirms a multiplicity of human types; it affirms their impulses that are connected to the earth and to the body; and it affirms Dionysian creativity. He argues that the strong should be able to affirm the process without any goals; that this is the true meaning of pantheism. This claim brings us back to the question posed in the beginning: what it is about 'the process' that should be affirmed? If the answer is that everything is in a state of constant flux and it is this flux that should be affirmed, then the whole of existence seems a matter of indifference. In this case there seems no difference between pessimistic and optimistic attitudes to existence. No matter how much Nietzsche argues against arbitrary categories, some appear to be necessary if we are to make sense of the world.

⁷⁴ *The Gay Science* 143.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

Nietzsche would presumably answer this question in terms of his rank ordering. He might argue that some individuals are conscious of their own power, that they are confident in their own strength and can take pride in the attained strength of humanity. This statement, however, brings into question a goal of some sorts: what exactly is the strength needed for? Nietzsche may reply that it is needed for affirmation. Again the question of what is affirmed and how is the natural response.

The second alternative may appear more promising: the reader may take seriously the statements Nietzsche makes regarding the relationship between words and our knowledge of the world. He or she may accept that words do not exhibit our mastery of the world, but merely the limits of our ignorance. Nietzsche, true to his claims to multiplicity, does not delineate a world for us to become acquainted with. He argues consistently that each person creates his own world according to how he perceives the world of flux and his place in it. Those who are most able to affirm impermanence and who are least concerned with their place in the world paradoxically remain always in it in the ideas of those that follow them.

Conclusion

Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy goes beyond rhetoric. Even if he uses many of the standard concepts of Western metaphysics, he does so in order to show their emptiness and lack of counterparts in the word. I have argued that his attempt to uncover the deception of human beings by metaphysics is not a break with Western tradition, but rather represents what is best in it. He follows the Pre-Socratics in his preparedness to question all aspects of existence. Like them, he is prepared to take the most difficult route in order to gain true understanding of the world, rather than accepting the world view shaped by the metaphysics of his predecessors. He is a true philosopher in his love of wisdom.

I have argued that Blondel's interpretation of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy captures better than that of Young the originality of his attempt to find a new language to describe the value of transient human experience. Blondel pays attention to Nietzsche's appeal to the senses as the loci of this experience. He therefore underscores Nietzsche's arguments for the limitations of the intellect as the interpreter of reality.

I have argued that although Young's interpretation of Nietzsche's four 'techniques' of affirmation provides a useful conceptual framework for the understanding of Nietzsche's

constructive philosophy, he fails to appreciate the fundamental transformation required for a consistent affirmation of transient human existence. Young focuses on particular aspects of existence, such as trying to see life's adversities in a more positive light or regarding them as parts of an overall good. Adversities, according to him, can either be integrated into a pleasing picture or be forgotten about. Young therefore remains caught in the categories of 'good' and 'bad'; even more erroneously he refers to adverse events as *prima facie* evils. He thus undermines his own interpretation of Nietzsche's demand for an aesthetic evaluation of life by continuing to describe Nietzsche's thought in the terms of morality. Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy, his 'Dionysian polytheistic pantheism' is a powerful - and plausible - response to the narrowness of the moral view of human existence.

Nietzsche is successful in overcoming the opposing categories by posing suggestions of how they can be overcome not just in thinking but also in practical action. He uses examples from art and history in order to demonstrate that alternative, affirmative modes of life have been possible for some individuals. The fact that more individuals have not been able to transform themselves into characters like Spinoza and Shakespeare is not proof of the failure of Nietzsche's message. On the contrary, it proves the difficulty of the task but at the same time underlines its value. The task of philosophy and true philosophers must be to search for more authentic modes of existence. For this search Nietzsche provides some of the best guidelines in Western intellectual history because of his understanding gained from the preceding millennia of what it is to live with transience.

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