

Friedrich Nietzsche and German Expressionist Art

Volume I: Text

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Please note: The following thesis is as it was examined and accepted in 1995. The second volume, containing illustrations, is not reproduced here. Short sections of the thesis have been made more concise and used in subsequent publications and lectures. As I now publish the thesis in its original form, I'm aware of certain of its shortcomings (which I may one day address); I publish it here in the hope that it may, in its more positive moments, contribute to on-going research into the relations between the philosophy of Nietzsche and modern art.

Page references in the content page are to the original version of the thesis and will have changed in this PDF.

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Section I. <i>Nietzsche</i>	11
Section II. <i>The Nietzsche Cult</i>	
Subsection I.	
Books and other extensive accounts of Nietzsche.....	55
Subsection II	
Periodicals, Literary Circles and the Broader Cultural Forum.....	89
Section III. <i>Nietzsche and Expressionism</i>	
Nietzsche and the Visual Arts.....	136
Subsection I	
Die Brücke.....	
156	
Subsection II	
Der Blaue Reiter.....	218
Section IV. <i>Nietzsche contra Expressionism</i>	288
Conclusion.....	340

INTRODUCTION

“Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite. ...Looking from the perspective of the sick toward *healthier* concepts and values and, conversely, looking again from the fullness and self-assurance of a *rich* life down into the secret work of the instinct of decadence - in this I have had the longest training, my truest experience; if anything, I became master in *this[...]*”.¹

In her excellent text *German Expressionism. Primitivism and Modernity*, Jill Lloyd writes, in that section called “Nudism” in the chapter titled “The Brücke Bathers: Back to nature”, of the famous motif of the sunworshipper popularised in Fidus’ illustrations, and of Sascha Schneider’s drawings for Karl May’s texts, published in the album titled “Upwards towards the Sun!”. Lloyd stresses the correspondence of certain of Ernst Ludwig Kirchner’s and Max Pechstein’s images to those inspired directly by Fidus, but suggests that “a direct relationship is less likely than a mutual store of ideas and images inspired by current historical developments and - more directly - by Nietzsche’s writings.”² Throughout the text, reference to Nietzsche’s ideas (among those of many other thinkers whose names have become commonplace in texts on Expressionism) are made, but never does Lloyd stop to question the status of the connections she makes. Nothing further is presented in the main text to follow the passage just cited, but a footnote offers possible enlightenment:

Kirchner - like Fidus and Schneider - was doubtlessly inspired by his reading of *Zarathustra*: ‘and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus: Great Star! What would your happiness be, if you had not those for whom you shine! You have come up here to my cave for ten years: you would have grown weary of your light and of this journey, without me, my eagle

¹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, as represented in Gordon (1987), p12.

² Lloyd (1991), p110.

and my serpent' [...] Nietzsche's influence was the major point of coincidence between *die Brücke* and the nudist movement. [...] ³

There is a sense in which we feel the assertion with which the note begins is true, but what follows does nothing to justify the assertion. The passage Lloyd quotes from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has *nothing* to do with sunworship in particular, nor the cult of the body in general. Nietzsche plays a strictly philosophical game in that passage: he articulates in concise form Kant's "Copernican revolution", in which the perceiving subject becomes the centre of the universe; and Nietzsche speaks this to the "subject" of Copernicus' universe, the sun. Can it be that Lloyd missed this playful wisdom, reading only that which suited her into Zarathustra's words?

I begin with Lloyd's text rather than any other, for hers is surely one of the most significant texts on Expressionism to have been published in the English language in recent years, yet it is also one which perpetuates, largely unquestioningly, the now commonplace "importance of Nietzsche" for Expressionism.

If the author fails to engage with the complex task of establishing meaning for Nietzsche's texts, there is little chance of satisfactorily comparing Nietzsche with anything else. Of course, the task of privileging one reading of a text over another is not always easy, but it is possible, at certain levels, to exclude readings. Thus my criticism and dismissal of Lloyd's reference to that passage of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in relation to sunworship. Another form of misrepresentation is readily uncovered in the passage from Donald Gordon's *Expressionism, Art and Idea*, quoted above, which pretends to be a quotation from Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*. Of course, use of those three dots to indicate an omission is regularly used to exclude material irrelevant, confusing (or even contradictory) to an argument. But to place material after that omission whose place in the original text was before that which is in front of the "omission" (the dots no longer

³ *ibid*, p246, n32.

signify an omission) - which is exactly what happens in Gordon's text,⁴ and is its reason for inclusion in this thesis - is to rewrite the original text without regard for that original. Before Gordon's text can begin interpretation of Nietzsche's text, the latter has been corrupted. The wealth of valuable material and interpretation his volume makes available to the reader will frequently be hampered by his failure to engage in a convincing way with Nietzsche's texts.

Beyond the representation of Nietzsche's philosophy itself, we come to the uneasy task of bridging the gap between philosopher and artist. In an effort to impress upon the reader that Nietzsche's thoughts were of great import to artists discussed, certain texts mobilise questionable devices and distortions. Consider, for example, Sarah O'Brien Twohig's essay "Dix and Nietzsche" included in the catalogue of the recent Otto Dix exhibition.⁵ Twohig notes how the twenty year old Paul Klee wrote in his diary, in 1899, of the enormous import of Nietzsche in Munich at that time, and goes on to note that "his friend Kandinsky, reading Nietzsche at the same time and place, felt 'as if a great earthquake had erupted in the soul', to which he gave aesthetic expression in *On the Spiritual in Art* [...]".⁶ Certainly, in the passage from the latter text to which Twohig refers Kandinsky makes reference to Nietzsche's name. But Twohig's assertion that Kandinsky read Nietzsche at the same time and place as Klee is highly dubious: it is the case that Kandinsky had recently arrived in Munich by this time, but his reference to Nietzsche which Twohig later quotes was published more than a decade later. Twohig provides absolutely no evidence, and the present author can find none, to suggest that Kandinsky was reading Nietzsche at anything like the same time as Klee's

⁴ Gordon's footnote, placed at the end of another extensive quote, refers the reader to pages 223-224 of Kaufmann's translation of *Ecce Homo*. Text prior to the "omission" comes from page 224, the remainder from page 223. The circumstances under which *Expressionism, Art and Idea* was completed may account for such error, but this, for the moment, is not our concern.

⁵ Twohig (1992)

⁶ *ibid*, pp41-42.

reference. Likewise, in the following paragraph, Twohig writes, in reference to *die Brücke*, that “Many of their vitalistic celebrations of nudes playing and dancing together in interiors and in the open air were made while listening to each other reading from Nietzschean texts.”⁷ The whole thing sounds rather contrived - on the part of the artists, if they did as Twohig suggests, or of Twohig, or whatever source she uses, if they didn't. Certainly, the artists read aloud from texts written by Nietzsche, and from texts we might call “Nietzschean”, as we shall see below, but the suggestion that “many” of these works were produced under such conditions is unfounded and misleading: the source to which Twohig refers (without giving page references) is Reinhardt's "Die frühe Brücke. Beiträge zur Geschichte und zum Werk der Dresdner Künstlergruppe 'Brücke' der Jahre 1905 bis 1908",⁸ a text which, though attending to the artists' readings of and relations to Nietzsche, does not support the specific claims Twohig makes. Twohig misrepresents events in order to articulate more forcefully the “impact” of Nietzsche.

While apparently quite minor, such distortions are indicative of a more profound carelessness which has entered the literature. The attempt to draw artist and philosopher together takes on more problematic proportions in another very recent text, Mark Roskill's 1992 “critical perspective” (the words are his) on *Klee, Kandinsky, and the Thought of their Time*.⁹ Amid a catalogue of questionable readings of artists' work in relation to Nietzsche, we encounter Roskill's assertion that

the drawings of Klee from 1907-8 referred to recall Nietzsche's claim in his *The Birth of Tragedy* that satire - as represented by the satyric chorus with which tragedy started out - puts one in touch with truths about the everyday world more effectively than do the conventions concerning reality and its representation that cultured society chooses to maintain [...].¹⁰

⁷ *ibid*, p42.

⁸ Reinhardt (1977).

⁹ Roskill (1992).

¹⁰ *ibid*, pp56-57.

At no point in the text does Nietzsche use the word “satire”, nor does he make any suggestion (or “claim”) at any point in the text that such is an object of the satyr.¹¹ The satyr functions in *The Birth of Tragedy* as the symbol of nature and of man’s strongest urges,¹² as well as “something sublime and divine”;¹³ the Greek satyr chorus is, writes Nietzsche, the chorus of primitive tragedy,¹⁴ that from which, as Roskill correctly notes, tragedy started out. To suggest that the satirical nature of certain of Klee’s drawings produced from 1907-1908 has any significant connection to the satyr as Nietzsche presents it in *The Birth of Tragedy* is surely a little too “ludicrous”. In bringing ideas together, we must make a “play” - to play one thing against another - but that play must surely succeed a rigorous consideration of those ideas, and their compatibility.

The present thesis will also play one thing against another, but it seeks to ground the connections it makes between the work of certain German Expressionists and Nietzsche in a critical account of both. Section I establishes aspects of Nietzsche’s philosophy of art, articulating this in relation to that which underwrites his later account of art: nihilism. In so doing, this section will catalogue certain shifts in Nietzsche’s thought as it moves from the early, metaphysical work, to the denial of metaphysics in much of his subsequent work. The section deals in some depth with these positions, making manifest the tensions through which his ideas pass, attending to important

¹¹ To assume a link between “satire” (from the Latin *satura*) and “satyr” (from the Greek *satyros*) at the level Roskill constructs is to subscribe to a false etymology; both the *Encyclopedia Britannica* and the OED present concise summaries of the “false etymology [which] believed that ‘satyre’ [(as ‘satire’ was written in 16th century England)] derived from the Greek satyr play.” (Entry under “Satire”, *Encyclopedia Britannica*.) Roskill asserts that Nietzsche makes a “claim” concerning “satire”, a concept completely absent from *The Birth of Tragedy*. His only defence might be a false etymology which developed in the English language in the 16th Century.

¹² *Birth of Tragedy*, p65; see below, Section III.

¹³ *ibid*, p61.

¹⁴ *ibid*, p58. Nietzsche refers to the satyr in just three aphorisms of the text: 2, 7 and 8.

changes as well as continuities within his writing. This is important, for the artists will not all relate to one, essential Nietzsche, but to a multiplicity of “Nietzsches”, manifest sometimes within one text, sometimes across a range of texts. I establish this account of Nietzsche at the outset with the assertion that what I present is representative of a considered and, I will assert, correct, reading of relevant aspects of Nietzsche. Whether or not the reader agrees with the account, it will act as a foil against which to judge other accounts of Nietzsche presented by protagonists later in the thesis.

The second section presents a selective path through what has been called the Nietzsche cult, in the form of a series of brief case studies. Each (except the first) of those studies has been shown elsewhere to have been of importance to Expressionism; most to have been of crucial importance, though not necessarily in the context of the artists’ relations to Nietzsche’s thought. The section is presented first, to demonstrate that about the turn of the century there was considerable and sustained interest in the philosophy of Nietzsche, and this in the circles among which certain key Expressionists have been shown to move; and second, to show that the relation of the artists who form the main subject of analysis in this text to Nietzsche corresponds in important ways to those case studies; that is to say, their readings and misreadings of Nietzsche can be traced back to readings of those they knew, and from whom they learnt.

The third section, then, will uncover the various ways in which the work of certain artists stands in relation to the philosophy of Nietzsche, particularly as represented in the first section of the thesis. Throughout this section, I will seek to forge a positive relation between artists and philosopher. Moving from philosophical text to the work of an artist in a convincing manner is not easy; the distance from words to image or form is frequently great. Thus, I have chosen to focus in particular on those artists who, apart from working in various artistic media, wrote about that work. The artists’ own texts, then, apart from being an object of study in themselves, form a bridge between philosopher and artist, and between philosophical text and the work of art. The wealth of

material to be covered necessitates the limitation of artists considered to those who have traditionally, in art historical writing on Expressionism, been the central focus of attention. Thus I focus on the work of certain of the artists of *die Brücke*, and on that of the editors of the almanac *Der Blaue Reiter*. No apology can be made for the focus of attention on particular artists and the exclusion of others. Those to whom the thesis attends present the reader with the most important and varied relations to Nietzsche.

In an attempt to avoid careless fabrication of links between Nietzsche and Expressionism, the thesis does not set itself the task of merely demonstrating the importance of Nietzsche. Rather, it sets about the task of beginning to answer that question which certain other studies beg: was Nietzsche important for Expressionism? and if so, in what ways? To come to terms with this question, particularly its second part, certain distinctions must be made. First, the notion of “influence”. To suggest Nietzsche influenced certain artists is to suggest that his ideas, whether or not the artists were aware, are manifest in, or alter the nature of, the artist’s work. The most obvious example would be an artistic representation (or likeness) of the philosopher, or reference to his name in a text. Nietzsche’s influence on the work is direct and obviously manifest. Equally clear is the direct manifestation of his ideas, most obvious in the form of quotation (acknowledged or otherwise) in the artist’s writing which could only have come from Nietzsche’s texts. Moving further from this field of obvious influence, we encounter representations of things which might or might not have been influenced by Nietzsche: a text’s “declamatory tone” which might be seen as derivative of, say, certain passages from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, or the artist’s repeated representation of the tightrope walker as an image which may be derived from that same text.¹⁵ Beyond the realm of obvious influence, then, we must begin to talk, instead of influence, of relations; that is to say, we uncover a certain *correspondence* between representations produced

¹⁵ Both these examples will be considered, to varying degrees, below.

by an artist and those of Nietzsche, one which may or may not be the result of direct influence. An artist's apocalypticism, for instance, might be seen to relate, at certain moments, to that manifest in certain of the philosopher's texts. To speak in a meaningful way of a relation between artist and philosopher in such a case depends on demonstration first of some sort of empirical or direct influence, even if not in that particular part of the text or that image to which we attend; within this context, more speculative reading which seeks out correspondence becomes a possibility.

The fourth and final section of the thesis arises as something of a counter to the third; as the third forges links between artists and Nietzsche, the fourth sets about the task of contextualising the importance of Nietzsche by attending to other intellectual sources manifest in the artists' work, and considering the ways in which they reinforce or contradict "Nietzschean moments" in the artists' oeuvres. It is here that we can begin to lay out the various and diverse relations of the artists' work to Nietzsche, and thus begin to come to terms with the ways in which the philosopher's name and ideas are important to our understanding of certain forms of Expressionism.

Section I:

Nietzsche

The following account will seek to synthesise certain of Nietzsche's ideas to present, in concise form, a coherent overview of themes relevant to the present thesis. However, contradictions and tensions within his thought will not always be suppressed in favour of synthesis; in particular, where these are important to the analysis which follows, we will note significant tensions and shifts of position which occur between different parts of individual texts, and we will note changes which occur across Nietzsche's oeuvre.¹⁶ Not only are these shifts and contradictions central and productive for Nietzsche's philosophy, but they are crucial to our understanding of the various relations of artists to his thought. Further to this, it is important to note the later Nietzsche's resistance to overt system *per se*: he describes the "will to system" as a "subtle corruption, a disease of the character", and as "a lack of integrity".¹⁷ Thus, to render Nietzsche's ideas in any way systematic could seem a wrong-headed project. But equally, and in contradiction to this, it is clear that Nietzsche saw value in systems,¹⁸ and careful analysis shows that, behind apparently diverse books, essays, aphorisms and maxims, certain ideas and themes are continuous, at least through

¹⁶ For our present concerns, this last can be summarised as a shift from an early commitment to a metaphysical world-view, and particularly to the importance of the arts in this context - a commitment made clear in the following analysis of *The Birth of Tragedy*, through an opposition to such metaphysics and art in what we shall later call his "scientific or Enlightenment period", manifest in a text such as *Human, All Too Human*, and finally, beginning particularly in sections of *The Gay Science*, a radical questioning of commitment to Enlightenment and scientific method, and of metaphysics in general, giving rise to an active nihilism and, eventually, a return to the arts. Only the first and last of these "phases" will be attended to in any detail in the present section.

¹⁷ Quoted in Kaufmann (1974), p80.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

certain phases of his work. Thus, in what follows I will seek principally to uncover continuities within his philosophy, drawing attention to important discontinuities within that philosophy where appropriate.

The analysis falls into three parts. The first considers in some detail the relationship of Dionysus to Apollo, and more generally the importance of the arts, as explicated in Nietzsche's first published book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is important to become familiar with some of the more subtle aspects of this relationship as I shall show how they are manifest in both theory and practice of certain of the artists to be considered. The second part is a far more general account of Nietzsche's notion of nihilism - a highly complex and powerful notion which underwrites the whole of Nietzsche's philosophy, but which is particularly significant in relation to his later work. It is important that we have an understanding of nihilism, as I shall suggest it is the single most important factor in the development of Expressionism. The final section presents an interpretation of what Nietzsche presented as the countermovement to that nihilism, an account which amounts to a summary of the later Nietzsche's aesthetics.

The Birth of Tragedy

In the preface he wrote in 1872 to Richard Wagner, Nietzsche describes art as representing the highest task and truly metaphysical activity of life.¹⁹ What follows thereafter is an attempt to establish the artistic interpretation of existence as more important than other apparently more serious concerns.

¹⁹ The following account of *The Birth of Tragedy* is indebted to a series of lectures and seminars presented by Robert Rethy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Essex during the academic year 1989-90. Any errors or flaws are my own.

While the Apollonian and Dionysian art impulses of nature as described by Nietzsche have been widely analysed, it seems necessary to rehearse and reconsider the analysis for two reasons. First, as we shall see, the concepts are echoed in texts of writers and artists working at the beginning of the twentieth century, and therefore will be of great import to the present thesis. Second, existent analyses - at least those written in the English language - tend to be rather reductive, failing to recognise the complex relations and confusions contained within the concepts.

Just as procreation depends on the duality of the sexes, writes Nietzsche, so the continuous development of art is bound up with the Dionysian and Apollonian.²⁰ We recognise this, he writes, by way of not only logical inference (on the one hand) but with the immediate certainty of vision. Through these two art deities of the Greeks Nietzsche recognises a fundamental opposition within the Greek world: on one hand the Apollonian art of sculpture, on the other the non-imagistic Dionysian art of music. Continually, we are told, they incite each other to new and more powerful births, manifest eventually in a profound and momentarily balanced coupling which is named Attic tragedy.

In the opening passages of the text Nietzsche introduces us to what he calls these two "art impulses of nature". Analogous to Dionysus is music, and the experience of intoxication; to Apollo, sculpture and the world of the dream. In his account of the Apollonian Nietzsche draws upon Schopenhauer's notion of the *principium individuationis*, that which allows for the possibility of differentiation, of discrete entities, as opposed to undifferentiated unity, which Schopenhauer calls the "will" or "noumenon", and which, as we shall see later when we consider more fully the relation of Nietzsche to Schopenhauer, is directly related to the Dionysian.

²⁰ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p33.

To create his account of Apollonian culture Nietzsche writes of "the glorious Olympian figures of the gods" who stand at the gates of that culture.²¹ The impulse which embodied itself in Apollo, he writes, is the same impulse which gave birth to the entire Olympian world. In this world both good and evil are deified; the spectator is presented with an "ideal picture" of his own existence. But the world view which created such beauty was not a naive one: the "radiant dreambirth of the Olympians" was placed by the Greek between himself and the horrific reality of the Wisdom of Silenus ("What is best of all [for man] is utterly beyond your reach: not to be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is - to die soon."²²). This overcoming of the terror of existence is described as the "complete victory of Apollonian illusion": within the context of the dream image, contained within the confine and measure which characterise Apollo, this art impulse (of nature) saves the Greek from the horrific truth of nature.

Our narrator writes of the astonishment with which the Apollonian Greek must have beheld Dionysus. The Dionysian orgy heralds the advent of the destruction of the *principium individuationis* as an artistic phenomenon for the first time. Particularly Dionysian music excited both a sense of awe and terror: prior to the event of Dionysus music had only been known as the "wave beat of rhythm", as "Doric architectonic" in tones: a music appropriate for the representation of Apollonian states. That which characterises Dionysian music is distinctly un-Apollonian: it is the "emotional power of tone, the uniform flow of melody, and the utterly incomparable world of harmony".²³ Nietzsche writes that "In the Dionysian dithyramb man is incited to the greatest exaltation of all his symbolic faculties." With the destruction of the veil of maya (in Schopenhauer's philosophy, the world as "representation"), a new unity of race, and of nature, "struggles for utterance".

²¹ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p41.

²² *ibid*, p42.

²³ *ibid*, p40

The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols; and the entire symbolism of the body is brought into play, not the mere symbolism of the lips, face and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement. Then the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward, particularly those of music, in rhythmic, dynamics, and harmony.²⁴

Dance and music, then, accompany the Dionysian state, the state of self abnegation and ecstasy, as its expression. To the Olympian world comes not only a new art, but a new mode of being which makes that art necessary.

Such is an initial account of Apollo and Dionysus. We will now consider some of the more subtle implications of these art impulses within the context of the broader concerns of the text. The *Birth of Tragedy* is underwritten by a profound and what frequently seems a mystical metaphysics of the artist. The language with which Nietzsche describes the role of art clearly draws upon that of religion, yet discussion of religion itself is almost completely absent. Behind all being lies the *Ur-eine* (primordial one). It is characterised as "eternally suffering and contradictory". Nietzsche's artist's metaphysics as outlined in *The Birth of Tragedy*, manifest in the figures of Apollo and Dionysus, is a response to, and is determined by, the nature of this *Ur-eine*. It is as follows.

Through the activity of what Nietzsche calls the *Ur-Künstler* (primordial artist) the *Ur-eine* achieves *Erlösung* (redemption) through its creation of *Schein* (semblance or illusion). From this world of *Schein* we create through our (Kantian) concepts of "time, space and causality" our daylight world, our "empirical reality" of *Erscheinung* (appearance). The primordial artist whose action determines Nietzsche's art impulses of nature creates from primordial oneness the redemption or "untying" which illusion or *Schein* affords. As we represent this beautiful world of mere illusion to ourselves, we

²⁴ *ibid.*

make of it our world of appearance and order, our world of *Erscheinung*. When daylight recedes *Erscheinung* (which, as we shall see, is itself in need of redemption) is itself augmented to *Schein* in the dream. Here, in this world of dreams, our concepts and empirical reality aren't in play: here we act as the *Ur-Kunstler*, except that we achieve redemption from the world of *Erscheinung* in the creation of *Schein*.

Our "reality", then, is merely the "show" of the "true" world (the *Ur-eine*). Thus, "we may assume that we [and our reality] are merely images and artistic projections for the true author":²⁵ our reality is an artwork. The human artist works rather as the dream: by coalescing with, and imitating,²⁶ the "primordial artist of the world" he comes to know the "eternal essence of art", and thus is in a position to redeem our world of *Erscheinung* through artistic creation, by the creation of *Schein*. Thus, there are two aspects to the Apollonian: first, the redemptive creation of individuation, of *Schein*, from primordial oneness; and second, redemption from our world of *Erscheinung* in the dream, and in the work of the human artist. The second amounts to an imitation of the first.

Performing in this beautifying, redeeming fashion, Nietzsche suggests that "we might call Apollo himself the glorious divine image of the *principium individuationis*, through whose gestures and eyes all the joy and wisdom of 'illusion' (*Schein*), together with its beauty, speak to us".²⁷ And yet this very *principium* is presented as "the primal cause of evil".²⁸ Our world of *Erscheinung*, like the Apollonian world of *Schein*, is founded upon this *principium*, and is thus itself in need of redemption. The evil of the *principium*, we shall see, arises from the destruction of primal unity - that destruction which we were led to believe was a redemption of the evil of that unity.

²⁵ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p52.

²⁶ See *ibid*, p38.

²⁷ *ibid*, p36.

²⁸ *ibid*, p74.

Nietzsche describes the "Dionysian orgies of the Greeks" as "festivals of world redemption":²⁹ these serve to "destroy the individual and redeem him by a mystical feeling of oneness."³⁰ This is the "metaphysical consolation" "that life, at the ground of things, despite all change of appearance is indestructibly powerful and pleasurable":³¹ it is the redemption of the evil of individuation, now at the hands of the Dionysian *Weltkünstler*. But as the Greek breaks away from the *principium* in the intoxication and excess which characterise Dionysus,³² he is overcome by a "tremendous terror": "if we add to this terror the blissful ecstasy that wells from the innermost depths of man, indeed of nature [...] we steal a glimpse of the Dionysian." The artist who creates after Dionysus will have "identified himself with the primal unity [(of the *Ur-eine*)], its pain and contradiction", to experience "Contradiction, the bliss born of pain";³³ at once the Greek experiences ecstatic joy, and terrifying pain. It is now for Apollo to redeem him from the *Ur-eine*'s destructive grip.

And it is from man's need for both art impulses that tragedy is born. Nietzsche writes that it is from the "reflection of primordial pain in music" that a second mirroring or example may occur at the hands of the Apollonian artist. "The image that now shows him his identity with the heart of the world is a dream scene that embodies the primordial contradiction and primordial pain, together with the primordial pleasure, of mere appearance".³⁴ Such is the process of the lyric poet. Within the folk song "melody [the Dionysian] is [...] primary and universal", and "seeks for itself a parallel dream [i.e. Apollonian] phenomenon [... expressed in] poetry". "Melody generates [(gives birth to -

²⁹ *ibid*, p39.

³⁰ *ibid*, p38.

³¹ *ibid*, p59.

³² See *ibid* pp36 & 46.

³³ *ibid*, p46.

³⁴ *ibid*, p49.

as in the title of the book)] the poem out of itself".³⁵ Indeed, it now seems that the opposition Dionysus/Apollo, generated by a single source, the *Ur-eine*, is no simple binary opposition: rather, they become, at certain moments in the text, more of a continuum in which the Apollonian is generated from within the Dionysian, which itself approximates most closely to the *Ur-eine*.

Still, while Nietzsche develops this account - one which he will develop further in his later aesthetics - it is to the model of duality and opposition that his text will return repeatedly. As Dionysus and Apollo converge, there arises the possibility of Greek tragedy. In the activity of the lyric poet lay the "first evidence in Greece of that new germ which subsequently developed into tragedy and dramatic dithyramb." As Apollo approaches and touches the "Dionysian-musical enchantment of the sleeper", "image sparks, lyrical poems" are emitted, "which in their highest development are called tragedies." Apollo and Dionysus clash and from their very difference arises a new birth.

The subject, "the willing individual that furthers his own egoistic ends", is seen as merely the antagonist and not the origin of art. He is at once the object of art - he himself is the manifestation of the activity of the *Ur-Kunstler* - and subject of art - but only in so far as he coalesces with, or is controlled by, the *Ur-Kunstler*. Nietzsche writes that "we have our highest dignity in our significance as works of art - for it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified."³⁶ This notion is crucial for our understanding of Nietzsche's account of the arts: essentially all is primordial suffering and contradiction, and only as an aesthetic phenomenon, only through tragedy which is generated from the mutual necessity of Dionysus and Apollo, does existence become justified.

"Eternally justified" does not mean once and for all: throughout the book Nietzsche refers to the interaction and friction of Dionysus and Apollo which give rise to

³⁵ *ibid*, p53.

³⁶ *ibid*, p52.

tragedy: "Melody generates the poem out of itself *ever again*";³⁷ the Dionysian chorus "*ever anew*" discharges itself in an Apollonian world of images³⁸ (my emphases); image sparks shoot forth and die away in the continual process of this redemption from evil, creating ever anew the possibilities of *Rechtfertigung* (justification). Both Apollo and Dionysus are destructive and suffering; they must continually battle against themselves to redeem themselves (they are of the *Ur-eine*), each with the assistance of the other, to create the possibility of eternal justification.

Wherever the Greek turns, then, suffering and joy, contradiction, are always (eternally) to hand; Apollo and Dionysus, who create redemption and the possibility of justification, always destroy as they create. To this destructive force he must say "yes" if he is to partake of the deities' redemption. Affirmation of what seems negative (suffering, pain) is essential to the affirmation of the positive (joy, redemption, justification). But this affirmation of the negative isn't simply some necessary step toward an end goal (justification, affirmation of the just): contained within the notion of justification is this affirmation of the negative. To make the idea of an aesthetic justification which includes that which is painful and disharmonic intelligible, Nietzsche refers to the joy of musical dissonance: "Quite generally, only music [...] can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous sensation of dissonance in music."³⁹ It is the Dionysian "with its primordial joy experienced even in pain" that is this common source.

Towards Nihilism

³⁷ *ibid*, p53.

³⁸ *ibid*, p65.

³⁹ *ibid*, p141.

It is "Only as an aesthetic phenomenon" that life becomes justified: not in religion (as traditional use of the word "justification" may suggest), and not in science. An explicit critique of the former is absent from the text; Nietzsche's analysis of the latter demonstrates what is seen as its genetic bond to the former. He writes of a "profound illusion" which first took shape in the name of Socrates; the faith that thought, via causality, could "penetrate the deepest abysses of being" - that thought could both know and correct being. This "sublime metaphysical illusion accompanies science as an instinct" leading science to its limits at which it turns into art - "*which is really the aim of this mechanism*".⁴⁰ The image of the "Dying Socrates" prefigures that of Christ, gladly bringing about his own death; fear of death is negated by the process of knowledge and reason. For Nietzsche this image signifies the mission of science - "to make existence appear comprehensible and thus" - like the image of Christ on the cross - "justified". But "if reasons do not suffice, myth has to come to their aid" - thus science (like religion) becomes art. The "tragic insight" to the limits of science - the recognition that at these limits "logic coils up [...] and finally bites its own tail"⁴¹ - belongs, Nietzsche asserts, to Kant and Schopenhauer.⁴² This "science of pessimism" redresses the irresistible speed of Socratic optimism. Science reaches its limits, fails, and can only succeed by revealing its own essence. Science "turns into" means that science "becomes visible as" art: it always was - an art of (mad) illusion (*Wahnvorstellung*) which, like religion, could act "as a remedy and a preventative" for a potentially profound and (in the absence of any art) wholly destructive practical pessimism.⁴³ But the "justification" science had offered

⁴⁰ *ibid*, pp95-96.

⁴¹ *ibid*, p98.

⁴² This "tragic insight" is the recognition that the world "in-itself", the noumenon, is unknowable, that knowledge is determined by the limits of experience.

⁴³ Art as genus, science and religion as species; consider the opening line of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation*: "The world is my representation". Here Schopenhauer draws upon Kant's emphasis on the formative activity of the mind in experience. Nietzsche seems to suggest that the world of our experience is of our creation - it is our representation - and thus could be called art.

depended upon its ability to render all things intelligible. Kant's "tragic insight" showed this to be impossible, to be no more than an illusion. From science, truth of the ground of being was absent. These Socratic "aesthetics of illusion" must succumb to those of tragedy which, through its unstable art deities is true to the nature of being, and through this truth (instability) is able "ever anew" to generate the possibility of the justification of an "eternally suffering" existence.

We now begin to understand the attention paid by certain artists, writers and poets to this, Nietzsche's first published book. Art is elevated to the sphere of the gods, beyond the "human, all too human" illusions of science and theory. To the artist suspicious of the scientific, materialist interpretation of reality, keen to impose a different perspective upon the world, such a notion was surely attractive.

But it is essential to note that, having identified the inability of what were hitherto man's most important value systems - in this case religion and science - to deal with the "truth" of existence, and having proposed an artistic solution to that problem, Nietzsche later problematises the metaphysics which made the *Birth of Tragedy's* "justification" and "redemption" possible. Indeed, the later Nietzsche,⁴⁴ to whom we shall now attend, sets about the task of calling into question all of man's highest values and in so doing tears, at certain moments, at the very fabric of his own earlier philosophy. The recognition that the highest values can only fail - the condition he calls nihilism - will then be seen to demand responses somewhat different (though not unrelated) to those of his first published book.

⁴⁴ According to the scheme I outlined above, p.11, texts produced after *The Gay Science*, to include unpublished notes written after that time and the posthumously published *Will to Power*.

Nihilism

"Was bedeutet Nihilismus? - *Dass die obersten Werte sich entwerten.*"⁴⁵

Until we have attempted to articulate the nature of Nietzsche's nihilism, we will be unable to conceive of the force which underwrites the importance of Nietzsche for Expressionism. The account is necessarily reductive: Nietzsche's philosophy is that of nihilism, its nature and its overcoming. Once the power of this notion has been felt, we may begin to appreciate the urgency of the Expressionist response.

Nietzsche recognises that consideration of values as articulated over the last two thousand years has constantly made reference to the kind of "alternative" reality outlined briefly above in the realms of science and religion.⁴⁶ For him the Platonic creation of an other worldly realm of ideas, from which the absolute notions of truth and value he sees permeating thought since Socrates are derived, leads only to a value system radically opposed to life.⁴⁷ "Revenge" against life is what allows the privileging of this - what has been treated as the "true" world - over the "apparent":⁴⁸ constant reference to some other world - whether it be the Platonic world of ideas, or "heaven" in the Christian sense - by which this world is to be judged leads to a devaluation of life.

This condition of revenge upon (human) life, the distance between those realms in which the values for life are established and life itself, is what has given rise to the advent of nihilism. Nietzsche's philosophy is concerned first to demonstrate the nature of this problem, and then to articulate alternative interpretations of human existence in which life's vital forces are enhanced rather than denied.

⁴⁵ *Der Wille zur Macht*, "I. Nihilismus".

⁴⁶ The following account of nihilism draws particularly on Goudsblom (1980), esp. pp19-35 re. the following exegesis of truth and its self-overcoming, and on Schutte (1984) .

⁴⁷ Schutte (1984), p1.

⁴⁸ Goudsblom (1980) p25ff develops this opposition in some detail.

How did this otherworldly realm become necessary? For Nietzsche "*This world is the will to power - and nothing besides!*"⁴⁹ And you yourselves are also this will to power - and nothing besides!"⁴⁹ To this we should add that "To impose upon becoming the character of being - that is the supreme will to power."⁵⁰ For Nietzsche, without man's ability to create order from the chaos of change and becoming (which, as we have seen, characterise the true nature of existence), life would not be possible. Thus the creation of a "crude world of stability" is necessary.⁵¹ Man has created the notion of a "true world" of Being, where values can be established in absolute, unchanging and predictable forms. By coming to know this realm, man could establish what is valuable, what is true. It is in relation to this world that values for our life gain their authority. Once this "true world" had become established, it proceeded to etch itself into the consciousness of man. Soon, it seems, he believed in this realm, and sought its truths.

The notion of truth, then, is established as fundamental. For Nietzsche the urge for truth is an essential part of the human condition: he identifies the "will to truth" as what he calls a "foreground" of the will to power. But in Nietzsche's hands this will becomes the downfall of that which for other thinkers was a solution - it is the end of any possible "absolute" or "true" world: it becomes the need to call into question all that hitherto stood as the truth. In this connection he set about the task of questioning the basis of morality, and thus attempted to engage a realm somehow beyond that value system which for Zarathustra constituted the greatest power on earth: to move "beyond good and evil".⁵² Nietzsche saw the efforts of previous philosophers to deal with morality as little more than the attempt to adapt themselves to what already existed: to

⁴⁹ *The Will to Power*, p550.

⁵⁰ *The Will to Power*, p330.

⁵¹ *The Will to Power*, p380.

⁵² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p84.

justify what was already there rather than question its truth claims.⁵³ Nietzsche's principal objection to morality is what he finds to be its interference with natural power structures.⁵⁴ Through reference to a true world, values conflicting with natural instincts attain their authority: in this realm the Good is established. The asceticism which this Good demands of life on earth, the denial of a joyful affirmation of earthly pleasures, is justified with the promise of otherworldly rewards - in the case of Christianity, eternal life in Heaven. It is from this "otherworldly" realm that life attains purpose.

From the eternal contradictoriness, purposelessness and becoming of this world, a stable world of being is established. However, if the same will for truth that led to the creation of the "real world" where "truth" could be established in an intelligible form were now to turn on this account of values, it may find that account problematic, or false. If the true world were to become so much part of human being that it formed our language, our consciousness, what would then happen if its very existence were denied? In the absence of society's "metaphysical comfort", man would lose precisely those structures which had given life its meaning and purpose. Everything of value becomes without value as the notion of value itself is destabilised, or recognised as false.⁵⁵

In *Human, All Too Human* Nietzsche writes:
the tragedy is that one cannot believe these dogmas of religion and metaphysics if one has the strict method of truth in one's heart and in one's head, whilst on the other hand one has become so tender, so sensitive and so agonised through the development of mankind that one needs remedies of the most supreme type; this gives rise to the danger of man's bleeding to death from acknowledged truth... with the current state of knowledge one absolutely cannot accept [Christianity]

⁵³ Thus, Nietzsche's concept of the "philosophical labourer" (typified in Kant and Hegel), to be superseded by Nietzsche's "artist philosopher", or "philosopher of the future" as described in *Beyond Good and Evil*. See below.

⁵⁴ Goudsblom (1980), p25.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p26.

without soiling one's intellectual conscience greatly and sacrificing it to oneself and others.⁵⁶

Eventually man must acknowledge the truth of this "Truth" - that it is a lie. Indeed, it was Christian morality, a morality which is derived from this notion of a true world, which demanded intellectual rigour and integrity of the thinker. Now that demand turns back upon that which made it necessary, and the will to truth undermines our ability to accept the truth of the real world: "All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming [...] In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality [...] After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself".⁵⁷ Truth devaluates itself: nihilism is that point at which the highest values devalue themselves. This accords with Nietzsche's principle of "self overcoming" - it is the self overcoming of morality.

Equally important in the maintenance of the fissure Nietzsche recognised between the realm of absolutes and the world of natural power structures was the advent - manifest in paradigm form in the figure of Socrates - of the "theoretical man". Nietzsche writes, in *The Antichrist*: "I call an animal, a species, an individual depraved when it loses its instincts".⁵⁸ Once such loss occurs, that species becomes decadent. In tracing the origin of the species "man", Nietzsche makes use of a Darwinian evolutionary scale⁵⁹ from aquatic to land animal, an evolution which devalued and "suspended" the instincts:

From now on they had to walk on their feet and "bear themselves" whereas hitherto they had been borne by the water [...] in this new world they no longer

⁵⁶ *Human, All too Human*, 109, p60; quoted in *ibid*, p20.

⁵⁷ *The Genealogy of Morals*, p161, referenced in *ibid*, p28.

⁵⁸ *The Antichrist*, p127.

⁵⁹ See below, Section IV, for Nietzsche's critique of precisely this model.

possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives: they were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, co-ordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their "consciousness," their weakest and most fallible organ.⁶⁰

This process Nietzsche calls "a forcible sundering of man from his animal past, as it were a leap and plunge into new surroundings and conditions of existence."⁶¹

According to Nietzsche, Socrates recognised in Greece an anarchism of instincts at play, everywhere people on the brink of (what seemed to Socrates) an undesirable excess: "The instincts want to play the tyrant; we must devise a counter-tyrant who is stronger." Thus Socrates made a tyrant of reason: rationality was divined as a saviour. Nietzsche summarises as follows:

Reason = virtue = happiness means merely: one must imitate Socrates and counter the dark desires by producing a permanent *daylight* - the daylight of reason. One must be prudent, clear, bright at any cost: every yielding to the instincts, to the unconscious, leads *downwards*...⁶²

Once again life as a whole is denied in favour of order and cleanliness, the need to explain human existence: that which problematises the account is negated. In this sense reason is fundamentally sterile: of science (which is dependent upon reason - and logic as the paradigm for reason - for its method) Nietzsche writes:

Scientific integrity is always ruptured when the thinker begins to reason

And

⁶⁰ *Ecce Homo*, 2, 16.

⁶¹ Quoted in Schacht (1983), p275.

⁶² *Twilight of the Idols*, p43.

That science is possible in the sense that it is cultivated today is proof that all elementary instincts [...] no longer function.⁶³

In the same way, logic articulates itself in opposition to existential reality - a reality characterised by an unstable relation between consciousness and the unconscious. When science turns away from its commitment to the senses - dependence upon senses being its positive moment - it becomes "abortion and not yet science: which is to say metaphysics, theology, psychology, epistemology. *Or* science of formulae, sign systems: such as logic and that applied logic, mathematics. In these reality does not appear at all".⁶⁴ What can a system of symbols which are not found in reality have to say of reality? Reason and logic, then, are shown to be radically opposed to existential realities of human being.

The nexus of the fissure running through human existence is language.⁶⁵ Here we will find manifest - albeit in the covert form of grammar - the tensions outlined above. Central to the analysis of language are the distinctions subject/object and subject/predicate. Nietzsche calls reason the basic presupposition of language, that is, its metaphysical presupposition.⁶⁶ It is this which has necessitated the ubiquitous division deed and doer, the notion of a concrete ego which through its will is the cause of that which is done and the thing which had to be created as a specific identity in order to counter the continual flux and becoming of reality. Whatever this language may say of the world will necessarily be false, for "Linguistic means of expression are useless for expressing 'becoming'",⁶⁷ which is the only "truth" of existence. Language is an artificial

⁶³ *The Will to Power*, p44, transl. altered.

⁶⁴ *Twilight of the Idols*, p46.

⁶⁵ The following account of the metaphysical divisions which occur through language is indebted to Schutte (1984), pp27-28. While Crawford (1988) presents the most complete account of Nietzsche's account of language, those in Strong (1976) and Edwards (1990) are particularly important in the context of nihilism.

⁶⁶ *Twilight of the Idols*, p48.

⁶⁷ *The Will to Power*, p380.

creation, that which underwrites the "true world" of being. Only in this realm could reason become so powerful. Reason and logic create a certain order within language which reinforces most thoroughly the distinctions which serve to alienate man from life: so long as the subject is distinct from predicate and from object, man will be divorced from that which he does, and is. The mind (the intellectual faculties) and the soul will correspond to the "real", the body and the action which passes away, to the "apparent" (and that means inferior). Within language then, grammar, metaphysics and logic combine to reinforce and affirm each other's existence. Thus Nietzsche writes: "'Reason' in language: oh what a deceitful old woman! I fear we are not getting rid of God because we still believe in grammar".⁶⁸

Such is an account of the conditions giving rise to nihilism. Nietzsche's attitude toward the notion is ambivalent: at one moment he will characterise it as weak and thoroughly negative, at the next strong and positive. The asceticism of Christian (and Buddhist) morality which rejects much of what we might call worldly instincts and actions approximates to doing nothing, is a striving for nil: it therefore portrays nihilistic tendencies. This morality is anti-life, and pro- some other world which "comes later". This then is one form of nihilism. Upon the recognition of the futility of these accounts of existence, man realises the pointlessness of life, manifest in the individual as a crippling sense of disillusionment. This condition Nietzsche calls "passive nihilism", and like its religious precedent is to be condemned. In opposition to this is the notion of a strong and active nihilism which actually helps to destroy those values which have created the necessity of their own destruction, which actually destroy themselves. This is the condition of those strong spirits who "do not find it possible to stop at the No of judgement"⁶⁹ and must make this "no" manifest as deed. Here everything which can be

⁶⁸ *Twilight of the Idols*, p48.

⁶⁹ *The Will to Power*, p18.

refuted is denied. As beliefs and dogmas are destroyed, hope for a new interpretation of existence - and that means hope for a new way of "being" in the world - is created. It is with this mode of nihilism that Nietzsche associates himself, allowing him to proclaim himself the only real nihilist to date.⁷⁰

Related directly to his concept of nihilism is that of decadence, and especially important in the present context is his account of the decadence of language. In *The Case of Wagner*, Nietzsche writes of literary decadence

That life no longer dwells in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, the page gains life at the expense of the whole - the whole is no longer a whole.⁷¹

This simile is that of every decadence, in all realms of experience. How has this come to be? The beginning of St John reads: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But in 1882 Nietzsche announced that "God is dead". Now our values, which had referred to the Absolute - to God - for their justification, stand alone. Tapped by the philosopher's hammer, a hollow sound rings out: "content" is lost. Its significance gone, the word slips from its frame. Indeed, the frame itself falls apart. Language becomes empty, and loses structure.

While it is clear that Nietzsche's account in *The Case of Wagner* is pejorative, his attitude toward the notion of decadence is, as toward the more general notion of nihilism, ambivalent. Of himself, Nietzsche writes "Apart from the fact that I am a decadent, I am also the opposite."⁷² Indeed, this process of decadence is *necessary*:

⁷⁰ *The Will to Power*, p3.

⁷¹ *The Case of Wagner*, p170.

⁷² *Ecce Homo*, p224.

Those who degenerate are of the highest importance wherever progress takes place [...] Precisely in this wounded and weakened part the whole structure is *inoculated*, as it were, with something new.⁷³

Precisely from the process of decadence arises the possibility of creating anew.

The equation between this form of decadence and an active nihilism is clear: from the process of destruction arises the possibility of the creation of a new reality. In the passage entitled "How the 'Real World' at last Became a Myth"⁷⁴ Nietzsche writes:

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?... But no! with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world!

(Mid-day; moment of the shortest shadow; end of the longest error; zenith of mankind; INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.)

Of course, we cannot have an apparent world without the notion of a real one - the loss of one entails the loss of the other. Man can now, with this abolition, begin to create a new shadow on earth, a new relation to reality. The teaching of Zarathustra may begin.

In the knowledge that there is no truth, Zarathustra will create new "truths" from his own strength - not the truth "this is the way it is" but "This is the way it has to be":⁷⁵ the kind of truth (and that means lie) which makes possible the affirmation of life on earth in all its forms. Thus Nietzsche writes that "belief in the truth is approaching its final conclusion within us - you know what that is: that if there is anything at all to worship, it is the illusion that must be worshipped; that the lie - and not the truth - is divine."⁷⁶ Indeed the very will to truth which drove Nietzsche to question the notions of the true world is itself open to question. Thus in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche asks

⁷³ *Human, All too Human*, p107.

⁷⁴ *Twilight of the Idols*, p51; "myth" is alternatively translated as "fable".

⁷⁵ Goudsblom (1980), p32.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

what it is in us that really wants truth, what the value of this will is: "why not rather untruth? and uncertainty, even ignorance?" From this "rendezvous [...] of questions and question marks"⁷⁷ we emerge perplexed. Truth or lie? truth and (that means) lie? Isn't everything possible? all things permitted? At one moment we are wholly subject to the will to truth, demanding answers to the most penetrating questions of our accounts of existence: at the next we must become artists, liars, creators. But the new lies, it seems, will be informed by an awareness that lies are all they can ever be - an awareness which brings us closer to the "truth" of eternal change, contradiction, suffering and joy: of an ever elusive becoming. It is the truth of an immanent rather than of a metaphysical ontology.

On the one hand there is room for compromise: reason and logic are not to be completely overturned in favour of irrationalism. Thus Nietzsche's suggestion of the possibility of an "artistic Socrates".⁷⁸ Nietzsche articulates his analysis of the real world in a thoroughly reasoned fashion - though it is clearly the language of the poet, with its freedom from the confines of grammar, which he prefers.⁷⁹ On the other, in those realms of thought articulated through a sense of revenge and *ressentiment* against natural power structures, there is no room for compromise. Those values which have turned man against life must be destroyed, and new ones created in their place: through a transvaluation of values negation must be converted into affirmation.

The "transvaluation of values" that was the alternative title for Nietzsche's projected magnum opus is the overcoming of man's alienation from life, but it is also the overcoming of "man" himself. By "man" Nietzsche refers to that "sovereign subject" as manifest in the philosophy of Kant, man as a realm divorce from the world of objects of which he (in reality) constitutes part - man as thoroughly dependent upon the notion of a

⁷⁷ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p9.

⁷⁸ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p98.

⁷⁹ *ibid*, p20.

real world. Thus he writes that "man is something that must be overcome",⁸⁰ and that "What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a going-across and a down-going [...] I love him who lives for knowledge and who wants knowledge that one day the [*Übermensch*] may live. And thus he wills his own downfall."⁸¹

Here Zarathustra offers one of Nietzsche's most powerful and evocative notions. Above we encountered the principle of self overcoming in the context of morality. Within the *Übermensch* it is the self overcoming of man - of the transcendental subject opposed to the world of objects, of the crippling division of human being into mind/spirit opposed to body - that Nietzsche addresses: the search for an account of man which does not divide him from life, for a unity of spirit [*Geist*]. The self must become healed, reunited in order to produce the creative, affirmative being of which Nietzsche speaks.⁸² But there has never been an *Übermensch*,⁸³ and for the moment he is more or less unimaginable: as we have seen, we are still bound to the rules of grammar, to its morality and false structure, and thus cannot articulate the concept. Nietzsche develops the idea of the *Übermensch* in his most poetic and metaphorical of texts, and it seems that for the moment it is within this realm that he must remain: discursive articulation will not take us far. As the prefix "Über" suggests, it is something that is deferred,⁸⁴ a signpost to the future. It is something man must strive to create, through his own destruction. He is not simply those great figures of history (such as Goethe and Napoleon) to whom Nietzsche frequently refers: he is radically different from man as now perceived⁸⁵ - these great figures in history are instances of those individuals who

⁸⁰ Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p215.

⁸¹ ibid, p44.

⁸² Schutte (1984), pp120-121.

⁸³ Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p117.

⁸⁴ In the sense of "Übermorgen", a metaphor which recurs through Nietzsche's texts, for instance.

⁸⁵ Thus Spoke Zarathustra, p117.

could prepare the ground for the *Übermensch*. They are of the type he calls "higher men" or "free spirits".⁸⁶

It is suggested that Nietzsche's failure to develop the notion of the *Übermensch* after Zarathustra resulted from his realisation that it was a too distant goal, that it was necessary to move closer to the "here and now".⁸⁷ Whereas the *Übermensch* is to transcend the life denying dualisms outlined above, the higher man, who is still rooted in this world of dualities, approaches the problem through the principle of domination.⁸⁸ Nietzsche writes that "he who cannot obey himself will be commanded."⁸⁹ Hierarchy is for Nietzsche a fundamental condition of life, of life's power structures. Democracy - a fundamentally Christian doctrine of equality - leads only to a thoroughly uncreative mediocrity. Only at the hands of a few can the will to truth set about the critique of duality: only at the hands of the few can it assist in the process of the self-overcoming of morality. And it is these higher men who will work to create those lies which make possible the survival of human beings - that is, the creation of new values. Upon the death of God, the higher man becomes lord and master.⁹⁰ His task is to overcome the "petty virtues" of the preachers of equality, to create new values which will lay the path to the *Übermensch*.⁹¹ But they are still far from that interpretation of being - still, they smell repulsive to Zarathustra's nose.⁹²

Perhaps the most important source of transvaluation for the concerns of the present thesis is the artist. After Nietzsche's early writing which was so concerned with the analysis of an artist's metaphysics the arts fall more or less silent in *Human, All Too*

⁸⁶Schutte (1984), p122.

⁸⁷ *ibid*, p126.

⁸⁸ *ibid*.

⁸⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p137.

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p297.

⁹¹ Schutte (1984), p133ff.

⁹² *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p307.

Human. But later Dionysus and the arts return. Thus in *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche writes (while describing the anti-Aristotelean nature of tragedy): tragedy exists

to realise in oneself the eternal joy of becoming - that joy which also encompasses *joy in destruction*... And with that I again return to the place from which I set out - the *Birth of Tragedy* was my first revaluation of values: with that I again plant myself in the soil out of which I draw all that I will and *can* - I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus - I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence...⁹³

In the collection of notes compiled and published posthumously under the title *The Will to Power* the reader encounters, having read sections entitled "European Nihilism", "Critique of the Highest Values Hitherto" and the first three parts of "Principles of a New Evaluation", under the title "The Will to Power as Art", the following:

"Our religion, morality, and philosophy are decadent forms of man.
The *countermovement*: art."⁹⁴

There is no doubt that anyone who took the trouble to read the preceding sections of the book would have felt the power of Nietzsche's nihilism - whether or not they agreed with its propositions. And now it is stated that the countermovement - the principle for a new evaluation - is art. It is the "artist-philosopher" whose higher concept of art allows him to place himself at a distance from men in order to "form them" - that is, to create new values which will shape man. The arts would seem to have almost returned to the divine level attributed them in *The Birth of Tragedy*. We recognise as essentially Dionysian the art Nietzsche invests with the task of overcoming nihilism. Art is

That making perfect [...] which characterises the cerebral system bursting with sexual energy [...] everything perfect and beautiful works as an unconscious reminder of that enamoured condition and its way of seeing - every perfection, all

⁹³ *Twilight of the Idols*, pp120-121.

⁹⁴ *The Will to Power*, p419, transl. altered.

the beauty of things, revives through contiguity this aphrodisiac bliss. (Physiologically: the creative instinct of the artist and the distribution of semen in his blood-) The demand for art and beauty is an indirect demand for the ecstasies of sexuality communicated to the brain."⁹⁵

Nietzsche insists upon the reassertion of the instincts, of an "earthly" account of existence. But this assertion of natural power structures does not entail an uncontrolled vitalism: in this vitalism "Logical and geometrical simplification is a consequence of enhancement of strength [...] the apprehension of such a simplification again enhances the feeling of strength - High point of the development: the grand style [(that which approximates to the classical type)]."⁹⁶ We recall the duality Apollo and Dionysus from *The Birth of Tragedy*, though here Apollo remains relatively silent: as the principle of self-overcoming is identified with Dionysus, the need for some more or less external source of control is negated. The Dionysian-artist-philosopher who will create this art is no longer bound to the metaphysics of *The Birth of Tragedy*, to notions of redemption and justification: these notions belong to a world still articulated dualistically. Now the artist must seek to create an art which is "essentially affirmation, blessing, deification of existence..." - and that means existence in all its forms: pleasure and pain, suffering and joy. Art is considered "the only superior counterforce to all will to denial of life, as that which is anti-Christian, anti-Buddhist, antinihilist par excellence."⁹⁷ We must now attend to Nietzsche's later account of art in some detail.

Art in the age of nihilism

"If there is to be art, if there is to be any aesthetic doing and observing, one physiological precondition is indispensable: *rapture*."⁹⁸

⁹⁵ *The Will to Power*, p424.

⁹⁶ *The Will to Power*, p420.

⁹⁷ *ibid*, p452.

⁹⁸ Nietzsche, quoted in Heidegger (1991) p96; originally *Twilight of the Idols*, p81.

Before moving to a more detailed consideration of Nietzsche's later account of art, it is useful to consider how a particular "artistic" element - that of style - is manifest in Nietzsche's own work. I suggest that this aspect, present to all of Nietzsche's texts, is perhaps every bit as influential as any of his explicitly formulated ideas.

Alexander Nehamas recognises in Nietzsche's work a "truly astounding variety of styles", a stylistic pluralism. (Scholarly, epic, dithyrambic, evangelical, aphoristic, autobiographical, pamphleteering; each performing perspectively.)⁹⁹ Nietzsche proclaimed proudly that he was "dynamite": throughout his texts charges explode, fuses burn. Above all other styles lies what Nehamas calls the "single most pervasive feature of his writing": that of (apparent) exaggeration and *hyperbole*.¹⁰⁰ As an instance he attends to the notion of the death of tragedy: it is one thing, writes Nehamas, to say that Greek tragedy came to an end through the dramas of Euripides, that they exhausted tragedy. It is another to say that "Greek tragedy [...] died by suicide [...] tragically",¹⁰¹ that Euripides killed it, using "aesthetic Socratism as the murderous principle."¹⁰² Another instance: once Nietzsche has uncovered the contingent nature of truth, he asks why we should not just as readily will untruth, the lie, even ignorance. Further, and to some distastefully, "to see others suffer does one good, to make others suffer even more: this is a hard saying but an ancient, mighty, human, all-too-human principle".¹⁰³ Though we isolate these examples, such apparent overstatement characterises most of Nietzsche's texts.

And what is more, that element of Nietzsche's style to which many of his commentators have paid most attention, the aphorism, can be seen to function in

⁹⁹ Nehamas (1985), p18ff.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, p22.

¹⁰¹ *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 11, quoted in *ibid*.

¹⁰² *The Birth of Tragedy*, Section 12, quoted in *ibid*.

¹⁰³ *The Genealogy of Morals*, p67, quoted in *ibid*.

relation to, if not subordinate to, the principle trope. The spaces that separate the aphorisms act as frames which magnify the power of exaggeration, at the same time attempting to create a confined space which limits as it intensifies the text. Not only does the aphorism disrupt any sense of system the more human among us may wish to create - a point traditionally recognised among philosophical interpreters as essential - but the aphorism enhances the (supposedly) non-philosophical, yet clearly essential, style.

Nietzsche's plurality of styles is the embodiment of a radical attack on existent, supposedly neutral, objective accounts of existence: the hyperbole constitutes a vehement attack upon those values he conceives of as radically opposed to life. In the following quote Nietzsche both describes and performs the hyperbole to which we attend: "The spell that fights on our behalf, the eye of Venus that charms and blinds even our opponents, is *the magic of the extreme*, the seduction that everything extreme exercises: we immoralists - we are the most extreme."¹⁰⁴ So we turn to examine the manner in which Nietzsche describes this artistic moment of life - or, rather, how Heidegger describes Nietzsche's account of the aesthetic process.

Heidegger recognises the lack of any coherent theory of aesthetics in Nietzsche's total oeuvre (we see *The Birth of Tragedy* as a discrete moment within that totality) and choosing to focus upon the section of *Will to Power* titled "Toward the physiology of art", which is essentially a list, identifies the primacy Nietzsche attaches to the notion of *Rausch*: rapture occurs at the top of the list as a presupposition in the physiology of art.¹⁰⁵

In his attempt to interpret *Rausch* for an English audience, David Krell writes "No single English word - rapture, frenzy, ecstasy, transport, intoxication and delirium - can

¹⁰⁴ *The Will to Power*, p396, quoted in *ibid*.

¹⁰⁵ Heidegger (1991), p94.

capture all the senses of *Rausch*".¹⁰⁶ The English "rush", in the sense that something "rushes over" us and sweeps us away, is related to it. But it is to the notion of rapture that Krell draws our attention, emphasising its relation to both erotic and religious contexts - contexts always close to Nietzsche's texts. The proximity of ecstasy to this rapture is clear, and will be fundamental for later analysis. In what follows I subscribe to Krell's account of *Rausch*, both in its primary translation as rapture,¹⁰⁷ and in its association with those other terms listed above. In relation to this latter, the German *Ekstase* (ecstasy) and *Verzückung* (ecstasy, rapture) are important for their proximity, on Nietzsche's terms, to *Rausch*.

Appropriate to *Rausch* is the feeling of force and plenitude, and indeed the increase of force - a notion which should remind us that we are dealing with that which Nietzsche describes as central to art, which is itself described as the "distinctive" form of will to power. In opposition to this artistic state is the inartistic which, as "objectivity, the mania to mirror everything, neutrality" is a will to nothingness, a manifestation of the "impoverished body".

By physiology Nietzsche means to emphasise the bodily state but, says Heidegger, this is always something psychical and therefore of psychology: when Nietzsche refers to the psychological, it is always already physical.¹⁰⁸ We have seen that this overcoming of the mind/body duality, and indeed of all dualities which separate man from himself, is an essential moment in Nietzsche's thinking. Thus he writes that "Rapture must [...] have augmented the entire machine" to include that which comes of "all great desires, all strong affects [...] the rapture of cruelty; rapture in destruction [...]"

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p92.

¹⁰⁷ I will not insist on translating *Rausch* as "rapture", as sometimes the more obvious "intoxication" is more appropriate.

¹⁰⁸ Heidegger (1991), p96.

finally, the rapture of will, of an overfull, teeming will."¹⁰⁹ This, then, is the basic aesthetic state.

Heidegger states that what is essential to the precondition of art is feeling, that is to say the way we find ourselves to be with ourselves, and with other things.¹¹⁰

Rapture, then, is always rapturous *feeling*.¹¹¹ But again we find ourselves splitting this feeling from our bodies - we must recall that we do not *have* bodies, we *are bodily*.¹¹²

Thus Heidegger: "Mood is never merely a way of being determined by our inner being for ourselves" - it is being in relation to other beings: "Mood is precisely the basic way in which we are outside ourselves".¹¹³

And it is essential for the present thesis to note that "*In all of this the bodily state swings into action.*" In relation to this Heidegger notes that "enhancement of force must be understood as the capacity to extend beyond oneself, as a relation to beings in which beings themselves are experienced as being more fully in being, richer [...] more essential."¹¹⁴ Developing this argument he writes that the feeling of plenitude which inheres in Nietzsche's *Rausch* "means above all an attunement which is so disposed that nothing is foreign to it, nothing too much for it".¹¹⁵

And what is more, this action may constitute the work of art: "One does not *get over* a passion by portraying it; rather, the passion *is over when* one portrays it."¹¹⁶ Heidegger writes that "[the artistic state] possesses a steady and extensive reach into things as a whole, indeed in such a way that this reach can take itself up into its own

¹⁰⁹ *Twilight of the Idols*, quoted in Heidegger (1991), pp96-97.

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, Heidegger (1991), pp99 & 123.

¹¹¹ See *ibid*, p123.

¹¹² *ibid*, p98-99.

¹¹³ *ibid*, p99.

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p100.

¹¹⁵ *ibid*.

¹¹⁶ *The Will to Power*, Aphorism 814, quoted in Heidegger (1991), p101.

grasp, keep it in view, and compel it to take form."¹¹⁷ It is what Heidegger calls *Dasein*, or human being, which reaches, and engages in this reach, beings. And it is the moment of *Rausch* that characterises the aesthetic state in human being that engages and *reaches into* beings. It is precisely this engagement which leads to the apparent hyperbole which, I will suggest, characterises certain moments of Expressionism. Creation is "an explosive state"¹¹⁸ writes Nietzsche: an explosion in which "one bestows upon things, one *compels* them to take from us, one violates them."¹¹⁹ This is the process he calls *idealisation*, a process which places "sweeping *emphasis* upon the main features."¹²⁰ In this regard Nietzsche writes:

The states in which we infuse a transfiguration and fullness into things and poetise about them until they reflect back our fullness and joy in life: sexuality; intoxication [*der Rausch*]; feasting; spring; victory over the enemy, [...] cruelty; the ecstasy (*Ekstase*) of religious feeling. Three elements principally: *sexuality, intoxication, cruelty* - all belonging to the oldest *festal joys* of mankind, all also preponderate in the early 'artist.'¹²¹

Possible implications of Nietzsche's somewhat romantic account of this early artist will be considered in more detail later.

To summarise: (i) Nietzsche establishes the concept "*Rausch*" as fundamental to the "physiology of art", an overflowing, rapturous moment. (ii) This artistic moment is of the whole subject both as mind and body, as the psychic and the physical, and in that sense escapes the limitations of a "dual subject". (iii) This state of rapture is bound to feeling/mood which always extends beyond the subject to a relation of the subject to itself, and to other beings in the world. (iv) Art is characterised as a reaching into things,

¹¹⁷ Heidegger (1991), p102.

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, p115.

¹¹⁹ *Twilight of the Idols*, quoted in *ibid*, p116.

¹²⁰ *ibid*.

¹²¹ *The Will to Power*, p421.

a compelling of them to take form, a subordination of the form to the dominant artistic state: *Rausch*.

According to Heidegger, to consider *Rausch* merely a "rush of frenzy/ ecstasy/ intoxication" which engages the object in the creation of the work of art, is to misunderstand Nietzsche.¹²² As is clear from a reading of "The will to power as art", Nietzsche's conception of art is no mere turbulence: within the aesthetic state, manifest in the work of art, rapture is said to acquire enhanced clarity.

For Nietzsche, writes Heidegger, the lawfulness of form is to be derived from the "logical", "arithmetical" and "geometrical". Thus Nietzsche writes of "logical feelings", a combination in which Heidegger identifies (i) underlying all, biological feelings of pleasure arising when life asserts itself and survives, and (ii) above these and at their service, logical, mathematical feelings which serve, in turn, as the basis of aesthetic feelings. Essential to this, the assertion that *Rausch engenders its own form* (and not mere formlessness),¹²³ is the notion that "order is a fundamental condition of embodying life". But this sense of order, and its extension through logic, elegance and beauty into what he calls the "grand style", which Heidegger writes "is most closely approximated by the rigorous style, the classical style",¹²⁴ would seem to be a far remove from the *Rausch* I have just outlined. Yet Nietzsche writes that the grand style "is a matter of tremendous passion; only what flows from such passion" is true to its form.¹²⁵

To understand this we must recollect Nietzsche's critique of the separation of human being into a mind/body duality. Within *Rausch* we recognise not the mere

¹²² Heidegger (1991), p119.

¹²³ See, e.g., *ibid*, pp119-120; that section titled "Rapture as Form-engendering Force" articulates precisely this point.

¹²⁴ *ibid*, p125.

¹²⁵ *ibid*.

subjection of chaos to form, not the dialectic of an Apollonian impulse set over and against that of Dionysus, "but that mastery which enables the primal wilderness of chaos and the primordially of law to advance under the same yoke, invariably bound to one another with equal necessity".¹²⁶ Contrary to the Dionysus of *Birth of Tragedy*, this later "art impulse of nature" does not stand in a necessary relation to Apollo: to the later Nietzsche dialectic is no longer tenable: Dionysian *Rausch* contains within itself the means for its own containment.

At this point a consideration of Nietzsche's account of what he called "sublimation" is useful. After his discovery of Will to Power, Nietzsche writes of the "doctrine of the derivability of all good drives from the bad". In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche writes: "In man *creature* and *creator* are untied: in man there is material, fragment, excess, clay, dirt, nonsense, chaos; but in man there is also creator, form giver, hammer hardness, spectator divinity, and seventh day: do you understand this contrast?"¹²⁷ In this process "[t]hat 'savage animal' has not really been 'mortified'; it lives and flourishes, it has merely become - divine."¹²⁸ And: "Those of [man's] abilities which are awesome and considered inhuman are perhaps the fertile soil out of which alone all humanity [...] can grow." That fertile soil is Will to Power, whose "distinctive form" is art, which itself is determined by *Rausch*. From the most violent and dangerous source arise the most refined and beautiful moments of existence.¹²⁹ Now let's recall that passage of *The Will to Power* entitled "On the genesis of art" where Nietzsche writes "everything perfect and beautiful works as an unconscious reminder of that enamous condition and its way of seeing - every perfection, all the beauty of things, revives through contiguity this aphrodisiac bliss. (Physiologically: the creative instinct of

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p128.

¹²⁷ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p154.

¹²⁸ *ibid*, p158.

¹²⁹ Compare with *The Birth of Tragedy*'s "joy born of pain."

the artist and the distribution of semen in his blood -) The demand for art and beauty is an indirect demand for the ecstasies of sexuality communicated to the brain." Far from being a passage in which we uncover a moment of extolling of unbounded sexual energy within Nietzsche's text (as certain commentators would seem to suggest¹³⁰), we see here an instance of what the philosopher called for the first time in Book II of *Human, all too Human* "sublimated sexuality". Yet it should be noted that the tone of the passage, together with its elaborate focus on sexuality, renders its meaning ambiguous: indeed, so strongly does Nietzsche emphasise sexuality in the passage that the moment of its sublimation is reduced to the final assertion that it is a sexuality *communicated to the brain* rather than to the body which is the source of the beautiful.

Nietzsche writes that "sensuality is not overcome by the appearance of the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but only transfigured and no longer enters consciousness as sexual excitement." This process of transfiguration is that of sublimation: the sexual drive, a manifestation of will to power, informs the arts which are equally of will to power: "without a certain overheating of the sexual system a Raphael is unthinkable- Making music is another way of making children".¹³¹ At precisely the same moment art appropriates, as it engenders form for, this sexuality. It would be correct to state that art is the very process of overcoming, that it is will to power's tool for its own sublimation: thus it could be said that it is art which sublimates coarse sexuality into a spiritual one.

While Heidegger's account of *Rausch*, particularly that of *Rausch* as form engendering force, and as the basis of the grand style, is thoroughly convincing, we

¹³⁰ See, for example, Gordon (1987), p14, for a discussion of this passage. In this context, Gordon asserts that Nietzsche never used the term "sublimation". This is incorrect.

¹³¹ *The Will to Power*, p421.

should not be in a hurry to negate the ambiguities in Nietzsche's account as manifest in the last example, that passage I have suggested relates to his concept of sublimation. Heidegger attends almost exclusively in the text I have interpreted to Nietzsche's notes which were only posthumously presented for publication. Gianni Vattimo has more recently presented an account of Nietzsche's aesthetics which shows them to be less unified, and in a sense contradictory, by reference to other texts which were published in Nietzsche's lifetime.¹³²

Vattimo takes us back to *Human, all too Human*, to a text which we identify as reflecting Nietzsche's "scientific or Enlightenment period", his rejection of art as passé and no longer of relevance to the human spirit. Here, Vattimo stresses, Nietzsche develops the account of art which will remain the same as that which is presented in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and which becomes the highest form of will to power. Vattimo writes for the Nietzsche of *Human, all too Human* and *The Gay Science* "art is preeminently the 'place' where, in the history of western culture, there persists a Dionysian residuum, a form of liberty of the spirit"¹³³ (transl. altered). Here, the artist, who moves in the realms of fantasy, the mythical and the extreme, has a weaker respect for the truth than the scientist. His world is invested with the emotions: "for the artist, precisely to the extent that he is psychologically a child and anthropologically a kind of left-over of epochs in which the fantastic and the mythical predominated, also lives his passions and emotions in the manner appropriate to children and primitives, i.e. violently and impulsively."¹³⁴ As articulated in the pages of *Human, all too Human*, the artist's world is one of excess, an excess of passion, and an overflowing of the artist's inner world into the that which lay beyond the self.

¹³² The following account is from Vattimo (1993).

¹³³ Vattimo (1993), p88.

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p89.

Having established art's marginal status as manifest in Nietzsche's "Enlightenment period", Vattimo describes the manner in which in the transition to Nietzsche's third and final period art becomes fundamental as the highest form of will to power, yet retains its regressive character as well as its status as excess. What he outlines is an account of art as will to power which more or less flatly contradicts Heidegger's: "to underline the significance of the will to power as art means to focus on the essentially destructuring aspect of the will to power."¹³⁵ This destructuring occurs as the imposition of emotions and instinctual impulses on the world of "things." Contrary to the resolution and harmony Heidegger sees as the ultimate form of will to power, Vattimo writes that, in the fragments Nietzsche produced during his last years, art as the model for will to power is not described in terms of closed form or the grand style: here, he writes, art is a development of that articulated initially in *Human, all too Human*, where passions do become specifically the sexual instinct, "the imposition on things of configurations produced by the subject and yet almost entirely devoid of classic 'form'".¹³⁶ Vattimo writes of the need to guard against the assumption that will to power means primarily "will to form, to definiteness and therefore always to domination." Stressing that as early as 1900 Zeitler had, in his book on Nietzsche's aesthetics, written of a "physiological aesthetics",¹³⁷ Vattimo places strength of emotions in relation to that of the body as essential to art's destructuring function.

Yet Vattimo does not leave things with a simple opposition to Heidegger's Nietzsche: attending to passages of *The Will to Power* he demonstrates that at various points of the same texts, contradictory accounts are given: at one moment in Aphorism 821 "form is the result of the victory of force that orders, subjects, simplifies and harmonises"; later the same aphorism moves to intoxication, dance, and quite indefinite

¹³⁵ *ibid*, p91.

¹³⁶ *ibid*, p93.

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p96.

development, "i.e. [...] something that is not primarily an impulse to form, but which rather stands on the side of the Dionysian negation of form" (transl. altered).¹³⁸ For Vattimo, the more Nietzsche attempts to analyse the victory of force as the source of organic, geometrical simplicity, the more the idea of structural rigour crumbles in his hands. Eventually, he commits himself to an account of will to power as art in which "form is forever being exploded by a play of forces, of particular forces, namely the body's instincts, sensuality and vitality."¹³⁹ Indeed, not only is the grand style not the only destiny of true art, it is not really any longer a viable form. Vattimo reads that passage in which Nietzsche describes the grand style as that which commands, wills, becomes "master of the chaos one is", forcing that chaos to become form, logical, simple, mathematics, as Nietzsche's announcement of the death of the grand style "because the reign of the man of violence is at an end."¹⁴⁰ To make of all "becoming" "being": that is how Nietzsche described the will to power as I accounted for it above. But for Nietzsche, this violence in the face of the truth - the eternal flux and chaos of the world - is something to be overcome. According to Vattimo's account, will to power contains within itself the means to its own overcoming; and this is precisely the destructuring power of art.

In the context of the present thesis, to argue in favour of Vattimo or Heidegger is unnecessary. For to decide between the two accounts is to commit ourselves to a particular reading of Nietzsche's account of art. Rather, I prefer to side with Vattimo when he is at his most indecisive, when he reads a passage from Nietzsche and is confused by the contradictions the text presents. It is clear that even when Nietzsche seems to be at his most decisive, he occupies a number of positions which may or may

¹³⁸ *ibid*, pp98-99.

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p105.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p107.

not agree with each other; as suggested at the beginning of this section, such contradictions and tensions are central and productive for his philosophy. Throughout what follows, the multifarious accounts of the work of art which Nietzsche presents will problematise the attempt to question the relation of artists to the philosopher; in Section IV, below, this will be considered in some depth.

Section II.

The Nietzsche Cult

Virtually everything my generation discussed, tried to think through - one might say, suffered; one might also say, spun out - had long been expressed and exhausted by Nietzsche, who had found definite formulations; *the rest was exegesis*. [My emphasis.]

Gottfried Benn, "Nietzsche - nach 50 Jahren"¹⁴¹

Nowhere will we feel more fully the weight of the Nietzsche cult than the two volumes of Richard Frank Krummel's *Nietzsche und der Deutsche Geist*.¹⁴² Volume one (covering the years 1867-1900) has 557 separately numbered references and summaries of texts referring specifically to Nietzsche. Volume two (covering the years 1901-1918) has 1 417 such references. The work extends over a total of 978 pages. Reading through the texts, it is difficult to uncover any particular patterns within the tradition extending over these 51 years: ideas so diverse confirm August Horneffer's assertion that the books about Nietzsche contradict each other to such an extent the reader can get the impression totally different people are being discussed.¹⁴³ So many Nietzsches are to be found in this extensive survey - covering periodicals as well as books - that we are forced to create a more coherent narrative, at least to begin with.¹⁴⁴

The Nietzsche cult is constituted by a series of different traditions of interpretation. The present chapter seeks to establish particular traditions (which I will define loosely as the continuity of certain thoughts in a given set of expressions regarding Nietzsche) within which it is appropriate to situate the artists to be discussed

¹⁴¹ Transl. in Kaufmann (1974), p412.

¹⁴² Krummel (1974)

¹⁴³ Horneffer, August: "Was ist uns Nietzsche", *Jahrbuch moderner Menschen*, p152; Quoted in Philippi (1970), p246.

¹⁴⁴ Texts on the nature of the Nietzsche cult - from summaries in the introductions of texts dealing with related material, to full blown accounts of the cult - abound. See bibliography. Undoubtedly the best overview in the English language is Aschheim (1992).

later. The account amounts to a series of case-studies which may or may not be conceptually linked to each other, but all of which bear comparison with certain activities of the artists discussed below. The case studies make no claim to completeness. In each I have discussed the relation to Nietzsche only in so far as is important for the present thesis. Most consist entirely of accounts of key texts: nowhere else will the attitudes of the cult's key figures come to crystallise more coherently and thoroughly than here. No apology can be made for the exclusion of other key-players in Nietzsche interpretation; with the exception of George Brandes, who initiates key themes in Nietzsche interpretation developed in later analyses, the subject of each case study has been connected by scholars to the artists who are the object of the present study. Where appropriate, those connections will be outlined briefly. Other important names and groups will find place in later parts of the thesis, but again, the sheer quantity of material makes completeness an impossibility.

The section does not rigorously pursue any chronological development; divided into two subsections, it begins (in the first subsection, entitled *Books and other extensive accounts of Nietzsche*) with the initial moments of the cult, focusing on explicit formulations of Nietzsche's philosophy; in the second subsection, entitled *Periodicals, Literary Circles and the Broader Cultural Forum*, it moves through texts and practices relating explicitly or implicitly to Nietzsche, and finishes on various and relatively diverse cultural practices far less directly related to that philosophy.

Subsection I

Books and other extensive accounts of Nietzsche

George Brandes

It is suggested that the lectures delivered by Brandes in Copenhagen in 1888 were the first on Nietzsche, and that it was from that moment that Nietzsche's ideas

began to "spread like wildfire".¹⁴⁵ But the fact that this is a starting point for what we shall call the Nietzsche cult does not in itself mean it should be the starting point for the account appropriate for this thesis. His reading of Nietzsche is, however, significant in that later accounts at which we shall look will be seen to echo Brandes' own, initiating account: it is possible to establish continuities within those aspects of the cult to which I will attend.

The subtitle of Brandes' study *Friedrich Nietzsche* (1889) reads "An essay on aristocratic radicalism". Of it Nietzsche wrote: "The expression 'aristocratic radicalism', which you employ, is very good. It is, permit me to say, the cleverest thing I have yet read about myself."¹⁴⁶ And it is a concept which is fundamental to the interpretation which follows.

The first topic with which Brandes deals is the state of contemporary German culture. Paraphrasing Nietzsche he writes that Germany's victory over France (to which Nietzsche referred on numerous occasions) had nothing to do with the victory of one culture over another, for "*Germany as yet has nothing that can be called a culture*".¹⁴⁷ Culture shows itself in a unity of artistic style running through all aspects of a nation's life, yet this homogeneous culture, writes Brandes, is not the same as "native culture": it is brought about precisely through its intercourse with other countries. Nietzsche is convinced, we are told, that the last hour of national cultures is at hand: a European or European-American culture will come to dominate.

For Brandes' Nietzsche (referring specifically to Germany) the most unfortunate thing is that a country can think itself to have a strong culture when it hasn't. Those "educated" people who, seeing everywhere the same conventions in religion, morality, literature, the community etc., believe this "imposing homogeneity" is culture, and

¹⁴⁵ Kaufmann (1974), p4.

¹⁴⁶ Brandes (1914), p64.

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p6.

seeing about them educated people of the same sort, universities and academies fashioned to the same ends as those they identify in themselves, Nietzsche calls "cultural philistines". Brandes writes: "The more the individual has it in him to become a real personality, the more he will resist following a herd." The call "Become thyself! Be thyself!"¹⁴⁸ is heard as each is exalted to become an *individual*, for it is the strong individual, writes Brandes, who will educate himself "*in opposition to the age*".¹⁴⁹ These aristocratic spirits - "educators, artists and creators" - are the aim of history, the solution to the philistine.

Brandes identifies at the outset Nietzsche's critique of moral prejudices as the largest part, and the most important part of his oeuvre.¹⁵⁰ In opposition to the "ethics of obedience" which modern morality preaches Nietzsche places the "the power of dictating to one's self one's own morality". Independently we must create for ourselves new tables of values, we must become our own lawgivers.¹⁵¹ Appropriately for one who sees Nietzsche's critique of morals as the high point of his thinking, Brandes gives a quite detailed account of the section of *Genealogy of Morals* in which Nietzsche presents a genealogy of the opposition "good" and "evil".¹⁵² To summarise: the noble (spiritually aristocratic) held themselves and their actions to be good, the lowly to be bad. While the good felt traces of pity for the lowly, the lowly felt hatred and spite for the ruling caste. Opposed to the "aristocratic evaluation" "(good = noble, beautiful, happy...)" the slave morality reads: "The wretched alone are the *good*; those who suffer and are heavy laden... are the only pious ones... you, ye noble and rich, are to all eternity the *evil*..."¹⁵³ Noble morality was generated from a process of affirmation, of

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, p9.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p11.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, p3.

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, p26.

¹⁵² *ibid*, p30.

¹⁵³ *ibid*, pp30-31.

"yea-saying"; that of the slave is a continual "nay", a "thou shalt not", a negation. The valuation "good - bad" is inverted (in Judeo-Christian morality) to become "evil - good".

Brandes' Nietzsche pours nothing but scorn on the masses, as he does the slave morality resulting from their inferiority: he revels in the aristocrat's delight in *power*, which is for him the real aim of life.¹⁵⁴ Life seeks not only self preservation, but self increase: the "Will to Power" which has as its ultimate manifestation the *Übermensch*, the figure which will mark a new table of values. After an extensive account of bad conscience, together with "guilt" as generated in Christian morality, and a summary of the "ascetic priest", Brandes writes: "In our day a new ideal is in process of formation, which sees in suffering a condition of life, a condition of happiness, and which in the name of a new culture combats all that we have hitherto called culture."¹⁵⁵ It is in this context that he presents an account of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

He begins with - and therefore presumably considers important - the assertion that Nietzsche wrote each section of the book in ten days, conceived chapter by chapter on long walks "with a feeling of inspiration, as though each sentence had been shouted in my ear". The work contains, he writes, Nietzsche's doctrine in the form "so to speak" of religion. (Later he will call the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence one of "somewhat shallow mysticism",¹⁵⁶ describe Nietzsche (or Zarathustra) generally as a "warlike mystic",¹⁵⁷ and then as a "mystical immoralist".¹⁵⁸) The book is for "spiritual mountain-climbers and dare-devils", for the few who have a "vision of a higher, braver humanity, which it seeks to rear and train".¹⁵⁹ Though Brandes does not rate the book as highly in Nietzsche's oeuvre as its author, Brandes clearly sees the importance of the book in its

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, p35.

¹⁵⁵ *ibid*, p43.

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, p49.

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, p51.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*, p53.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, p45.

status as countermovement to the decadent traditions he has described until this point in the text.

Fundamental to this breaking with tradition is the announcement of the "man who is a bridge to the *Übermensch*."¹⁶⁰ In the person of Zarathustra comes the overturning of modern values - "There sits Zarathustra with old broken tables of the law around him and new half written tables" - and the task of creating the new *begins*. Adopting Nietzsche's tone Brandes summarises some of Zarathustra's pronouncements. He continues to focus on the "hard", noble aspects of Nietzsche's position: "Zarathustra says: That which is ready to fall, shall ye push. All that belongs to our day is falling and decaying. No one can preserve it, but Zarathustra will help it to fall faster"¹⁶¹ and "The creators are hard. And it must seem bliss to you to press your hand upon millenia as upon wax."¹⁶²

Driving home the need for a countermovement to modern decadence, the main body of the text (which continues with a post script written for the 1899 edition and a series of correspondences between Nietzsche and Brandes) finishes with the following:

Soon, I believe, we shall once more receive a lively impression that art cannot rest content with ideas and ideals for the average mediocrity, any more than with remnants of the old catechisms; but that great art demands intellects that stand on a level with the most individual personalities of contemporary thought, in exceptionality, in independence, in defiance and in aristocratic self-supremacy.¹⁶³

Throughout the text reference to the creative, artistic spirit as the source of a new valuation is a recurrent theme; to finish the essay in this way, Brandes forcefully identifies art as the foremost solution to the spiritual crisis of his day.

¹⁶⁰ *ibid*, p46. Trans. altered from "Superman" to "*Übermensch*".

¹⁶¹ *ibid*, p47.

¹⁶² *ibid*, p48, transl. altered. Cf. Steiner below.

¹⁶³ *ibid*, p56.

Rudolf Steiner

In inner perception I saw Nietzsche's soul as if hovering over his head, infinitely beautiful in its spirit-light, surrendered to the soiritual worlds it had longed for so much.¹⁶⁴

Steiner was a privileged writer on Nietzsche in that Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche had asked him to arrange the Nietzsche library, and thus he spent much time in the Nietzsche Archives at Naumberg.¹⁶⁵ But this access to archive material, though it undoubtedly provided much stimulation and significant material for his writings on the philosopher, is not the reason for his inclusion here. Rather, it is the immense popularity his writings and ideas were to accumulate in the years at the beginning of the twentieth century. In the context of the present thesis, we should be aware of Steiner's presence in Munich, where the principal artists associated with the *Blaue Reiter* were based; of Alexej Jawlensky and Marianne von Werefkin (both intimates of Kandinsky, and members of the *Neue Künstlervereinigung*), who reportedly discussed painting with Steiner; Kandinsky and Gabriele Münter owned a number of books and articles by Steiner, some carefully annotated, others (the articles from *Lucifer-Gnosis*, to which Kandinsky refers in *On the Spiritual*¹⁶⁶) summarised in Kandinsky's notebooks.¹⁶⁷ In the last twenty-five years, scholars have paid much attention to precisely the importance of Steiner's theory to the visual arts not only in Germany, but more generally across Europe and Russia.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁴ Steiner, on his visit to Nietzsche during his final illness, quoted in Aschheim (1992), p27.

¹⁶⁵ For a brief statement of the immense importance of the Archive in promoting Nietzsche, and variations on his ideas, see Kaufmann (1974), "Prologue", and Aschheim (1992), pp45-48.

¹⁶⁶ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p145.

¹⁶⁷ Washton-Long (1980), p27.

¹⁶⁸ See Ringbom (1970). Coetzee (1988) is important in the present context for recognising the importance of Steiner in transmitting Nietzschean ideas to Kandinsky.

The preface to Steiner's *Friedrich Nietzsche, A fighter against his time*,¹⁶⁹ written in 1895, states that the final goal of Nietzsche's creativity is the description of the *Übermensch*, and that he therefore considered his key task in the text to be the characterisation of this type. Indeed, of the 110 pages which constitute the English translation, 57 are devoted to the idea. Perhaps equally important in this same short preface, at least for the concerns of the present study, is his assertion, contrary to what he reads in Lou-André Salomé's account, that there is not the slightest trace of mysticism to be found in Nietzsche's writings. This point is perhaps significant to those who might expect to find in the text ideas which prefigure the Steiner who wrote and spoke so much of Theosophy and other religious ideas.

Steiner begins the first chapter, entitled "The Character", with the assertion, emphasised in italics, that Nietzsche was a personality "*not made for the age in which he lived*". We are reminded of Nietzsche's self-characterisation as a lonely figure, fighting tradition without help from others. And immediately we are told of the manner in which he fights tradition: it is instinct rather than the method of logical process which leads the philosopher's insights: "The aversion starts from the immediate feeling; to begin with, conscious thinking does not come into consideration at all".¹⁷⁰ In this context he outlines Nietzsche's critique of science and materialism. The contradiction between intellect and instinct is, writes Steiner, the mark of our "modern spirits". He stresses the importance of the instincts in Nietzsche's philosophy, especially in the overcoming of traditional prejudices. Instinct, it seems at this stage, forms the nexus of Steiner's reading of Nietzsche.

To further emphasise Steiner's repeated assertion that Nietzsche was a fighter against his time, he writes of Nietzsche's repugnance at the patriotic and nationalist

¹⁶⁹ *Friedrich Nietzsche, ein Kämpfer gegen seine Zeit*, originally 1985, transl. in Bibliography under Steiner (1985), *Friedrich Nietzsche: Fighter for Freedom*.

¹⁷⁰ Steiner (1985), p43.

feelings of his contemporaries. "Orient and Occident are strokes of chalk which someone draws before our eyes to make fools of our timidity". Echoing Brandes, of German celebration of its victory after the 1870 war, Steiner tells the reader that Nietzsche represented it as an insanity that German culture should have been victorious in this struggle, and that he recognised potential disaster if this arrogance should become widespread and fuel national fanaticism.

The second section of this chapter continues to stress that Nietzsche has no confidence in merely intellectually conceived reasons for things: for him, "a criterion was not that an opinion could be proved logically, but rather if it acted upon all forces of the human personality in such a way that it had *value for life*". Steiner spends the whole of this section (though only about four pages long) addressing Nietzsche's notion of "truth", and his questions of the value of truth. He tells quite clearly how previous philosophers have been under the spell of the will to truth, and how Nietzsche's assertion that truth might oppose life, that rather untruth might be preferable, renders the thoughts of these most profound thinkers superficial. Steiner writes that the unconscious instinct, which lies behind the conscious quest for truth as a final goal, strives toward the fostering of life. Thus it matters not if a judgement is wrong, only the question "to what extent is it life furthering, life supporting".¹⁷¹ Steiner writes: "Truth is to make the world subservient to the spirit, and thereby serve life". He completes this second, for our concerns, dense and very important section with a reminder that Nietzsche does not advocate the abandoning of reasoned processes, but rather that he asserts the value of the whole individual, one who can use intellect and instinct in harmony.

In the space of a few pages, then, Steiner has outlined for the reader Nietzsche's account of the will to truth, demonstrating for him the contingent nature of truth, and articulated this insight so that it is seen as a radical break with traditional thought.

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p49.

Further, the concept of truth, and in particular the will to truth, is articulated in relation to, and is seen to be born of, the Will to Power. Accompanying this essential notion is a tone which, throughout the section, asserts the need for man to dominate things in his world, to make them subservient to the spiritual in man, and to life. Weakness gives way to the mighty in man: a concept with which he begins the next section.

This third section is given over entirely to those who refuse to be commanded by tradition, for whom "*Nothing is true, everything is permissible*". Again, those who believe themselves free but subscribe to the "eternal laws of the intellect", "incontrovertible concepts of duty" and "the Will of God" are distanced from Nietzsche's free thinker, from the *strong* (Steiner's emphasis) personality. "The strong, truly free human being will not *receive* truth, he will *create* it", writes Steiner: "The real philosophers are *commanders* and *law givers*".

The second chapter begins by describing the person who looks for the purpose and meaning of his existence in himself, who makes his own such virtues as serve the unfoldment of his own power, and the perfection of his own might [...] The sovereign individual which knows that it can live only out of its own nature and which sees its personal goal in a life configuration which fits its own being: for Nietzsche this is the *Übermensch*, in contrast to the human being who believes that life has been given to him as a gift to serve a purpose lying outside of himself".¹⁷²

Thus Steiner introduces his account of the "*menschlicher Übermensch*". That is, contrary to the account I presented above in Section I, the *Übermensch* Steiner describes is here, now. For he defines this most elusive character as "the human being who understands how to live according to nature",¹⁷³ as the one who has "found himself", recognising himself as master and creator of his own values. Later in the chapter Steiner writes that until now *Übermenschen* have come about only through accidental coincidence of conditions, that Zarathustra's goal was the making conscious

¹⁷² *ibid*, pp67-68.

¹⁷³ *ibid*, p68.

of this process.¹⁷⁴ This becomes highly significant: the *Übermensch* is not something deferred, something to come in a distant future, it is something which could exist here and now. A reading of Nietzsche's idea which accords with that of Steiner could lead the artist to the belief that he is actually living as Nietzsche's "crowning thought" prescribed. If this were the case, a messianic and indeed superior sense of self could soon follow.

And it is to this sense of elitism that Steiner now turns. He points out that Zarathustra's wisdom is not in accord with that of modern cultured people who seek to make all persons equal, to have "no shepherd and one flock".¹⁷⁵ This image of man, Steiner tells us, is seen by Nietzsche in radical opposition to the community of human beings which man creates for his own comfort, but which cultivates the "average man" whose mediocrity Nietzsche despised. The *Übermensch* is the one who does not follow others, but searches for his own self. Steiner goes on to devote considerable space to Judeo-Christian morality, focusing precisely on the manner in which *Zarathustra* accounts for its life negating and "leveling" influence: "thou shalt" is portrayed as a tonic for a sound night's sleep, for mediocrity. Later in this same chapter Steiner writes that that which the masses have deemed to be good, the free spirit and (that means) amoralist considers evil: every instance of the instinct for revenge against the strong - which Steiner points out is the essence of morality - is contra the natural instincts which arise from the well springs of man.¹⁷⁶ The need to overcome existent, egalitarian morality - indeed, of any God, whether theistic or profane, which asserts such morality - is thus established firmly as a precondition for the realisation of an *Übermensch*.

Section 15 is devoted to a concise account of the origin and existence of a divided self, with body and soul, and an existence divided into idea and reality, from which men have come to despise the body and reality. Steiner paraphrases *Zarathustra*:

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*, p112.

¹⁷⁵ *ibid*, p69.

¹⁷⁶ *ibid*, p107.

"Body and soul of man are *a unity*; body and spirit spring from *one* root." He quotes from *Zarathustra*: "Behind your thinking and your feeling, my brother, stands a mighty master, an unknown wise one: he is called self. He lives within your body, he is your body." Be true to this world, and don't allow yourself to be alienated from your self, nor your world, comes Nietzsche's message. Later, Steiner writes in this context of Nietzsche's account of art that it is only of value so long as it serves the life of the individual human being.¹⁷⁷ All German aesthetes have thus failed the instincts, demanding that it represent the "infinite" in the "finite", the "idea" in "reality": in other words, that the work of art aspire not to the truth of our world, but to that of another, fictional and therefore life-denying one. This attitude Steiner's Nietzsche calls the counterpart to philosophical nihilism, *aesthetic nihilism*. The artist who celebrates this world ("our world") "demands heightening of his joy of life", the strengthening of his life forces. Thus Steiner points to Nietzsche's account of his problem with Wagner: "My objections to Wagner's music are physiological objections... [...] I no longer breathe easily when this music first begins to work on me; that soon my *foot* becomes *angry* with it and revolts: it desires to beat, dance, march [...] But doesn't my stomach also protest? My heart? My circulation?"¹⁷⁸ quotes Steiner. The great importance of Nietzsche's "earthy" references to the physiology of art for the Expressionists will become clear below. Art which refers to this world rather than a fictional other, to the body rather than some fictional spirit, is portrayed as fundamental to Nietzsche's thought. Precisely this distinction informs Steiner's account of Nietzsche's art deities Apollo and Dionysus. Dionysus is portrayed in the text as that form of wisdom which does not borrow from tradition, which creates from within itself: "Out of his gestures [...] enchantment speaks".¹⁷⁹ And "He does not stand as a spectator outside of the world he wishes to know: he becomes *one* with this

¹⁷⁷ Steiner (1985), Section 26.

¹⁷⁸ Steiner (1985), p110

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, p128.

knowledge". The Dionysian human being "enters into everything, into every emotion; he transforms himself continually". In contrast to this Steiner places the Apollonian one who considers himself a mere observer, always standing outside his objects of analysis. The realm of the Apollonian is beyond our reality: it considers itself the bearer of a message from the beyond, of a world of earnestness from which all laughter (so characteristic of the Dionysian) is banned. Steiner's opposition Apollo and Dionysus is precisely the division "fiction"/"reality". Finally, in the third chapter of the text, Steiner introduces the third element, Socrates, as the intellectual faculty which stood in opposition to the Dionysian, as enemy of all instinctive and vital life, and of what he calls the mythical. Steiner wishes to emphasise Nietzsche's opposition to a "merely logical spirit",¹⁸⁰ thereby emphasising again the primacy of vital forces, and this particularly in the context of the art work.

Significant for the present essay is Steiner's focus on the role of language in sustaining this privileging of a logical world view: "To Nietzsche the *language* of civilised people appears *sick*." Feelings can no longer be adequately be expressed with *words*, as these have become abstract tools for the expression of intellectual ideas, and therefore cannot express the wisdom of Dionysus. To overcome this impoverishment Nietzsche calls particularly on music, but, writes Steiner, all the arts are essential in this process of revitalisation: the archetypal dramatist, he quotes Nietzsche, "is the really free artist , who can do nothing but think in *all the arts* at the same time, the mediator and conciliator between apparently separate spheres."¹⁸¹ This passage, which Nietzsche wrote in 1875 in honour of Richard Wagner, could have been of great importance to those artists who subsequently attempted to fulfil Wagner's notion of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. But for the moment we simply note another instance of how Steiner

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*, p131.

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, p133.

emphasises Nietzsche's desire to overcome man's alienation from life's vital forces, and how the arts were called upon to do this.

Stefan George and his circle

Like Steiner, the poet Stefan George had an enormous influence upon the artists and men of letters of his time; unlike Steiner, he was very closely associated with a particular group of writers who - to a very large extent - perpetuated his ideas. Particularly important in the present context is the following. It is suggested that by 1903 Kandinsky was probably aware of George;¹⁸² he certainly visited Karl Wolfskehl's home (see below for Wolfskehl's importance), along with other artists (especially Peter Behrens and Alfred Kubin) who had shown with Kandinsky's *Phalanx* between 1902 and 1904;¹⁸³ Kubin remained in contact with other members of the circle which collected about George, such as Alfred Schuler and Ludwig Klages¹⁸⁴ and, as Kandinsky and Marc's friendship with Wolfskehl grew, the latter bought a painting from Kandinsky and was later advised by him to buy from Marc.¹⁸⁵ In Berlin, in 1914 Erich Heckel depicted Siddi Riha (his future wife) and Walter Kaesbach in the work entitled *Beim Vorlesen*, both of whom took part in readings by the George circle.¹⁸⁶ Schmidt-Rottluff was in contact with Alfred Mombert who was a member of the circle in Munich,

¹⁸² For the importance of George in transmitting Nietzschean ideas to Kandinsky, see Rensburg (1987). Rensburg's article is important for its demonstration of the diverse range of Nietzschean influence on Kandinsky.

¹⁸³ Weiss (1979), pp81-84; and Washton-Long (1980), p17.

¹⁸⁴ Washton-Long (1980), p18.

¹⁸⁵ *ibid*, pp22 & 24.

¹⁸⁶ Dube (1983), notes that Heckel's early interest in dithyrambic poetry led him quickly to an admiration of Nietzsche, and to Stefan George.

and who Schmidt-Rottluff depicted in a woodcut bearing his name¹⁸⁷ (see below, in discussion of literary Expressionism). In 1912 both Heckel and Kirchner befriended Morwitz and Botho Graef, both associated with George's circle, whom Nolde had met in 1908.¹⁸⁸

In George's work a collision of ideas occurs: on one hand we find an adoption of clearly mystical/ religious ideas, on the other a strong dependence on and adoration of Nietzsche, and Nietzsche's ideas. Though it isn't known exactly what George read of Nietzsche, much of his thought is explicitly indebted to the philosopher. In his *Das Nietzsche-Bild im George-Kreis*, Heinz Raschel provides a valuable insight into the importance of his ideas to the circle with an overview of the main texts (twelve in total) published by that group (and authorised by its despotic leader) between 1892 and 1924, which mention, or are about, Nietzsche.¹⁸⁹ They range from articles and poems published in the periodical *Blätter für die Kunst* (hereafter: *BfdK*), named after the French symbolist periodical *Écrits pour l'art*,¹⁹⁰ which George founded together with Carl August Klein in 1892, to complete books on Nietzsche's philosophy.

The following analysis is two-tier: first I shall look briefly at the Nietzschean activities of the group, known as the George-circle, which grew up around George; then I shall examine two of the poems George wrote about Nietzsche, treating them as monuments to the poet's changing and wider relation to the philosopher, by relating those concerns to the poems.

¹⁸⁷ Lloyd (1991), p248, n35.

¹⁸⁸ Re Kirchner see Gabler (1980), pp28, 130, and re Heckel see Gabler (1983), p104, re Nolde, see Haftmann (1959), p23.

¹⁸⁹ See Raschel (1984), pp10-12 for summary of these texts, discussed in detail later in the book.

¹⁹⁰ Bentley (1974), p199.

Though George gathered around him disciples in Berlin, Heidelberg and Bingen, centres between which he divided his time,¹⁹¹ it is suggested that it was among a circle of "semi-mystical adepts" in Munich that his ideas found their most keen response.¹⁹² The group, consisting principally of Karl Wolfskehl (at whose home the circle regularly met), Ludwig Klages and Alfred Schuler, came to be known as the Munich *Kosmiker*.

In 1901, the year after Nietzsche's death, Wolfskehl published in *BfdK* a poem entitled "Zarathustra", a work which praises Nietzsche as it praises what for many was his ultimate creation. In his monograph on George, Klages writes that the landmarks which gave rise to "the Master" were the figures of Hölderlin and Nietzsche, the latter with his *Zarathustra*.¹⁹³ But it is not with such texts that I am here concerned. In *Der Siebente Ring* George included the following poem:

FEASTS

The common day has blurred the image now,
But here, in times of senselessness and horrors,
They came with torches, wreaths around their brow:
The first procession of the new adorers.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps the object of adoration described is the young boy Maximilian Kronberger, or Maximin as he was renamed, revered by George and the circle as what appears to be a curious mix of a new Christ and Nietzsche's vital youth/ *Übermensch*, perhaps George himself. But it seems clear that what George here describes recalls the Dionysian festivals and masques held by the *Kosmiker*.¹⁹⁵ We are reminded of the passage in

¹⁹¹ Weiss (1979), p82.

¹⁹² Urban (1962), p21.

¹⁹³ Klages, *Stefan George*, 1902, referred to in Urban (1962), p27. Later, in 1926, Klages, to whom much reference will be made later in the present thesis, published his *Die psychologischen Errungenschaften Nietzsches*, Leipzig.

¹⁹⁴ Marx and Morwitz (1974), p311.

¹⁹⁵ Urban (1962), p22. Washton-Long (1980) notes, by reference to a letter written by Wolfskehl's wife, that Kandinsky frequented such fêtes.

The Birth of Tragedy in which Nietzsche writes: "believe with me in Dionysian life and the rebirth of tragedy. The age of Socratic man is over; put on wreaths of ivy, put the thyrsus into your hand, and do not be surprised when tigers and panthers lie down, fawning, at your feet."¹⁹⁶ In relation to these occasions Fr. Wolters wrote that "it was a time of Aphrodite [...] the aphroditism came again to fruition in a changed form in the Dionysian religion under the rule of the phallic master of a lush natural life, coming finally to a standstill in the supernatural light of Apollo":¹⁹⁷ they were occasions for the worship of love and recreation of primordial chaos. Wolfskehl wrote in his "*Maskenzug*" (1904) of an empire, ruled by Dionysus, "of boundless oscillating and reveling":¹⁹⁸ not only is Nietzsche's thought implied in these events, but a particular reading of that thought is clear. In *The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, a text which, among others, surely informed the circle's tendency to promote the writing of history as "legend",¹⁹⁹ Nietzsche had written an account of histories in which great figures and events of the past are set up as monuments, from which the present may learn. Perhaps it is such a notion of history which allowed the circle to bring together in one fête a Bacchante, Dionysus, Caesar, and various other figures in Renaissance, old German and Oriental costumes.²⁰⁰ (See fig. 1) Repeatedly we encounter the idea of the heroic individual, the Zarathustra/"preacher of the philosophy of Dionysus" figure: indeed, it is suggested that for the circle the whole of Nietzsche's output could be forcefully reduced to a reading of *Zarathustra*, the only exception being *The Birth of Tragedy*²⁰¹ (see below, re George's Nietzsche). But this happy coincidence of what are

¹⁹⁶ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p124.

¹⁹⁷ Urban (1962), p22.

¹⁹⁸ *ibid*, p23.

¹⁹⁹ Re the circle's notion of historiography see *ibid*, pp31-39. On the question of the need for myth see esp. *Birth of Tragedy*, Section 23.

²⁰⁰ Countess von Reventlow, *Herrn Dames Aufzeichnungen*, quoted in Washton-Long (1980), p19.

²⁰¹ Raschel (1984), p23.

in fact distinct and distant historical moments is symptomatic of a more problematic relation to Nietzsche. For the circle's cultish behaviour was very much indebted to a decidedly un-Nietzschean interest in the occult, and mysticism: hence the name *Kosmiker*. Theosophy was very much in vogue, and "Buddhist-spiritualist-transcendental and metaphysical" sessions were organised.²⁰² Klages wrote in his book on George of his desire to stimulate an understanding between mysticism and the "dead formulae of science".²⁰³ George himself wrote, possibly directly of the circle:

Once in a Golden Age we merged with all,
For aeons now the crowd has shunned our call,
We are the Rose: the young and fervent heart
The Cross: to suffer proudly is our art.²⁰⁴

George clearly endorses the ideas of the Rose-Croix specifically: Urban suggests he could not resist the imagery offered by mysticism and magic in general.²⁰⁵ If it was Nietzsche who inspired interest in the orgies and festivals of the Greek deities (and it surely was), the circle felt no obligation to remain true to his ideas: Nietzsche becomes one name²⁰⁶ - albeit a name of utmost importance - among others, evoked in the essentially *Nietzschean* project of overcoming tradition and creating a new reality.

Concerning the period he spent in Paris, George wrote:

It was impossible to stand Germany; think of Nietzsche! I would have thrown a bomb had I been forced to stay here; or I would have, like Nietzsche, gone to the ground.²⁰⁷

²⁰² Washton-Long (1980), p19.

²⁰³ Klages, *Stefan George*, 1902, quoted in Urban (1962), p25.

²⁰⁴ Marx and Morwitz (1974), p238 (The Seventh Ring, "Templars"). Reference to this passage in this connection is made in Washton-Long (1980), p21.

²⁰⁵ See, e.g., Urban (1962), p23ff.

²⁰⁶ Urban includes alongside Nietzsche the names Hölderlin and Jean Paul, and to a lesser extent Novalis and Goethe as George's principal sources of spiritual influence.

²⁰⁷ Raschel (1984), p17.

In the context of the above (Section I) account of decadent language, it is significant that George brought to Germany from the symbolist circles which collected about Mallarmé in Paris the idea of a poetry in which the sounds of words became sometimes more important than concepts²⁰⁸ (an essentially symbolist idea), and even of an "absolute poetry".²⁰⁹ His hatred of contemporary use of language led him, we are told, to create a language of his own,²¹⁰ and in this connection he wrote to Hofmannsthal: "Who knows if I - had I not found yourself and Gerardy as poets - would have continued to write poetry in my mother tongue".²¹¹ But it is specifically with George's reading of Nietzsche that I am here concerned.

In *The Seventh Ring*, published in 1907, appeared the following poem:

NIETZSCHE

Low yellow clouds and frosty storms are drifting
Across the hill, half harbingers of autumn,
Half early spring's. Was this wall which circled
The Thunderer who was unmatched among
Surrounding thousands made of dust and smoke?
He launched his last, his duller flashes here
Upon a lifeless town and shallow foothills
And left a long night for the longest night.

Do not disturb the jog below. Can stabs
Destroy a squid, or sheers uproot a weed!
The rule of fervent silence shall continue
Until the brutes who soil him with their praise
And fatten further on the reek of rotting
Which helped to strangle him, at last are stifled.
But you shall live in glory through the ages
With crowned and bleeding brow like other leaders.

You, the most luckless, fought to set us free.

²⁰⁸ Urban (1962), p14.

²⁰⁹ *ibid.*

²¹⁰ Bentley (1947), p208; Weiss (1979), p81.

²¹¹ Raschel (1984), p13.

What destiny oppressed you that you never
Could feast your eyes upon the promised land,
Created gods, but only to dethrone them?
Dissatisfied with rest or what was done
You wrecked the treasure dearest to your spirit
So you might yearn for it with new desire
And cry aloud in aching loneliness.

He came too late who might have pleaded with you:
There is no way across the icy summits
And haunts of ghostly birds! Now you must learn
To stay within the circle drawn by love.
And when his voice, austere and full of torment,
Rings like a paean into azure night
Across the surf, we mourn: It should have sung,
This herald-spirit, it should not have spoken.²¹²

This, George's first poem dedicated to Nietzsche, has been shown to have borrowed significantly from Nietzsche's own "*Ruhm und Ewigkeit*".²¹³ The nature of George's borrowing, however, isn't of importance here: I want only to display the particular "Nietzsche" produced by the poet. "[...] half harbingers of autumn,/ Half early spring's" come clouds and storms: somewhere between the old and dying and the fresh, new born are the affairs of which George writes. This first stanza situates Nietzsche - "The Thunderer" - not only between the conceptual bounds of past and future, the old world and the new, but imprisoned within spiritual and practical limitations of his thinking: the walls which encircled him are not simply those of the building in which he finally died. We are presented with a picture of limits; the philosopher's duller flashes are those of a weakening and now failing force. This is a telling account. For George, Nietzsche consistently failed to make his prophetic announcements become reality: "Nietzsche's

²¹² Marx and Morwitz (1974), p219.

²¹³ Raschel (1984), p39.

writings found no living sympathy at the time",²¹⁴ his philosophy was a "between and middle thing",²¹⁵ a point to which the poem constantly returns.

In the second stanza George reproaches the spiritless animal and vegetable-like masses, an elitist reproach which he sustains throughout his career, and one which is not so far removed from Nietzsche's own "aristocratism." Indeed, George criticises precisely those intellectuals who praise the philosopher, but who in so doing corrupt his ideas: Nietzsche's concept of the cultural philistine, the educated person who is incapable of free thought,²¹⁶ is precisely what George evokes. And as a result Nietzsche's ideas will remain silent until someone - presumably George - can create an alternative response. In spite of this, he writes, Nietzsche's name will remain glorious - like that other prophet whose words fell largely on deaf ears, who, ridiculed, was crowned with thorns, baptised in his own blood. Nietzsche's attitude toward Christ is a complex one, but here the important point is George's comparison and identification of the philosopher with the son of God.

The third stanza begins with identification of Nietzsche as a fighter for freedom, but one against whom fortune and destiny were stacked: never was he to see the "promised land" (George sustains the religious imagery) which he laboured so hard to create. Just what George means when he says that Nietzsche created gods only to dethrone them, in terms of Nietzsche's philosophy, is not clear; but in the context of his own thinking, it seems clear that he felt in the person of Maxamin he had found his own Divinity, the *Übermensch* toward which Nietzsche could only point in a conceptual sense. Again, the philosopher failed to realise that which he described, and George completes the unfinished project.²¹⁷ What is more, the poet suffers none of Nietzsche's

²¹⁴ *ibid.*, p40.

²¹⁵ *ibid.* George, in reference to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

²¹⁶ See, for example, Nietzsche's essay "David Strauss, the confessor and the writer", in *Untimely Meditations*, pp.1-55.

²¹⁷ Raschel (1984), p41; Urban (1962), p195.

loneliness and isolation to which the poem refers: George's circle of writers are, in embryonic form, the beginning of a new humanity. That Nietzsche had nothing so "human" in mind when referring to the *Übermensch* does not seem to have deterred, or occurred to, the poet.

No path is to be found through the icy summits, no route through Nietzsche's writings to the future. Lest there might still be any doubt as to which path we ought to follow, George's final stanza uses Nietzsche's critique of a particular work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, and applies it to "Nietzsche" in general: "It should have sung,/ This herald-spirit, it should not have spoken". The language of the poet (and that means of George, in George's account), not of discursive thought (that of Nietzsche), heralds a new future.

Throughout, George, as he draws upon Nietzsche, seeks to distance himself from his teacher. Thus Morwitz could write of the Dionysian Nietzsche calling upon the Apollonian George to complete his task. Morwitz uses Nietzsche's own structure to stand the Nietzschean George in opposition to Nietzsche himself. For it is George who is privileged in this relation: according to Wolters and Salin, Nietzsche wrote by way of "admonishing and swearing", as opposed to the "poetry of George". Nietzsche's "scream" was seen in "the perspective of the blindness and deafness of his contemporaries": "he cried louder and finally over-cried himself - the excess of noise was unbearable for George, it seemed a danger to the measure of the beautiful".²¹⁸ Later Salin wrote of "the indecipherable screeching after the *Übermensch*". "He came too late who might have pleaded with you": in the poem it is George that might have saved Nietzsche. Later he becomes the saviour of all mankind: in the Biblical analogy set up in the 1920 account of the George Circle, authorised by George himself, Nietzsche takes the figure of John the Baptist, George, that of Christ. At this moment,

²¹⁸ Salin, E., *Um Stefan George*, quoted in Raschel (1984), p46.

then, we see George close to Nietzsche, taking on and continuing his ideas: at other moments this proximity creates a sense of difference, even opposition.

The second poem to which we attend appeared in 1914, without explicit reference to Nietzsche, entitled "*Stern des Bundes*". It reads:

And one emerged who keen as flash and steel
Revealed abysses and divided camps,
Reversed your Here to fashion out a There,
Who dinned into your heads that you were mad,
With such insistence that his throat was cracked.
And you? The shrewd or dull, the false or true,
You acted as if nothing had occurred.
You hear and gape, you talk, you laugh, and breed.
The warner passed. And now no hand will seize
The spokes: The wheel is hurtling toward the chasm.²¹⁹

Once again the philosopher's words went unheard: George condemns the "breeding masses" whose laughter negated the possibility of salvation. Nietzsche's style of excess is here explained: through such an insensitive audience the "warner's" throat cracked as his cries diagnosed and repeatedly pronounced their madness. Indeed, the tone of George's condemnation of his contemporaries echoes that of Nietzsche, so much so that we could suggest a clear influence of style: "The shrewd or dull, false or true [...] You hear, you gape, you talk, and laugh, and breed [...] The wheel is hurtling toward the chasm." The "breeding" of these "dull" masses approximates them to animals as the whole of humanity heads toward the chasm of nothingness prophesied in Nietzsche's nihilism.

Thus far George represents Nietzsche's ideas in a fashion we easily recognise as the philosopher's. Yet we ask, when considering specifically what is meant by the suggestion that Nietzsche's "reversal" creates a "There" from a "Here", whether or not George has completely confused Nietzsche's thinking. For Nietzsche's transvaluation

²¹⁹ Marx and Morwitz (1974), p324.

demands an "earthly" valuation of things rather than a "Heavenly" or metaphysical one. That George refers to ontological issues with his apparently mundane "Here" and "There" is clear: first, they are the only words George capitalises in the poem (except those at the beginning of each line or sentence), and second, in reference to Nietzsche's ideas in general, and in the context of creating one from the other in particular, they could mean only the distinction between the immanent and the metaphysical. That George has reversed the relation is significant when remembering the uncomfortable coincidence of Nietzsche's thought on one hand, and the mysticism of the circle on the other: if Nietzsche is seen to fashion a "There" from a "Here", suddenly his thought could be seen to support more mystical ideas. That Nietzsche was unable to finish his project is important: for George, this was license for him to adapt (and corrupt) the philosopher's ideas at will.

Georg Simmel

The account of Nietzsche Georg Simmel offers in his *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* focuses to a large extent on this relation of Nietzsche to religion (though to Christianity in particular): partly as an appendix to the above account of George's Nietzsche,²²⁰ and partly as an important account in its own right, I include a short account of the relevant sections of the book.²²¹

²²⁰ For Simmel and the Stefan George circle, see, e.g., Frisby (1992), p195 for an account of Simmel's article "Der Siebente Ring"; and see Frisby's *Georg Simmel* p35ff for George's visits to Simmel's "salon", for the proximity of Simmel to the circle, and for his influence on the group's programme for cultural renewal.

²²¹ Simmel's importance for the Expressionists is less clear than other case-studies chosen. Concerning Simmel and Expressionism see Allen (1983), pp25 & 87; and Lloyd (1991), (who describes "the immense influence of his thought and writings on the prewar Expressionist generation", though no direct evidence of this is provided) p7, and repeated references to his writing throughout the book; for Gordon's discussion of Simmel's account of community and art in relation to *die Brücke*, see Gordon (1987) and see Gordon (1984). Gordon stresses the importance of both Simmel and Tönnies: for the important relation to Nietzsche of both, see Aschheim (1992), pp39-43.

The introduction to Simmel's text situates the origin of the modern world's need for goals and a meaning for life in Greco-Roman Culture, at the outset of the Christian era.²²² Salvation of the soul and the kingdom of God offered absolute value for the masses, a goal beyond fragmented life. Simmel writes that this meaning endured until recent times in which Christianity lost its appeal to and power over innumerable people. Christianity's legacy is an empty urge for an absolute goal which has now become inaccessible. For Nietzsche, writes Simmel, this idea of a world moved by goal orientation yet deprived of the goal itself is fundamental to the crisis he identifies in contemporary life. For him life must be an increase, a "growing concentration of the surrounding power of the universe in the subject."²²³ Life becomes the goal of life, and the concept of a goal beyond life itself is meaningless. By way of this move we escape the opposition between spiritual and corporeal existence, as Simmel's Nietzsche attempts to remove the meaning-giving role for life from its illusory position outside of life and return it to life itself. There is always an increase in life: Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is, for Simmel, a level of development beyond that attained in man at any time,²²⁴ a leading of humanity upwards.²²⁵ Conveniently Simmel has summarised in the first few pages of the text the context for the present thesis: the loss of an illusory purpose beyond life (which leads to the nihilism described above), and the need for an immanent valuation of life itself (which acts as countermovement to that nihilism).

Like Brandes, Simmel begins²²⁶ by stressing the centrality of "value" in Nietzsche's writing, and presents a concise summary of the genealogy of "good" and "evil" as detailed in *Genealogy of Morals*. In place of growth, strength and will to power

²²² Simmel (1987), p4.

²²³ *ibid*, p6.

²²⁴ *ibid*, p7.

²²⁵ *ibid*, p137. Simmel repeatedly couches Nietzsche's account of humanity's increase to a "higher level" in terms of Darwin's evolution, the noble man a product of breeding. re Simmel's account of the importance of Darwin for Nietzsche, see Simmel (1987), pp5-6.

²²⁶ Simmel (1987), "Human Values and Decadence", p138.

stand Christian, democratic and altruistic notions of value where the powerful must submit to the weak. Christianity seeks to give religious legitimation to corrupt and decadent life. Yet Simmel asserts that certain of Nietzsche's own values and those of Christianity could be shown to be intimately related: in Christianity the individual retains its concern for individual being: "a divine and higher order, within which the double status of final goal and element of a transcending totality is retained for the individual". In Nietzsche this concern is expressed in the concept of life itself. His account of Christian values as wholly altruistic is, for Simmel, unbalanced, overlooking as it does the importance of the value of one's own soul. Indeed, he writes that "the ultimate Christian concern is not with the negation of self, with giving oneself, but solely with the internal quality of the person, which resides in itself."²²⁷ Further, writes Simmel, Nietzsche finds himself unwittingly borrowing from Christianity in his assertion that no God can exist, "because if He did how could I bear not being God?" For Simmel there is a direct connection to a feeling "that in other forms is close to Christian tendencies of the inner life": in Christianity, apart from distance and humility before God, there is the desire to become one with God. In short, Simmel's Nietzsche completely misinterprets Christianity,²²⁸ and several pages of Simmel's text are devoted to the positive relation which exists (though Nietzsche is unaware of it) between the two. In Simmel's text, then, we find Nietzsche and religious ideas not only juxtaposed, but forming an identity: George's "mystical" Nietzsche is not wholly exceptional (think also of those passages in Brandes' text, quoted above, in which both Nietzsche and his key ideas - Zarathustra and Eternal Recurrence - are described as mystical), and indeed prefigures a similar Nietzsche who will appear in relation to certain Expressionist painters, below.

²²⁷ Simmel (1987), pp140-141.

²²⁸ *ibid*, p141.

For Nietzsche, humanity degenerates when the individual is displaced from the centre of things, and is replaced by the concerns of the many.²²⁹ For Nietzsche "specific individuals are unequal *a priori*", and the differences between people are a natural fact. His concern is with individuals through whom humanity can progress to higher levels: "Whereas the immense masses move slowly onwards, only the pioneers of humanity, who are not chained to this slow pace, can make noticeable progress and push their limits outwards." This is the fundamental expression of Will to Power, and the forces which impede that expression are decadent forces.

The chapter "The Morality of Nobility" continues to stress the importance of the strong and noble individual, now in terms of the creation of new values. What matters for Nietzsche is not so much the overt dimension of deeds, but the "closed and inward dimension of the individual";²³⁰ not the outcome or "exterior" aspect of the action, but the interior, the superiority of the person. A man could move the world, quotes Simmel, yet this would be meaningless: material consequences are not to be compared with this "interior dimension" of the noble person. And this inner aspect contains the conditions for increase of power and productivity where humanity reaches a new level, a process which becomes more disciplined and severe the more it ascends.²³¹

When referring to the question of morality, Nietzsche frequently describes himself as an "immoralist". For Simmel this is not the case: "He merely fills up the 'ought' with a different content". When Nietzsche makes this claim he is confusing what has been the previous content of morals with the idea of morals themselves. Simmel writes: "This laxity in formulating his thought is responsible for the horde of his followers who find in the liberation from traditional moralities an excuse for being libertines, and not a challenge to create a new law." Together with the assertion that "Nobody would have

²²⁹ *ibid*, p146.

²³⁰ *ibid*, p163.

²³¹ *ibid*, p169.

been more disturbed than Nietzsche by the abuse of the concept of the *Übermensch*, which transforms the liberation from democratic-altruistic morality and concern into a justification for libertinism, rather than into the duty to move onward to an objectively higher level of humanity" Simmel is here forming a critique of the cult I am seeking to outline, simultaneously offering a warning to those who participate in that cult.

Subsection II

Periodicals, Literary Circles and the Broader Cultural Forum

We turn now to the dissemination of Nietzsche's ideas within a broader cultural forum. Initially remaining with textual representations, in the form of periodicals, we will come to consider "café culture" and literary circles, and finally cultural practices and related theories which are underwritten in important ways by Nietzsche's philosophy.

Periodicals

Perhaps one of the most important sources of information regarding Nietzsche's ideas are the numerous periodicals²³² which carried innumerable articles on the subject. Schematising the various positions the articles take is surely a massive task, one which J. Philippi has undertaken in her Doctoral thesis *Das Nietzsche Bild in der Deutschen Zeitschriftpresse der Jahrhundertwende*. One thing that study proves, again, is that there was no simple reading of Nietzsche. Indeed, it seems that precisely the differences are what prompted much of the writing.

In this context it becomes necessary to focus again on precisely that area which was of particular importance to the artists who are the focus of the present study: Herwarth Walden and *Der Sturm*. But first it is useful to look at some of the positive, general accounts of Nietzsche available in the periodicals in order to get a broad idea of the type of readings which seemed at the time to be important. August Horneffer's article "Was ist uns Nietzsche?" in *Jahrbuch moderner Menschen* (1908) tells how

²³² It is perhaps astonishing to note that between 1875 and 1887, 766 new periodicals were formed, from 1888 - 1900, 2 151. See Philippi (1970), p9.

Nietzsche avoided the mistake of offering a utopian goal for life: "Nietzsche leaves for us the complete horizon free and open, he extends it to become unbounded".²³³ Man becomes unchained from his bond to the past and future allowing for new, honest and truthful connections to be found. In his article "Aristocratic Radicalism" in the *Deutsche Rundschau*, 1890, George Brandes writes how "Nietzsche is a spirit of the most meaningful order who wholly deserves to be studied, discussed, fought over and *appropriated*"²³⁴ (my emphasis). His importance for Brandes was, as we have seen, in his battle against moral prejudice to which man was bound by tradition. Nietzsche didn't want to bind people like a flock to him: on the contrary, they should learn through him how to become an *individual*. Examples of precisely the same attitude - Nietzsche as the one who awakes man from his traditional bonds and constraints, who forces him to become critical in relation to that tradition - abound. So does the assertion that the creative, assertive and independent individual will be essential to the overcoming of that tradition.

In this context "Nietzsche as educator" is another recurring theme: "The time wants to rejuvenate itself, to raise itself through a self-overcoming - and for that reason alone Nietzsche is the man of the time, and for that reason he is the man for all times: not because he is a goal, but really because he makes people courageous, a spur and model to each heroism", writes Karl Joël in "Nietzsche und die Romantik".²³⁵ Raoul Richter writes in this regard "Obviously we won't be able to remain standing with Nietzsche, but through him we must move on".²³⁶

²³³ Philippi (1970), p236.

²³⁴ Quoted in *ibid*.

²³⁵ *Neue deutsche Rundschau*, 14, Jg., 1903, p488, referenced in *ibid*, p240.

²³⁶ "Fr Nietzsche und die Kultur unserer Zeit", *Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1906, Nr222, p581, referenced in *ibid*.

Herwarth Walden and Der Sturm

Art is dead.

J.A.Lux, *Der Sturm*, 2nd issue, 1910.²³⁷

In January of 1909 Herwarth Walden, founder of *Der Sturm* in 1910, had written of *Der neue Weg*, of which he had just been made editor, the following programmatic statement:

Der neue Weg is the organ of free spirits, of good Europeans. No other prefatory declarations shall be made here. Our actions shall reveal what we want, and whether we can accomplish it. German actors had the courage to act. They will travel the new road, which they have set out upon, with the free spirits of all the arts and cultures. The pages of this journal are dedicated to their interests.²³⁸

"Good Europeans", "free spirits"; and this in the context of a founding statement. As Taylor (1990) points out, Walden was clearly very interested in Nietzsche: since 1905 he had been in touch with the Nietzsche archive, attempting to secure the publication of a periodical devoted to articles on Nietzsche, and parts of the philosopher's unpublished writings. Upon his appointment as editor for *Der neue Weg* Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche agreed to make material from the archive available, withdrawing the offer on (as well as protesting at²³⁹) his dismissal in February.²⁴⁰

As early as 1903 Walden had created the "*Verein für Kunst*", what was described as an "aristocratically intellectual" group in an age of idiocy, as having new, unapproved values: "'selectivity' always reigned supreme, that aristocratically sparing critical perspective, that self discipline which does not react to all enticements, only to the unforeseen, the dangerous ones, to the mastery of minds" free of the "instincts of

²³⁷ Krauss (1978), p13.

²³⁸ Allen (1983), p101.

²³⁹ Selz (1957), p250.

²⁴⁰ Allen (1983), p44.

the rabble". Among this circle, which continued to meet well into the life of *Der Sturm*, eventually adopting its title, was Hermann Bahr who in 1916 had connected so forcefully Nietzschean ideas to the fundamentals of Expressionism,²⁴¹ Heinrich and Thomas Mann and Frank Wedekind.²⁴² To confirm the relation to Nietzsche, we can turn to Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche's comments to Walden concerning her approval of the "Nietzsche evenings" held by the group.²⁴³

By 1908 Walden was assistant editor of the literary journal *Morgen: Wochenschrift für deutsche Kultur* which had among its principal editors Richard Strauss and George Brandes. About the time of the formation of *Der Sturm*, close associates and members of the Walden circle included among others Salomo Fiedlaender, to whom Taylor devotes a whole chapter in relation to Nietzsche, and Gottfried Benn, author of that now famous passage with which this section begins, grounding *everything* done by his generation in the writings of Nietzsche.

On the second page of the first issue of the violently titled *Der Sturm*, subtitled *Wochenschrift für Kultur und die Künste*²⁴⁴ we encounter Rudolf Kurtz's "Programmatisches" containing ideas which, though Kurtz himself suggested were not really the official line of *Der Sturm*, reverberated throughout the life of the periodical.²⁴⁵ The Nietzschean tones of the article would sound forth even without the explicit references to the philosopher. The middle classes are condemned for their blind reliance on the intellect and consequent denial of the instincts. In the editor's comments at the very top of the first page, Walden had written of his belief that art and the arts could replace journalism and popular literature: Kurtz writes that the aim was not to

²⁴¹ See, for e.g., Lloyd (1991) p116. Throughout his *Expressionismus* (Munich, 1916) Nietzschean tones resound.

²⁴² Allen (1983), p100.

²⁴³ Taylor (1990), p44.

²⁴⁴ Originally conceived by Lasker-Schüler the title was to evoke a sense of revolt, "purging, extirpating and destroying". See Allen (1983), p103.

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, p105.

entertain the general public, but "to demolish their comfortable, eminently serious [ernst-erhebenes] worldview. For we hold their seriousness to be a weariness of life, a provincial dullness [Hinterwaelder-Dumpfheit], whose psychology Nietzsche had long ago described."²⁴⁶ "Art has never touched them. Their understanding is filled totally with the gravity of tasks": in place of this Nietzsche preached "the gay message of the 'dance'" which would equate with more fruitful periods in German history in which "logical inspiration is shot through with an aesthetic intuition."²⁴⁷ "The organs are weakened, the instincts without forceful verve": at one time, when Nietzsche had written his books, a new time was imaginable, an epoch of a new humanity. But people had chosen the "narrow, most intellectually limited and contradictory stance: naturalism."²⁴⁸ Towards the end of the article Kurtz writes of the need for a new form of expression, a literary style which could break with traditional structures which perpetuate logical analysis, and he concludes: "we will flout every manifestation of this culture which aims at the preservation of its conventions instead of the full enjoyment of life. We will pluck out with painstaking care [...] all meaningless customs."²⁴⁹

There is no need to go too deeply into the various, particular articles in the periodical written about, or carrying extensive extracts from, Nietzsche. Concerning Unger's two extensive passages entitled simply "Nietzsche", published in the first year of *Der Sturm*, Taylor demonstrates the similarity of his interpretation of Nietzsche to that of Kurtz, placing emphasis on the potential and overwhelming need for change.²⁵⁰ Concerning "over-intellectualisation" Unger quotes Zarathustra: "You ask why. I do not belong to those to whom you could ask why." Unger's fundamental point seems to be

²⁴⁶ Kurtz, Rudolf, "Programmatisches" in *Der Sturm*, 1, p2; transl. in Taylor (1990), p44, transl. altered.

²⁴⁷ Kurtz, Rudolf, "Programmatisches" in *Der Sturm*, 1, p2.

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Allen (1983), p104.

²⁵⁰ Taylor (1990), p46.

that "Thinking thinks not about intentional acts of will, but it flows from the unconscious, it is un-arbitrary where it unfolds to the greatest degree."²⁵¹

The same point again occurs in Kurt Hiller's article "*Über Kultur*".²⁵² It begins with a summary of what Hiller considers the key elements of Georg Simmel's *Philosophy of Money*, moving on to an account of and extensive extract from "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life" in which the modern, "educated" man is described as a "walking encyclopedia", burdened by his knowledge, unable to act.²⁵³ Man's instinctive faculties too must be brought into play if man is to overcome this "wissenschaftlich", purely reasoned account of things. When Unger quotes, in his article "*Vom Pathos: Die um George*", extensively from that section of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in which he tells the higher men of the need to dance, and to laugh,²⁵⁴ precisely the same point is being made.²⁵⁵

What is important to recognise is that once a particular agenda had been established in the first issue of the periodical (albeit "unofficially" in that Kurtz claimed it was not necessarily representative of everyone's position), and this with explicit reference to Nietzsche, the same intentions and arguments are maintained throughout²⁵⁶ - whether reference to Nietzsche is explicit (which it frequently is, as a brief glance at the pages of the periodical will show), or not.

²⁵¹ Erich Unger, "Nietzsche", *Der Sturm*, 48, 1911.

²⁵² Kurt Hiller, "Über Kultur", *Der Sturm*, 1910, pp187-188, 196-197, 203-204.

²⁵³ *ibid.*, pp196-197.

²⁵⁴ You Higher Men, the worst about you is: none of you has learned to dance as a man ought to dance - the dance beyond yourselves! What does it matter that you are failures!

How much is still possible! So learn to laugh beyond yourselves! Lift up your hearts, you fine dancers, high! higher! and do not forget to laugh well!

This laughter's crown! I have canonised laughter; you Higher Men, learn - to laugh!

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, "Of the Higher Man", p306

²⁵⁵ Erich Unger, "Vom Pathos: Die um George", *Der Sturm*, 1910. 40, p316.

²⁵⁶ See Allen (1983), p105.

The importance of *Der Sturm* for Expressionists, both literary and visual, has been well documented. Pechstein was the first of *die Brücke* to be included in its pages; in the spring of 1911 Nolde contributed, soon to be followed by Kirchner, Heckel and Schmidt-Rottluff. It was Kirchner whose works were to be featured most frequently during the period of collaboration between the group and Walden, in 1911 and early 1912.²⁵⁷ In 1912, the editor's attention began to turn from the Dresden/Berlin based group to, among others, those associated with the *Blaue Reiter*. Thus it was the latter artists who were represented in the *Sturm* gallery exhibitions (both as a group and individually) as "German Expressionists".²⁵⁸ The importance of certain other literary groups for Expressionist painters, however, demands a little more uncovering.

Visual Expressionism and literary circles.

You, poet, don't be ashamed to blow into the ridiculed tuba. Arrive in a whirlwind. Smash to smithereens those delicate little clouds of Romantic daydreams, sling the lightning of the spirit down upon the masses."

Iwan Goll, "Appell an die Kunst".²⁵⁹

Woe space all spaces
Throttle
Swing
And
Swing to bits
Swing
Throttle
And
Throttle to bits
Storm
Flood
Swirl
Squeeze
Clench
Woe woe.

²⁵⁷ Selz (1957), p254.

²⁵⁸ See *ibid*, pp261-263.

²⁵⁹ Cardinal (1984), p109.

Affiliations between members of *die Brücke* and literary groups in general have been touched upon in the literature of Expressionism. Thus, two of what Gordon gives as his three main reasons for the success of Berlin as a centre for Expressionism were the presence of *Das neopathetische Cabaret*, and the success of *Der Sturm* magazine and gallery in unifying a new generation of artists and writers.²⁶¹

Gordon notes that Kirchner and Schmidt-Rottluff portrayed Simon Guttman²⁶² (Ghuttman) (see fig. 2), a regular member of *Der Neue Club* (transformed into *Das neopathetische Cabaret* in 1910) and visitor to Café des Westens,²⁶³ in 1911. In 1923 Kirchner illustrated Georg Heym's *Umbra Vitae*. Having made these connections, he points out that the closest relation of this sort was between Ludwig Meidner and Jakob van Hoddis, precisely the author of that poem which was, as we shall see, to be named the first Expressionist poem, "End of the World". With Jacob Steinhardt and Richard Janthur, Meidner formed a group called the *Pathetiker*, clearly taking its name from and thereby expressing its solidarity with van Hoddis and the *neopathetische Cabaret*, and exhibited at Walden's Sturm Gallery in 1912.

Lloyd writes that it was Guttman who introduced *die Brücke* to the *neopathetische Cabaret*, and that Heckel made a woodcut advertising a "Pantomime von W.S.Guttman getanzt von Sidi Riha",²⁶⁴ a dancer who was later to become Heckel's wife. Allen notes that Schmidt-Rottluff did title heads for the announcements of the last two performances of *Das neopathetische Cabaret* on December 16, 1911 and

²⁶⁰ *ibid*, p110.

²⁶¹ Gordon (1987), p91.

²⁶² *ibid*, p98.

²⁶³ Allen (1983), p75-76.

²⁶⁴ Lloyd (1991), p248, n39.

April 3, 1912.²⁶⁵ Kirchner illustrated Guttman's pantomimes and contributed to the periodical *Das Neue Pathos*, but Lloyd gives no further details. Further, she recalls Kirchner's painting *Portrait of Alfred Döblin* of 1912 (see fig. 3), and several related drawings and photographs, together with his six 1913 illustrations for Alfred Döblin's *Das Stiftsfräulein und der Tod* (which Reed (1978) translates as *The Retired Spinster and Death*, and Lloyd translates, making an error which the most cursory reading of the text would have avoided, as *The Stick-thin Girl and Death!*²⁶⁶). Also, he produced a series of erotic woodcuts for the poet's lost drama, *Comtess Mizzi*. In a footnote²⁶⁷ Lloyd provides further, for our purposes extremely useful research concerning the group's relation to literary Expressionism. In his *Erinnerungen* Bleyl noted that during the early Dresden years they had read Arno Holz, who was involved with the Walden circle,²⁶⁸ as well as Alfred Meyer's circle in what came to be the "schwarze Klub".²⁶⁹ Gerhard Hauptmann, a "pre-Expressionist"²⁷⁰ who Döblin remembered mocking with Walden as an "idol of the bourgeoisie",²⁷¹ was a relative of Otto Mueller, and with Kirchner co-signed a postcard to Heckel on 11 January 1911.²⁷² Finally, Lloyd notes that Schmidt-Rottluff was in contact with Alfred Mombert,²⁷³ a *Kosmiker* (see above, re George circle) who was selected to contribute to the proposed periodical of "Der Neue Club"²⁷⁴ and who, along with Dehmel and Döblin, is named as having appeared in

²⁶⁵ Lloyd (1991) writes that Schmidt-Rottluff designed two programmes in November to December 1911; Allen's dating refers to Heym, *Heym: Dokumente* pp.410-411 as his source.

²⁶⁶ Lloyd (1991), p140.

²⁶⁷ *ibid*, p248, n35.

²⁶⁸ *ibid*.

²⁶⁹ Allen (1983), p155.

²⁷⁰ *ibid*, p196.

²⁷¹ *ibid*, p99.

²⁷² Lloyd (1991), p248, n35.

²⁷³ Whom Thiem calls the "ekstatischen Dichter Alfred Mombert"; Thiem (1989), p83.

²⁷⁴ Allen (1983), p84.

Walden's "Verein für Kunst", a group which remained active throughout the *Sturm* period.²⁷⁵

Gunther Thiem indicates Schmidt-Rottluff's hitherto unknown relation to Else Lasker-Schüler (poet, close friend of Marc, and first wife of Herwarth Walden), evident in the painting *Lesender* of 1912 (see fig. 4). Reproducing letters the artist wrote to Ida and Richard Dehmel (see below for discussion of the letter dated November 1911) and his title cut "Richard Dehmel" (see fig. 5), Thiem draws attention to the artist's relation (through the Bohemian group which collected during the 1890s at the wine bar nicknamed the Black Piglet) to this one time associate of Strindberg,²⁷⁶ also described as a "pre-Expressionist" who published in *Pan*²⁷⁷ and *Der Sturm*. Also associated with Dehmel was the extraordinary "Nietzschean" Stanislaus Przybyszewski, Nietzsche's earliest cultural interpreter in Berlin.²⁷⁸ Gordon notes that his starting point was Nietzsche's (supposed) praise of instinctual sex.²⁷⁹ Writing of syntheist art he writes "Also accessible to art in this macrocosmic view [exemplified by Zarathustra] [...] will be The Sexual: that never-satiated lust which displays only the eternal joy of creation, everlasting affirmation, and a big "yes" to all the will's instincts for personal immortality, for propagation; those spasms of passion, considered as the deepest instinct of life [...]"²⁸⁰ Accounting for sex as the primal, mystical force which supplants the concept of divine creation, he proclaimed in his *Totenmesse*:

²⁷⁵ *ibid*, p100; see also Selz (1957), p251.

²⁷⁶ Thiem (1989), pp82-83.

²⁷⁷ For the importance of Nietzsche in *Pan* see Aschheim (1992), p32, and discussion of Beckmann in Section III, below.

²⁷⁸ Gordon (1987), pp36-37. For Dehmel's "Zarathustran" "eight-day-long possession enraptured by the bellicosity (*Kampflust*) of its rhythms", see Emil Ludwig, *Richard Dehmel*, Berlin, 1913, referenced in Aschheim (1992), p30.

²⁷⁹ As outlined above in Section I, p 51, Nietzsche's enthusiasm for sexual instinct must be seen in relation to his broader philosophical concerns, particularly his concept of sublimation. As noted above, to ignore this context is to reduce the complex problem to a simple, sexual vitalism.

²⁸⁰ Stanislaus Przybyszewski, *Zur Psychologie des Individuums: Chopin und Nietzsche* (1892), quoted in Gordon (1987), p21.

In the beginning was sex. Nothing outside it. Everything contained in it [...] Sexuality is the primal substance of life [...] the eternally creative, the transformatory and destructive force.²⁸¹

Regardless of whether we admit the mystical nature he attributes sex has anything to do with Nietzsche, the attack on Christian metaphysics, and its replacement with fundamental instincts of man, is surely Nietzschean.

Of the many cafés frequented by members of Berlin's literary community, the Café des Westens seems to have been most popular.²⁸² Ernst Blass, in his extended account of the Café, wrote that "More than anything else, van Gogh, Nietzsche, and also Freud and Wedekind, were in the air. A post-rational Dionysus was saught."²⁸³ By the beginning of the second decade of this century, the Café had become the meeting place for all Expressionist circles in Berlin, also drawing artists from across the rest of Europe. Eagerly, we are told, this clientele awaited the arrival of the latest editions of the periodicals *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, periodicals not only read but also planned and founded at the Café. In 1910, Else Lasker-Schüler wrote: "You know, the [Café des Westens] is our stock exchange; you have to go there because that is where you make your deals. All the dramaturgists, painters, poets go there."²⁸⁴ It is through this idea of the Café, and cafés in general, as the melting pot for different ideas, as a point of contact for people with different but related interests, that café culture becomes important. For although there is only a limited amount of material which suggests intellectual exchange between the artists who are the subject of the present study and the literary Expressionists to which secondary literature on the artists has gestured, it is, I suggest, first, reasonable to assert that the enthusiasm of the artists would have led

²⁸¹ Quoted in Heller (1984), p106.

²⁸² The following account of the Café is taken from Allen (1983).

²⁸³ Blass, E., *Das alte Café des Westens*, quoted in Reinhardt (1977), p28.

²⁸⁴ Allen (1983), p72.

them to seek to meet like minded people,²⁸⁵ and second, once that is accepted (and having recovered the research provided by secondary material, above, such a suggestion is acceptable), it is fair to propose that they would have become, to some extent, familiar with the particularly Nietzschean account of things they presented. It is to this last that we now attend.

The "Neue Club" was founded in March 1909 by Kurt Hiller and others (particularly Erwin Loewenson, Jakob van Hoddiss, Erich Unger) on their secession from "Die Freie Wissenschaftliche Vereinigung". Hiller, together with the other key member of the club, Loewenson, was a regular of the Café des Westens. In terms of the development of literary Expressionism - which, according to Taylor begins here²⁸⁶ - one of the founding moments achieved was Hoddiss' "Weltende", described by Johannes Becher as "The Marseillaise of the Expressionist rebellion",²⁸⁷ published in January 1911 in *Der Demokrat*. It seems that the piece was almost certainly recited before that date by Hoddiss for the membership of the club.

The bourgeois' hat flies off his pointed head,
the air re-echoes with a screaming sound.
Tilers plunge from roofs and hit the ground,
and seas are rising from the coasts (you read).
The storm is here, crushed dams no longer hold,
the savage seas come inland with a hop.
The greater part of people have a cold.
Off bridges everywhere the railroads drop.²⁸⁸

The pessimism the poem presents is close, in its negativity, to the nihilism I have suggested underwrites much of Expressionism, and to the "doom" which, together with

²⁸⁵ Allen (1983), p123, describes one of the purposes of his book as the demonstration of an "Expressionist community".

²⁸⁶ Taylor (1990), p38.

²⁸⁷ Gordon (1987), p98.

²⁸⁸ *ibid*, p98.

"aristocratism",²⁸⁹ Loewenson described as the "basic theme" of the "Neue Club" as a whole.²⁹⁰ This account is reinforced by the papers given by Hiller and Loewenson as the foundation and programme of the group. Loewenson opened the club with a reading of his "Aufruf des Neuen Club," which begins: "'That we are creative beings, forces, is our fundamental belief' says Friedrich Nietzsche."²⁹¹ It is interesting that the passage isn't, according to Taylor, to be found in Nietzsche,²⁹² that in fact it is merely a phrase which could be equated with his name. Loewenson's essay which also formed part of the opening, "Die Décadence der Zeit", is, to say the least, heavily indebted to Nietzsche. Distancing his concept of art from that of the aesthete, who he describes as a "cultural philistine", Loewenson identifies "men of the second level", men who have behind them the experience of a "deep nihilism", who through a powerful determination leave this behind as they "ascend steep slopes to the summit of creative forces". He knows that truth isn't attainable; he knows that the truest way he can live is to live life as poetry.²⁹³ What this person does, "he does from the will for one thing: the will to the enhancement of his life intensity." For him "all morals can be discharged, for he himself will be the scale for each moral."²⁹⁴ And "the feeling of force is to him the feeling of health [...] The human being of the second level is the one who has overcome the decadence in himself."²⁹⁵ The whole is placed in response to what Loewenson calls a "Kulturkrankheit", whose "principal symptom is: that [today's man] doesn't live life as an intensification [...] His affects are weak, scarcely functioning any more. / His intensities are in some way blocked or paralysed. A deep stillness fills him. He becomes wholly

²⁸⁹ Taylor (1990), p52.

²⁹⁰ Allen (1983), p81.

²⁹¹ Anz and Stark (1982), p203.

²⁹² Though I cannot imagine how he verified the assertion.

²⁹³ Anz and Stark (1982), p199-200.

²⁹⁴ *ibid*, p200.

²⁹⁵ *ibid*.

apathetic. [...] Quietude is to him the principal aim."²⁹⁶ For the "higher man" the highest value is "Intensitaetenrausch": "that seems to me to be health". Evoking Nietzsche's quote which appeared on the title page of the 1887 edition of *The Gay Science*²⁹⁷ he writes: "He who can't laugh at himself [...] he who also can't say yes through laughing thus, he no longer belongs to the highest order." Not only laughter is evoked in this process of uplifting, for he writes: "Fighting one against another: and through that a mutual stimulant to life."²⁹⁸ He quotes an extensive passage Nietzsche had intended to use as a preface, presumably (since the first line is the same) to *The Anti-Christ*:

This book belongs to the few - to those people who have become free, to whom nothing is forbidden. We have won back step by step the right to everything forbidden. Proof of the achieved power and self-certainty is that man "unlearn to be afraid of [himself]". He could trust his instincts in exchange for mistrust and suspicion, that man loves himself and esteems in his sense - even in his lack of sense; a little buffoon, a little God; no small gloominess, no crow, no blind hypocrisy...²⁹⁹

Seth Taylor notes that for Loewenson, the counter to German decadence is a new "pathos", something more than an excitement of the passions which could also incorporate the intellect. This latter distinguishes, he writes, the Expressionist Nietzschean pathos derived by the literary intelligentsia directly from Nietzsche, from the irrationalism of the right-wing.³⁰⁰ In his essay "Das Neue Pathos," Stefan Zweig underlined this essentially Nietzschean pathos, writing that "das Neue Pathos" refers to

²⁹⁶ *ibid.*

²⁹⁷ "I live in my own place,
have never copied nobody even half,
and at any master who lacks the grace
to laugh at himself - I laugh.

OVER THE DOOR TO MY HOUSE

Kaufmann (1974), p31.

²⁹⁸ Anz and Stark (1982), p202.

²⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p201.

³⁰⁰ Taylor (1990), p40.

a "'Yes-saying pathos par excellence' in the sense of Nietzsche", one which is "above all joy, force and will to produce ecstasy."³⁰¹ Hiller likewise defined pathos as a mixture of instinct and intellect, and pointed to *Ecce Homo* as the direct source of his account: "pathos [...] as universal serenity, as panick-stricken laughter."³⁰²

Here we touch on a point central to the present thesis. Anz and Stark (1982) present as the words most frequently used in Expressionism "Pathos", "Ekstase" and "Schrei". That this could have nothing to do with the metaphysics of certain Expressionists is made clear in Martin Buber's introduction to the series "Ekstase und Bekenntnis" where he rebukes mystical and crypto-religious dimensions of Expressionism.³⁰³ Concerning a related theme, "intensity", Anz and Stark quote from Kurt Pinthus' Foreword to his *Menscheitsdämmerung*, suggesting that perhaps the only unity within Expressionism is "the intensity and the radicalism of feeling, of conviction, of Expressionism, of form; and this intensity, this radicalism forces the poet again to the battle against humanity at the end of its era and to a yearning preparation and demand for a new, better humanity."³⁰⁴

Particularly important are the connections between these terms, and the centrality of "ecstasy" in this. In his essay "Das neue Pathos" Zweig writes how "even in our day there seems again to be a turning back to [an] originary, inner contact between the poet and the audience, to bring about a new pathos."³⁰⁵ I will come to suggest that the ecstasy - he refers to ecstasy as precisely the goal of the artist's joy, force and will - this refers to, a standing beyond or beside the self in communion with others, is not only found in Nietzsche, but is also to be found in the writings and method of certain artists.

³⁰¹ Anz and Stark (1982), p577. For Zweig's association with the George circle in Munich see Weiss (1979), p82.

³⁰² *Das Cabaret und die Gehirne Salut. Rede zur Eroeffnung des Neopathetischen Cabarets*. In *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), No. 44. 29. December 1910, S.351, in Anz and Stark (1982), p440.

³⁰³ Anz and Stark (1982), p573.

³⁰⁴ *ibid.*

³⁰⁵ Reproduced in *ibid.*, pp575-577.

And for Zweig this is no mere intellectual or spiritual matter, for "The new pathos must not constrain the will to a vibration of the soul, to a refined aesthetic feeling, but it must develop it into an action."³⁰⁶ "Poetry from such new pathos cannot be created by weak, passive men [...] but only those of the battle, who are commanded by an idea, the thought of a duty [...] to raise the entire world."³⁰⁷

We have already encountered Hiller's Nietzschean text "Über Kultur", reproduced in *Der Sturm*. In his autobiography, appropriately entitled *Leben gegen die Zeit*, Hiller acknowledged (or claimed) Nietzsche as the greatest influence on his thinking.³⁰⁸ Repeatedly he wrote to Loewenson describing the progress of his reading of Nietzsche, stressing, after Nietzsche, the need for "An antimetaphysical view of the word - yes, but an artistic one." (Taken from Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 1048.³⁰⁹) This radically anti-metaphysical view, despite the inclusion of the same idea in the passage Loewenson himself quoted from *Will to Power* (see below), led, together with differences regarding political positions, to the final break between the two writers and Hiller's subsequent formation of the Café Gnu.³¹⁰ Later, in his *Die Weisheit der Langenweile* of 1913, as if to underwrite his difference with systems of metaphysics, he wrote:

Don't lie; rather, hold fast to the fact that insecurity is your surest possession, antinomy your single law [...] Thus springs the wisdom of boredom: courage to power should flow into conscious powerlessness and generate, I hope, warriors. That is what Nietzsche, with marvelous regard for himself, called "active nihilism". A new Naïveté, the natural association of the cultured.³¹¹

³⁰⁶ *ibid*, p577.

³⁰⁷ *ibid*.

³⁰⁸ Taylor (1990), p62.

³⁰⁹ *ibid*, p65.

³¹⁰ The importance of Nietzsche for *Gnu* is apparent; see, for example, Ernst Blass, *Vor-Worte (Gesprochen zur Eröffnung des Literarischen Cabarets GNU in Berlin am 2. November 1911)*, where Nietzsche is the only philosophical source quoted.

³¹¹ Quoted in Taylor (1990), p67.

With his recognition of the end of system, and of metaphysics, Hiller articulates precisely Nietzsche's nihilism. Certainty is replaced by insecurity, multiplicity and discontinuity replace singularity and unity. How might the work of art in such an age look?

Through reference to programmes and sketches for programmes of *Das neopathetische Cabaret*, Taylor notes that a considerable proportion of each evening at the cabaret was devoted to quotes from Nietzsche's works and to essays about his philosophy.³¹² A section of the first two cabarets was (significantly for this thesis) entitled *Von Rausch und Kunst*. Here Loewenson read a selection of Nietzsche's aphorisms and notes from *The Gay Science*, *Twilight of the Idols* and *Will to Power*. Passages from the *Gay Science* emphasised the role of the artist in questioning values previously thought absolute through association with religion and science; and from *Twilight of the Idols* and especially *Will to Power* stressing the power of the instincts to change the self and value systems. Throughout there was much reference to the affirmation of sexuality and therefore the rejection of Victorian mores. There was, however, emphasis placed on the role of sublimation and of self-mastery in this process of overcoming.

As if a hymn to *die Brücke*, Loewenson read from *Will to Power* 820:
In the main, I agree more with the artists than with any philosopher hitherto: they have not lost the scent of life, they have loved the things of "this world" - they have loved their senses [...] What are priestly and metaphysical calumnies against the senses to us! We no longer need these calumnies: it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the "things of this world":- for in this way he holds firmly to the great conception of man, that man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns to transfigure himself.³¹³

³¹² *ibid*, p41.

³¹³ Referenced in *ibid*, p42.

Analysis of this process of transfiguration in the work of *die Brücke* forms the basis of what follows in specific discussions of their work in Section III, below.

Lebensreform, *the dance and the body*

I wish to speak to the despisers of the body. Let them not learn differently nor teach differently, but only bid farewell to their own bodies - and so become dumb. [...] Your Self wants to perish, and that is why you have become despisers of the body! For no longer are you able to create beyond yourselves.

*Also sprach Zarathustra, "Of the Despisers of the Body"*³¹⁴

Above we saw, particularly in Unger's article on the George Circle in *Der Sturm*, the importance certain theorists, though the object of their writing was not specifically dance, placed on the subject. In this section we will continue to consider the dance as such, but now attempt to place this in the broader context of the various institutions which emphasised "physical (bodily) culture" in different ways. Special attention is paid to those which stress the importance of the body in the production of works of art, particularly those which make reference to Nietzsche.

A concept which developed in the late nineteenth century, *Lebensreform* signifies the quest for alternatives to the alienation which many considered the result of the rapidly expanding industrial city and other supposedly decadent aspects of modern life. It took various forms, including the attempt to adapt to nature, and to the "Heimat", in order to become again in touch with the *Völkish* way of life (which in some cases was coupled with a nationalist quest for a German identity established by a mystical bond with the land), clothing reform, vegetarianism, and the exclusion of alcohol and

³¹⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp61-63.

nicotine.³¹⁵ Institutions most famous for their involvement in such ideology include the *Wandervögel*,³¹⁶ and later the *Jugendbewegung*. Various colonies and cooperatives were established, offering support for middle class opposition to what was conceived of as the progressive destruction of man's natural being in the face of a rapidly expanding capitalism.³¹⁷ These were initially concerned with an essentially *Völkisch Bodenreform* (land reform), the attempt to overcome private ownership of land and, again in contradistinction to capitalism, to share profits produced.³¹⁸ In the context of such communities other reforms became manifest, a principal concern being the cult of the body, or *Körperkultur*. Physical culture had become an important part of German culture since about the beginning of the nineteenth century, particularly in the philosophy of the German Gymnasts founded by Father (Friedrich Ludwig) Jahn, where physique and bodily strength were glorified and developed through gymnastic exercises in order to further the ideal of the naked Aryan body.³¹⁹ For our present concern, this cult, together with *Freibad*, the nude bathing which had become enormously popular by the beginning of the First World War, took most important form in the Monte Verita Cooperative, founded in 1902.³²⁰ It placed great emphasis on sunbathing and working in the nude, and followed educational principles laid down in Rousseau's *Emile*.³²¹ Figures as central as Stefan George, Karl Wolfskehl, Frau von Reventlow, Else Lasker-Schüler,

³¹⁵ For the use of Nietzsche to advocate vegetarianism, see reproduction on a postcard of his portrait together with a suitable quote in Krause (1984), illus. 10, referenced in Aschheim (1992), p33.

³¹⁶ Thomas (1990), p96ff, notes that it was principally Lagarde and Langbehn who influenced *Wandervögel*, but quotes from contemporary texts which interpret their project as fundamentally Nietzschean. For an account of *Lebensreform* by an official of the *Wandervögel* which stresses the importance of Nietzsche see Walter Hammer, *Friedrich Nietzsche: der Lebensreformer und seiner Zukunftskultur*, 2nd ed, 1910, referenced in Thomas (1990), p110.

³¹⁷ For details of, for example, the colony of Eden, founded in 1893, see Mosse (1966), p111ff.

³¹⁸ See Mosse (1966), pp113-115, concerning the Mittgart settlement, for example.

³¹⁹ *ibid*, p116.

³²⁰ For the importance of Nietzsche, particularly Dionysian "ecstatic dynamism", and this especially in relation to the dance, to the cooperative, see Aschheim (1992), pp59-61.

³²¹ Schall (1989), p37. Certain of what follows in the present discussion of dance is indebted to Schall's research.

Isadora Duncan, Rudolf Steiner, Martin Buber, Otto Gross, Marianne Werefkin, Alexei Jawlensky, and (in 1920) Paul Klee, visited Ascona, the site of the cooperative.³²² The principal aim was to replace diseased civilisation with an "authentic culture." Of more immediate relevance to the artists of *die Brücke* were the eleven establishments listed by Heinrich Pudor, a leading theorist of the nudist movement who attempted, through reference to Nietzsche and Langbehn, to provide a theoretical justification for *Freibad*, as practising nudism in the Dresden area. Part of the Moritzburg lakes was itself designated a nudist area.³²³

Körperkultur as such underwrites developments in rhythm and dance; dance innovators were also most ardent supporters of physical health and hygiene. Principal texts were Fritz Winther's *Koerperbildung als Kunst und Pflicht* (1914) and Fritz Giese's *Geist im Sport* (1925), both of which saw the development of physical culture as a chance to overcome the mind-body dualism which had begun in antiquity and developed under Christianity, resulting in the decadent physique of the contemporary German. Most significant for our concerns is that, apart from this decidedly Nietzschean account of the history of the mind-body duality, Winther attributed the current concern for the well-being of the physical body to the writings of Nietzsche, and that he attributed both his and Giese's belief in the philosophy of action as the way to the future to Nietzsche.³²⁴

Concerning the dance as such, Hermand writes that a result of the increased significance of the body was the evaluation of dance as the most immediate expression of the human body. Everywhere, he writes, resounded the "love of rhythmic movement and noble gestures": a dance of the entire body was sought. Combining a quest for the

³²² *ibid*, p38.

³²³ Lloyd (1991), p110.

³²⁴ Schall (1989), pp66-67.

"cultish origins" of dance with the concept of the dance as described by Nietzsche, some sought to contribute to a "rhythmic renewal of the whole Volk".³²⁵

The first page of Isadora Duncan's autobiography of 1927 reads:

If my virtue be a dancer's virtue, and if I have often sprung with both feet into a golden-emerald rapture, and if it be my Alpha and Omega that everything heavy will become light, every body a dancer and every spirit a bird: verily, that is my Alpha and Omega.³²⁶

The words are Nietzsche's, an author to whom she will turn at several key stages in the text which follows. She writes of her efforts to read everything which had ever been written of dance, from the earliest Egyptians to the present day, but: "when I had finished this colossal experiment, I realised that the only dance masters I could have were Jean-Jaques Rousseau (*Emile*), Walt Whitman and Nietzsche."³²⁷ The reason for her interest is surely her "desire to make the Greek choruses and the ancient tragic dance live again."³²⁸ In an attempt to create the "dancework of the future" she turned to the dance of the ancient Greeks, emulating the poses found on Greek vases and bas-reliefs, and in 1907 danced at dawn at the theatre of Dionysus in Athens. She wrote extensively of the frequent visits of Karl Federn, whose self-assumed task it was to reveal to her the "genius of Nietzsche." "Only by Nietzsche, he said, will you come to the full revelation of dancing expression as you seek it." Each afternoon he came to read aloud from *Zarathustra*: "The seduction of Nietzsche's philosophy ravished my being" to the point at which she developed a fascination "so potent that it was with the greatest reluctance that my impresario could persuade me to make even short tours [...] where excited, furious audiences and many thousand marks awaited my coming."³²⁹ Special

³²⁵ Hamann and Hermand (1967), pp183-184.

³²⁶ Duncan (1988).

³²⁷ *ibid*, p62. Again emphasising a central tenet of the present thesis, Duncan wrote in *My Life*: "My soul became a battlefield where Apollo, Dionysus, Christ, Nietzsche and Richard Wagner disputed the ground." Quoted in Alessandra Comini (1979).

³²⁸ *ibid*, p100.

³²⁹ *ibid*, p104.

reference is made to Zarathustra's two dance songs, described as ecstatic tributes to the primal life force, dissolving in the wake of orgiastic rapture.³³⁰ 1904 saw the opening of the Elisabeth-Duncan-Schule in Darmstadt, its stated aims being the development of the "body-character", a strong musculature, "beautiful neck, well built arms and fully developed breasts"; in this context it sought an "ennoblement of the race".³³¹

The importance of Duncan's dance for certain Expressionists is apparent. In May 1903 Franz Marc saw her dance at the Sarah Bernhardt Theatre in Paris, describing it thus:

30. Mai
[...] le soir Isadora Duncan (Théâtre Sarah Bernhardt [sic!]). Première représentation publique à Paris. bête et mauvais public, excepté les Américains. notre enthousiasme démesuré....³³²

In *On the Spiritual in Art*³³³ Kandinsky refers to Duncan's work, comparing her use of the art of the Greeks in her search for the "dance of the future" to the painter's appropriation of the primitive.³³⁴

At about the same time the Swiss musician Emile Jaques-Dalcroze was developing a new system of music education based on rhythmic gymnastics, and which he called "Eurhythmics".³³⁵ In his *Rhythm, Music and Education* Dalcroze described the aim as the enlightenment of the interrelationship of body, soul and mind.³³⁶ We are told that praise for the festival which inaugurated the Dalcroze Institute in Gartenstadt, Hellenrau came from figures as diverse as Wölfflin, Worringer, van de Velde, Peter

³³⁰ Schall (1989), p50.

³³¹ Hamann and Hermand (1967), p184-5.

³³² Lankheit (1978), pp79-80. Referenced in Schall (1989), p171.

³³³ Hereafter, "*On the Spiritual*."

³³⁴ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p205. Referenced in Schall (1989).

³³⁵ Schall (1989), p52.

³³⁶ *ibid*, p53.

Behrens,³³⁷ Meier-Graefe, Max Friedländer, Osthaus, and Hugo von Hofmannsthal.³³⁸

In 1908-9 Kandinsky noted Dalcroze's name in one of his notebooks, and in *Mein Leben* Nolde notes that he visited the institute often in its early years.³³⁹

Of more immediate importance is that Mary Wigman, who enrolled at the Institute in the first term, and who wrote that without ecstasy there could be no dance,³⁴⁰ met Nolde in 1912. He suggested she meet Rudolf von Laban at the Monte Verita Cooperative, which she did the following year.³⁴¹ During 1913-14 she was more or less in charge of Laban's dance school in Munich; here she developed her own ideas concerning dance, apparently filling her notebooks with responses to Nietzsche and the dance. In February 1916 she attended the Café des Banques, a Dada gathering place, and recited and interpreted passages from Nietzsche.³⁴² Huelsenbeck writes of how Wigman danced at the Café: "She put on a special performance for us dadaists and 'danced Nietzsche'. I can still see her in the centre of a circle, waving Zarathustra about. Left, right, left, right - 'and conceived deeper than day'."³⁴³ During the 1920s Kirchner was to visit her studio and, as outlined in detail below, produce an extensive series of drawings of the dance.

It is possible to uncover an intellectual context which theorises the connections I want to make between the body and the creative act. Janice Schall presents the intellectual context for interest in rhythm in Germany as that of Nietzsche,³⁴⁴

³³⁷ For Behren's design for his own Zarathustran Villa as centrepiece of Darmstadt artists' colony, see Aschheim (1992), illus.5; for a description of its importance, see *ibid*, p34.

³³⁸ Schall (1989), p54.

³³⁹ *ibid*, p55.

³⁴⁰ On the ecstatic nature of Wigman's dance, see Aschheim (1992), pp60-61.

³⁴¹ Schall (1989), p57. For Laban as the Nietzschean "incarnation of modern dance", and a "bearded Dionysian satyr", see Aschheim (1992), p60.

³⁴² Schall (1989), p58.

³⁴³ Huelsenbeck (1991), p11.

³⁴⁴ Schall (1989), p18.

emphasising the importance he places on the body in overcoming the intellectualism of late nineteenth century Germany. Of Munich in 1898, Paul Klee had written: "Many paradoxes, Nietzsche in the air. Glorification of the self and of the drives. Neo-ethics";³⁴⁵ and it is in this context that she goes on to describe the George circle as the "hub" of Schwabing, the bohemian centre of Munich, and to outline Kandinsky, Klee and Marc's involvement with them.

In his "On the Spirit of Music", of 1913, Karl Wolfskehl wrote:
The human soul is space and body: the human soul in time is language. In the body matter is ordered in rhythm. Rhythm is the spatial aspect of the soul in time; rhythm is the temporal aspect of the soul in space (language of forms united in movement!) [...] the substance of passion is formed from the self.³⁴⁶

Though somewhat obscure, the importance of the passage is clear: spirit is matter, and that matter (the body) makes itself manifest in the work of art through movement. The equation of this concept with that which speaks of the dance as the source of a new world of symbols in *The Birth of Tragedy* parallels that of Wolfskehl's title and the subtitle of Nietzsche's text. The significance of the words "the substance of passion is formed from the self" will become apparent in specific discussion of "passion" and related concepts in relation to the creative process in Section III, below. Here, it is the importance of the body as such which concerns us. In "Blätter für die Kunst und neueste Literatur" (in *Geistige Bewegung I* (1910)) Wolfskehl wrote that it was Nietzsche who brought together

the music laden, Nordic impulse which is drawn to the dematerialised, to ascetic mysticism [...] and the plastic rhythmic, gesture laden [...] finality perpetuating will to form whose lords, masters and representatives have been the Greeks³⁴⁷

³⁴⁵ The quote is from Klee's *Diaries*, #68, p26, referenced in Schall (1989). #69 reads: "Force demands forceful expression. Obscenity as expression of fullness and fertility." Nietzsche himself could have written these lines.

³⁴⁶ Schall (1989), p23.

³⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid*, p25.

again stressing *The Birth of Tragedy* as the context for his thought concerning the essential relation between the body and art; for the "plastic rhythmic, gesture laden" is the embodiment of this will to form.

Another one time member of the circle, Klages wrote in his *Handschrift und Charakter. Gemeinverständlicher Abriss der graphologischen Technik* of 1917 that body and spirit were united through motion, that the invisible trace left by motion was the key to understanding "inner spirit". Thus, he attempts in the article "Der Fall Nietzsche-Wagner" to analyse and interpret the form and rhythm of Nietzsche's handwriting in the hope of uncovering his "essential character".³⁴⁸ Further, he wrote later in *Zur Ausdruckslehre und Charakterkunde. Gesammelte Abhandlungen* that the slightest gesture of the hand, and the track of that movement, the line, is an indication of character.³⁴⁹ And it is this latter concept which is of importance here. Though Klages attends in his *Ausdrucksbewegung und Gestaltungskraft. Grundlegung der Wissenschaft vom Ausdruck* principally to handwriting as the trace of movement, he refers to physical gestures in the broadest sense in the text, and refers to the graphic traces of those movements in general. He writes that "each lively movement [has] a guiding force, and this is without exception called a non-arbitrary guiding of the will. Thus each action shows an expressive stroke, and in that the state of the subject's being."³⁵⁰ He becomes quite scientific in his analysis, accounting for the expressive nature of movement in diagrammatic form. He writes that "A movement [*Bewegung*] B is

³⁴⁸ibid, p25. Klages saw Nietzsche as the father of the "*Seelenforschung*" he thought he was undertaking. See Aschheim (1992), p81. For Klages' search for a primal "Dionysian intoxication", his emphasis on "elemental ecstasy" and "erotic rapture", see Aschheim (1992), p80. Klages wrote numerous books on graphology, publishing his *Die Probleme der Graphologie. Entwurf einer Psychodiagnostik* as early as 1910, and his *Die Ausdrucksbewegung und ihre diagnostische Verwertung* in 1913.

³⁴⁹ Schall (1989), p148.

³⁵⁰ Klages (1921), p1.

produced from an act of will [*Willensakt*] W; in the act of will W the personality [*Persönlichkeit*] P appears, and thus it appears no less in the movement B."

Each such movement, then, is an expression: "[...] in every arbitrary movement is the personal form of expression." When the act of will remains the same, but different personalities perform the act, different movements result.³⁵¹ Even the most simple movement, he writes, takes such multiple forms that the entire range of languages available to man cannot characterise it. In reference to two pieces of handwriting he notes that "what each differentiates in its manifestation of inner nature, it differentiates fundamentally in each draw of the feather, each gesture, each expressive facial expression, in the physiognomy of the action [...eventually in] the object produced as craft, as art and as writing."³⁵² Throughout he emphasises the bodily nature of the affects, and the essentially physiological nature of language;³⁵³ thus, it is not surprising, he writes, that we learnt to interpret the states of other peoples' souls before our own. He writes "'The you' - Nietzsche expresses it short and to the point - 'is older than the I.'"³⁵⁴ He summarises thus:

*the bodily expression of each condition of life is created so that its image can call that condition back to presence again.*³⁵⁵

Klages conceives of his analysis of expression as an alternative to those based on what he calls a false metaphysics. Thus he attempts to stress the interaction of body and

³⁵¹ *ibid*, p2-3.

³⁵² *ibid*, p9.

³⁵³ *ibid*, p17: "Die Ursache jedes Sprachlauts sind Bewegungen des Kehlkopfs, der Zunge und der Lippen, die ihrerseits wieder im Hirn entspringen."

³⁵⁴ *ibid*, p14.

³⁵⁵ *ibid*, p15.

soul, or "so called 'psychophysischen Parallelismus.'" He goes on to write that "The body is the appearance (*Erscheinung*) of the soul, the soul the sense of the living body."

Moving closer to the creative act in two-dimensional art, courses at the *Obrist-Debschitz Lehr - und Versuch Ateliers fuer Angewandte und Freie Kunst* in Schwabing, the institution attended by Kirchner in 1903, examined the way in which lines of varying intensity contributed to the overall effect of the work of art.³⁵⁶ In his article "Wozu über Kunst schreiben?", published in the February 1900 issue of *Dekorative Kunst*, Obrist stated that art should be an "intensification of life", and should seek not a "rash impression" but a "deepened expression."³⁵⁷ Of his *Whiplash* (1895, reproduced in Weiss (1979)), Fuchs wrote "this violent movement looks for us like the sudden, forcible shaking of the string at the crack of a whip. It soon seems to us to be a reflection of the sudden, violent elements: a flash - soon the defiant signature of an important man, a conqueror, a mind who rules by new documents, by a new legislation."³⁵⁸ Apart from the Nietzschean sounding metaphors, this "defiant signature" presents a true extension to the realm of the visual arts of Klages' theory of expression outlined above. August Endell wrote of the effects various lines could have on the feelings of the viewer, emphasising the potentially durational (rather than synchronic) nature of the line. Thus the long thin line carries qualities of speed and movement, the "falling" straight line a sense of effortlessness, and the upward moving line a heightened tension.³⁵⁹ Writing of the experience of purely visual perception, he writes: "It is like an intoxication [*Rausch*], like a madness which comes over us. Happiness threatens to destroy us,

³⁵⁶ Mûnter noted that "Kandinsky knew Obrist well and appreciated his ideas" ; that they were invited frequently to the designer's house. See Long (1980), p8.

³⁵⁷ Weiss (1979), pp29, 31. It was Fuchs who, in *Pan* during 1896, brought Obrist's work to public attention and, in his "Friedrich Nietzsche and the Visual Arts" of 1895, cited a passage from *Human, All Too Human* as evidence Nietzsche also recognised the importance of "seen and unseen" energies of nature in the work of art. See Schall (1989), p105f.

³⁵⁸ Quoted in Weiss (1979), p169, n46.

³⁵⁹ *ibid*, pp36-37.

superabundant beauty to suffocate us. Whoever has not experienced that will never understand fine art."³⁶⁰ For Henry van de Velde, who was to become a close friend of Kirchner, the line was principally manifest as a concern for line as force:

A line is a force like all elemental forces; several connected but contradictory lines have the same effect as several elemental forces working against each other. This is an essential truth [...] If I now say that a line is a force, I am only asserting something which can be taken for granted: it takes its force from the energy of the person who has drawn it.... Nothing is lost, either of the energy or of the force [...]³⁶¹

The importance of Endell's decidedly Nietzschean *Rausch* as described by Endell, and of van de Velde's force and energy, will become apparent in Section III below. Here, it is the suggestion of movement which is essential. To Arthur Roessler, Adolf Hölzel, who had taught Nolde at his painting school in Dachau, explained that he had developed a correspondence between the "rhythmic movement" of deep thought or meditation and lines drawn on paper.³⁶² Believing it was possible to interpret purely linear and formal elements of art, Roessler suggested the possibility that such interpretation of the newly developing visual art (*Jugendstil*) might be founded precisely on the same principles as graphology.³⁶³ He emphasised the importance of psychology in this process, noting in this context that studies of "pathologically significant expressive movement" already existed. Line could function, he wrote, "as the expression, as graphic sign, as gesture of a thought or feeling."³⁶⁴ Just as both thoughts and feelings are movements, he writes,

³⁶⁰ *Um die Schönheit*, quoted in *ibid*, p149. Weiss compares this to that passage in Kandinsky's "Reminiscences" where he writes that "every resting point and every moving point (=line) became [...] alive and revealed to me its soul."

³⁶¹ Henry van de Velde, *Prinzipielle Erklärungen*, from *Kunstgewerbliche Laienpredigten* (1902), quoted in Sembach (1989), p48. See below, Section III, for van de Velde's interest in Nietzsche.

³⁶² Weiss (1979), p44.

³⁶³ For the importance of Nietzsche for *Jugendstil*, and Obrist and Endell in particular, and their relation to Kandinsky, see Rensburg (1987), pp247-248.

³⁶⁴ Roessler, *Neu-Dachau - Ludwig Dill, Adolf Hölzel, Arthur Langhammer*, Knackfuss Künstler Monographien, LXXVIII, p125, quoted in *ibid*, p117.

and every movement, whether spiritual or bodily, results in what he calls "vibrations" which can be represented graphically, so thoughts and feelings are subject to the same form of representation: "Just as emotional processes [*seelische Vorgänge*] can be expressed in certain bodily gestures, so too can artistic feelings as inner movement be made visible through line."³⁶⁵

Summary

The specific concerns of each of the above analyses fall into general categories which certain of the texts have in common. I shall deal with each in turn.

1. The first turns about ideas of logic and reason in general, and scientific reason in particular. Steiner focuses on the importance of Nietzsche's poetic reply to natural science, in which methods of the instincts rather than those of logic are emphasised, intellect being no longer the dominant concern. Opinions are no longer to be logically

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*

proven: truth as such no longer matters, only the value any assertion has for life. Thus the life-denying instincts of modern science must be overcome. In this way, instinct, which forms the very nexus of Steiner's account, joins with reason in the "whole" individual. In Goerge's account, precisely the same goal is to be sought in the attempt to combine mysticism and science. *Der Sturm* managed to articulate this distinction in specifically classist terms, castigating the middle-classes for their dependence on the intellect, their denial of instincts. Hiller evoked Nietzsche's account of the "walking encyclopedia", again stressing the importance of the instinct in overcoming the intellectualism and scientism which characterised the age.

2. Much of the writing stresses Nietzsche's emphasis on the individual, connecting this, through a celebrated elitism, with the idea of a higher man; in this context the *Übermensch* is accounted for. Steiner wrote of the latter as Nietzsche's ultimate goal, as the "Sovereign individuum" who "lives out" his own nature, and lives according to nature, creating his own values and thus mastering the self. This rather human *Übermensch* seems to accord with his own account of Nietzsche; a lonely figure, not made for his age, a "complete individualist", the superior, aristocratic thinker. Of course Brandes' "Aristocratic Radicalism" follows in exactly the same vein. In opposition to cultural philistines, Brandes called upon Nietzsche's demand "be thyself!", upon the exalted individual who educates himself in opposition to the age and who creates the possibility of a higher, braver humanity. He concludes the essay with the extended assertion that the artist is the source of this revaluation. Again, in Goerge's writing it is the heroic, this time Zarathustran figure who is exalted. For him, though, Nietzsche was a fighter for freedom against whom fortune was stacked: thus in the poem "Nietzsche" he focuses upon the philosopher's failure to achieve his pronouncements; in the figure of Maximin, Goerge completes Nietzsche's unfinished project. Here he thought he had his own divinity, his own *Übermensch*. Goerge looks down repeatedly on the "breeding

masses" who failed to understand Nietzsche, seeing only in "the few" the possibility of a completion of his project.

Contrary to these accounts of the *Übermensch*, Simmel managed to focus on the idea that it was always something beyond man, something which stood ahead of humanity, leading "upwards". Still he maintains the idea that Nietzsche is concerned with individuals who lead humanity to higher levels, leading the immense masses slowly onwards. Simmel writes that humanity is raised by its "inner aspect", as its will to power increases. Again, articles in periodicals generally follow that popular account in which Nietzsche is seen to open up the horizon, to unchain man from his past and from tradition, the importance of the superior individual in this, and Nietzsche as the model for each heroism. Thus Walden referred to free spirits of all arts and cultures, to "Artistic intellectuals" whose self-discipline would fulfill this task.

3. Regarding the mystical interpretation or application of Nietzsche, we note that Steiner stated at the outset that there was not a trace of the mystical in Nietzsche. Yet we noted even here the suggestion that Apollo was a bearer of messages from "beyond" as opposed to the "this worldliness" of Dionysus. Brandes called Zarathustra (and Nietzsche) a warlike mystic, a "mystical immoralist". We saw how Dionysian masques, evocation of primal chaos, in the George circle was mixed with a profound mysticism. Thus George himself could associate and confuse Nietzsche with Christ, and later himself with Christ and Nietzsche with St John. Nietzsche, he concluded, fashioned a "Here" from "There". Equally keen to draw comparisons between Nietzsche and the religion which the philosopher attacked was Simmel, who also suggested similarities between Nietzsche and Christ. In Christianity (the institution, not to be confused with Christ the individual) there is, argues Simmel, concern for the individual just as there is in Nietzsche. The extended space Simmel devotes to Nietzsche's misreading of Christianity is invested with the intention of showing how similar their ideals were. Finally, Nietzsche is concerned, in a typically Christian manner, with the "inner

dimension" of the individual: material consequences are insignificant for Simmel's Nietzsche.

4. Nationalism is a little mentioned concept in the studies, though Steiner does refer to Nietzsche's repugnance at his compatriots' patriotism. Brandes emphasises Nietzsche's concept of an international or Euro-American as opposed to national European culture, stressing that at present Germany has no culture. The concept of the "good European" was important to Walden's account.

5. Articulation of general concepts regarding the decadent nature of the world abound. Steiner writes of the need for man to dominate things, to subject them to his will; the need to remain true to this world, and the concept of a "real" world as fundamentally life-denying. He writes of an aesthetic nihilism as the counterpart to philosophical nihilism, and of the need for the arts to engage with this world, not to escape it. Celebration of this world becomes the affirmation of life forces, the overcoming of asceticism. Brandes stresses Zarathustra's need to accelerate the decline of the decadent, and to create values anew during that process. George stressed that mankind was heading toward a chasm, to a nihilism so profound only the most superior beings could overcome it. Equally poetic was Hoddiss's articulation of the "end of the world" in what was described as the first Expressionist poem. Further, this nihilism was described as the "basic theme" of the "Neue Club" at which the poem was first given public hearing, one which echos through Loewenson's essay "Die Décadence der Zeit". In Hiller's *Weisheit der Langenweile* this is, as with Steiner's text, thrown into the context of the need to overcome metaphysics, in particular the illusion of a real as opposed to an apparent world. Thus Hiller stresses the need to acknowledge the disorder which arises upon the negation of such illusory systems, to affirm the realities of this world as it is. As we saw, Simmel's account of nihilism was most accurate in its approximation to Nietzsche's. For him the raising of humanity is the function of will to power, and forces which undermine this are fundamentally decadent. Humanity

degenerates when the individual is displaced from the centre. Again stressing the political nature of things, we found among periodicals the suggestion that idle-class intellectualism was a weariness with life, itself a symptom of decline.

6. Concerning morality, Steiner wrote that what the masses consider good, the immoralist considers evil, that the overcoming of existent morality was a precondition of the *Übermensch*. Morality, like science, is seen as a life-denying asceticism. Equally, Brandes described the need to overcome morality as a fundament to Nietzsche, as is the need to create a new morality for (and from) the self. Simmel stressed the leveling effect of conventional morality, the manner in which herd mentality had come to dominate the noble caste. Christianity was presented as essential to this, the noble individual essential to its overcoming. Walden's circle sought to "pluck out meaningless customs", to create new unapproved values.

7. Much reference was made to the body, sex, and to dance, and the possibility of an artistic form which develops in relation to that. Through Dehmel we considered the group who collected at the Black Piglet: in this context we attend to Przybyszewski's exaltation of Nietzsche's supposed praise of instinctual sex which took on the character of a "primal, mystical force which supplants the concept of divine creation." Steiner outlined Nietzsche's concept of the body as self, of the unity of body and soul. Precisely this unity was presented in explicitly Nietzschean terms in Wolfskehl's account of rhythm and movement. Underwriting such accounts were theoretical treatises concerned with *Körperkultur*, particularly those of Fritz Winther and Fritz Giese which stressed the need to overcome mind-body dualism. Both Duncan and Wigman stressed the importance of Nietzsche for the development of modern dance, placing emphasis on the importance of physical hygiene and bodily reform. For Klages, in a decidedly anti-metaphysical way, it was bodily movement which underwrote the *expressive* and emotional/spiritual nature of gesture and its graphic trace, a concept which relates directly to Jugendstil's account of

the line, an account which incorporates a Nietzschean *Rausch* as described by Endell, a Nietzschean force and energy when described by Van de Velde.³⁶⁶

8. Periodicals uncovered the opposition of Nietzsche's dance to the intellectualism of their age, as well as its opposition to the "naturalism" which the Expressionists sought to overcome. In relation to this there is the suggestion in Steiner that middle-class *language* itself has become sick, that words are an intellectual expression unable to articulate the wisdom of Dionysus. The arts are essential to overcoming this, particularly the possibility of all the arts functioning together in one work. Of course George's supposed creation of a new symbolist language, an absolute poetry, depends on a similar rejection of discursive prose: Nietzsche's voice should have sung, he wrote, not spoken.

George wrote that the highest task after Zarathustra was the production of an art derived from joy, ecstasy, sand and sun. Describing Nietzsche's hyperbole he called him the "Thunderer", stressing his Dionysian nature as, screaming in the face of the deafness of his age, his throat cracked. Further, we saw George emulate this Dionysian style of excess. Loewenson wrote that the necessary response to the profound nihilism which all great men experienced was intensification, an enhancement of power which would act as a stimulus to life. Thus his concept of "pathos" as an excitement of the passions which would incorporate to itself the intellect, a pathos Stefan Zweig described as a "Yes-saying [...] *par excellence*," the impulse to "joy, force and will to produce ecstasy." "Pathos", "Ekstase" and "Schrei" as manifest in Expressionism gained retrospective articulation in Anz's and Stark's emphasis on the intensity and radicalism of feeling: here, a concise summary of a particular moment of Expressionist style - of the Expressionist revaluation of language - is articulated.

³⁶⁶ It must, of course, be noted that both artists' interest in the psychological function of line is indebted to a tradition which precedes and is quite apart from Nietzsche. Those aspects of their theory of art to which I refer, however, are to be seen in relation to the philosopher's writings.

If we think of this summary as a series of horizontal divisions which bring together the most important aspects of the foregoing analyses, much of the material contained in the summary can itself be divided vertically, into two categories. These categories will split individual texts. On one hand, we have an account of Nietzsche which sees in his work predominantly metaphysical, religious or mystical importance; on the other, attention to an immanence which excludes the possibility of such accounts. Thus, in representing Nietzsche's rejection of systems of logic and reason, nearly all accounts represent his rejection of that (life denying) metaphysics which underwrites such systems. When Steiner draws attention to Nietzsche's rejection of the "real" world as fundamentally life-denying, he articulates the source of that nihilism which was so important in those accounts by Löwenson, Hiller, and Simmel: all emphasised Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical stance. For these authors, bourgeois mores (though not in all cases named as such) and modern values arose from a failure to affirm life as it is. Reference to the importance of the body, to sex, and to the dance, then, are represented as Nietzschean antidotes to such metaphysics, as is emphasis on a language which could articulate the affirmation of the pain and joy which constitute life. Clearly those parts of texts which write of Nietzsche's ideas as if they equate with religious and mystical accounts endorse that metaphysics which I showed, above, even the earliest Nietzsche problematised. Thus Steiner, George and Simmel, in particular, present, in parts of their texts, a Nietzsche more thoroughly indebted to his metaphysical heritage than other parts of those same texts, and representations in other accounts of and responses to Nietzsche, would allow.

Most significant about this latter, uneasy axis, is that the (chronologically) later, unsystematised relations to Nietzsche in literature and the broader social sphere tend to fall almost entirely to the side of immanence; those systematic accounts of Nietzsche with which the above analysis begins straddle this axis, at certain moments celebrating

the existential realities of Nietzsche's account of existence, at others indulging in mystical and metaphysical speculation as to the importance of Nietzsche.

Section III.

Nietzsche and Expressionism

Cézanne taught the simplification of tone values, Gauguin the effect of the planar, and Van Gogh added the flaming luminosity of colour. Maurice Denis, Vuillard and Bonnard attempted to prepare a planar simplification in *the grand style*, but they lacked persuasive expression. This was found by the Teutons of the north and south, Munch and Hodler. (My emphasis).

Paul Ferdinand Schmidt, "Die Expressionisten", *Der Sturm*, Jan. 1912.³⁶⁷

Nietzsche and the visual arts

Before we come to precisely the relation of Nietzsche to the Expressionists who are the object of the present study, it will help to attend to a few summaries of accounts scholars have presented concerning Nietzsche and those aspects of Modernist visual art which provide important precedents or contexts. This will show, first, that the importance of Nietzsche for the visual arts has been widely recognised among historians of Modernism, and thus will demonstrate that the relation of Expressionists discussed in detail later to Nietzsche is not exceptional. And second, it will uncover key themes and tensions, to be understood in relation to Nietzsche's philosophy, which will become important to the artists discussed in detail below. Thus, not only will the analysis show a widespread relation to Nietzsche in Modernism in the visual arts, but it will show that certain key themes of Nietzsche's philosophy are repeatedly raised in the work of various artists.

³⁶⁷ Quoted in Selz (1957), p257. See below for Schmidt's account of Nietzsche's importance for Otto Dix.

Again, the following can make no claim to completeness. The artists to which we attend are those who have been seen in art historical literature as major influences on the artists to be discussed later - in particular, Edvard Munch and Henry van de Velde as precursors, and aspects of French and Italian Modernism as more or less contemporary manifestations - or are those who have subsequently been seen as part of that very same group who are the object of the present study - the Expressionists, here represented in the work of Otto Dix and Max Beckmann.

In relation to Section II, above, it is important to note, having attended to the significance of *Der Sturm* in relation to Nietzsche's thought, the role of both the journal and the Sturm Gallery in the dissemination of much of French and Italian (as well as German) *visual* Modernism³⁶⁸ which is at key moments to be seen - as we shall see - in relation to Nietzsche's thought. Along with great international exhibitions such as that organised in 1912 by the editors of the *Blue Rider*,³⁶⁹ such presentation and promotion of European Modernism actively contributed to the dissemination of artforms, certain of which can be shown to be significantly influenced by the philosophy of Nietzsche.

It was during 1892 that an international literary group began to meet regularly at a wine cellar in Berlin which August Strindberg nicknamed "Zum Schwarzen Ferkel", and which Edvard Munch, whose importance for certain German Expressionists has been documented, was to frequent.³⁷⁰ It was here that Munch became intimately involved - both intellectually and emotionally - with Stanislaw Przybyszewski. Przybyszewski's doctrines concerning sex, coupled with the thoughts of a member of the earlier Christiana "Bohème" circle, Hans Jaeger, concerning free love, became

³⁶⁸ In particular, see Selz (1957), pp250-264 for a summary of *Der Sturm*'s importance for Futurism, and for its exhibition of the work of Munch, Fauvism, and Cubism, and for van de Velde's interest in Walden.

³⁶⁹ The second exhibition of the editorial board of *The Blue Rider*, shown by Hans Goltz, Munich, 1912.

³⁷⁰ Heller (1984), p104.

central concerns of the artist's own account of life.³⁷¹ Of a sketch for *The Empty Cross* (1898, reproduced in Heller (1984)) Munch wrote that "The bohemians' time came with its free love": "God was overthrown, as was all else. Everyone danced about in an insane dance of life. A blood-red sun stood in the sky. The cross was atoned for. But I could not rid myself of the language of life, and the thought of eternal life."³⁷² The artist's suffering, Heller notes, takes on the agonies of a mankind which indulges in a physical ecstasy and careless ignorance. Such concepts are shot through with the Nietzschean analysis of the state of religion in late nineteenth century, as is the idea of the antidote of earthly ecstasy and the artist as the bearer of humanity's loss, and source of its overcoming.

Munch had announced in 1893 that while the history of German art was essentially unimportant, there were exceptions:

For example, Böcklin, whom I would almost rank above all other modern painters, Max Klinger, Thoma. Among musicians, Wagner; among philosophers, Nietzsche. France has an art that is greater than Germany's but no artists greater than these I have named.³⁷³

Though German art is essentially inferior to French, in Germany there have existed great, heroic individuals. His most important reference to Nietzsche, for our present concern, takes the form of studies for and a portrait of Nietzsche which the Swedish collector Ernst Thiel commissioned in 1905. Having rejected several sketches of the philosopher seated near a window with head supported by his hand (see, e.g., fig 6), Munch wrote to Thiel:

I have chosen to paint him in a monumental and decorative style. I think it would not be right of me to portray him in an illusory manner - as I have not seen him

³⁷¹ For Jaeger's influence on Munch see *ibid*, pp32-34.

³⁷² *ibid*, p165.

³⁷³ Letter to Johan Rohde, quoted in *ibid*, p109.

with my outer eyes - So I have made my point by painting him somewhat larger than life-size - I have depicted him as the author of Zarathustra in his cave between the mountains. He stands on his balcony, and over the mountains a radiant sun is rising. One may think of the point [in *Thus spoke Zarathustra*] where he talks about standing in the light, but wishing to be in the dark - but of many others as well.³⁷⁴

Despite the obvious compositional and indeed stylistic similarity to *The Scream* and other related works, the Nietzsche figure (see fig. 7) does not succumb to the horror which is the nature of Munch's world which surrounds: the figure is austere and composed, quite unlike the melancholy and despair which underwrite so many of Munch's works. To produce the painting Munch had researched at the Nietzsche Archive in Weimar, using as a source for some of his studies photographs of the philosopher, including those Hans Olde produced in 1899.³⁷⁵ At the Archive he came to know Nietzsche's sister, Elizabeth. Through Munch's acquaintance with Elizabeth, accounts she gave of the supposed moment at which Nietzsche conceived of the will to power, and Munch's postcards of the region in which she said this occurred, Eggum asserts that what Munch portrays is precisely that moment at which Elizabeth says Nietzsche conceived of this fundament to his philosophy.³⁷⁶ While it is probably as well to disregard most of what Elizabeth had to say concerning her brother,³⁷⁷ it is conceivable that Munch took her words seriously, and that they informed the nature of the representation. The work would then be a monument to what Munch, presumably, considered a key to the philosopher's ideas: the concept of will to power.

³⁷⁴ Quoted in Eggum (1989), p85. "The Night Song" in *Zarathustra* includes the lines:
Light am I: ah, that I were night! But this is my solitude, that I am girded round with light.
Ah, that I were dark and obscure! How I would suck at the breasts of light!

³⁷⁵ Eggum (1989), p85. Heckel's 1905 woodcut *Friedrich Nietzsche* (see below) is derived from an etching of Olde's from 1899: see Reinhardt (1977), p30.

³⁷⁶ *ibid*, pp85-88. In a similar manner, Giovanni Segantini, described as an "enthusiastic Nietzschean", painted the scenes of the Engadine, those mountains which inspired the rapid creation of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and had planned for the Paris 1900 World Exhibition a massive Engadin *Gesamtkunstwerk*. See Aschheim (1992), p35.

³⁷⁷ Her extensive biography is to say the least uninteresting, at times complete nonsense.

A similar concern is manifest in the work of one of Munch's contemporaries. Initiated by Harry Graf Kessler in 1911, Henry van de Velde's designs for a monument and stadium in memory of Nietzsche in Weimar was just one aspect of the designer and architect's interest in Nietzsche. Kessler's idea was, we are told,³⁷⁸ to produce a new Hellas in which temple, arena and stand were to be united in a unit which was to serve sport and spiritual education in a union of the physical and spiritual, a concept appropriate to the philosopher's own aims as outlined above in Section I. Van de Velde read Nietzsche exhaustively,³⁷⁹ produced several designs for the covers of his books (figs. 8, 9), and was asked by Elizabeth Förster Nietzsche to design the interior of the Nietzsche Archive (fig. 10).

Consideration of the Monument (see fig. 11) benefits from the account van de Velde gave above (Section II) of the line as an element of force: the sheer weight of the monument, derived essentially from its solidity and massive dimensions, is emphasised by the mechanical, strictly geometrical lines of the form. The power of the whole could be attributed to the architect's reading of Nietzsche, to the common conception of the author of will to power and of the destruction of conventional morality. Thus Sembach writes of the "thunderous tone" of the designs executed for the project.³⁸⁰ But such an assertion isn't supportable in documentary terms and depends on speculation. The designs and final result of the Archive, on the contrary, have nothing in common with such an account. As Schubert noted in discussion with Trillhaas,³⁸¹ there is no evidence to suggest that Nietzsche's thoughts came to bear on the form of interior designs.

³⁷⁸ Sembach (1989), p92. See also Krause (1984), pp199ff.

³⁷⁹ Sembach (1989), p151.

³⁸⁰ *ibid*, p152.

³⁸¹ Schubert (1982), p319.

In van de Velde's work, then, we see two possible relations to Nietzsche. In the archive, artifacts which have no relation to the philosopher's ideas other than that they are dedicated to the memory of it. A somewhat speculative reading of the monument, on the other hand, not only recognises that the monument celebrates the philosopher, but that it actually refers to the content of his philosophy, and to a particular reading of it: specifically, I have suggested, to the idea of power.

Significant for its diverse relations to Nietzsche is the work of Otto Dix. The various forms of Dix's appropriation from and proximity to the philosopher may be gleaned from a consideration of the difference between his 1912 plaster bust *Friedrich Nietzsche* (fig 12) and the quotation from *Zarathustra* he included in 1933 in the background of *The Seven Deadly Sins* (reproduced in Twohig (1992)), which reads: "Deserts grow: woe to him who harbours deserts."³⁸² On the one hand, an explicit representation of Nietzsche, on the other, a quote re-presented in a somewhat different context from the original. But both references are explicit; more recent scholarship has tended toward more covert relations. We are told that at his death in 1969 Dix's library contained four volumes of Nietzsche's philosophy, all published between 1906 and 1908, including in one extracts from *The Will to Power*, *Twilight of the Idols*, *The Anti-Christ*, and the *Dionysus-Dithyrambs*; the others were *Dawn*, *Zarathustra*, and *The Gay-Science*. Sarah O'Brien Twohig convincingly dates his ownership of these volumes, by reference to inscriptions and signatures, to the years prior to or during the war.³⁸³ In spite of her careless attitude to Nietzsche's philosophy - at one point in the text she writes that "Each individual, group and generation is free to interpret him as they wish"³⁸⁴ - Twohig has access to Dix's copies of Nietzsche's texts, and can focus on

³⁸² The original is in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p315.

³⁸³ Twohig (1992), pp42-43.

³⁸⁴ *ibid*, p41. The implication would seem to be that the Nazi account of Nietzsche is as valid as any.

precisely those passages he underlined or annotated. Thus we know for sure that he was interested in that passage of *Twilight of the Idols* where Nietzsche noted that the division of the world into the "real" and "apparent", as had happened under Christianity or in Kant's philosophy, is a symptom of decadence (see above, Chapter I), and that he was interested in Nietzsche's repeated attacks on both state and Church in *Will to Power*. In relation to this, we are told, stands Dix's adherence to "things of this world", his taste for (and we might add, affirmation of) the ugly, harsh realities of life found in so many of his works.³⁸⁵ In place of modern western theology, Dix evokes a more Dionysian sense of life. Thus, of his *Self Portrait as Mars* (1914, fig. 13), Dietrich Schubert could write:

in this *portrait-histoire*, a historical allegory, Dix portrays himself as Mars, the war god. Both the notion of a cruel, Dionysian principle of chaos, destruction and rebirth, and the notion of a dancing star, derive from Nietzsche. As Zarathustra said, one must have chaos within oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star.³⁸⁶

The sheer energy, aggression, and chaotic movement of colour in the image is clear, but only in the context of Dix's explicit references to Nietzsche is Schubert's account reasonable. Dix's visual and textual oeuvre provide the context and justification for such a reading.

It is suggested that Max Beckmann first began to read Nietzsche at the age of thirteen.³⁸⁷ His journal of 1903 (when Beckmann was nineteen) records what he had been reading throughout the year, including Goethe, Maeterlinck and Kant as well as

³⁸⁵ See, e.g., McGreevy (1975), p11. In the first monograph on Dix, published in 1923, Schmidt asserted the artist's indebtedness to Nietzsche, focussing precisely on the artist's Nietzschean inspired "pessimistic rejection of the illusion of beauty"; referenced in Twohig (1992), p45.

³⁸⁶ Dietrich Schubert, *Otto Dix*, quoted in Eberle (1985), p27.

³⁸⁷ Buenger (1993), p137.

Nietzsche. Seeking manifestations of his interest in Nietzsche in his work, Güse attends to *The Resurrection* (see fig. 14) of 1909.³⁸⁸ Compared with Rubens' *The Great Final Judgement* (see fig. 15),³⁸⁹ its profane nature is apparent. Arranged in two columns the bodies ascend to what would be heaven, while on the ground a small number of people stand as if in a drawing-room witnessing the resurrection of the dead. Beckmann himself stands to the far left, his mother-in-law just behind him to the right. Above, no St Michael weighing sins and virtues, no Christ, no angels, no demons. All have been saved: whereas the Rubens shows the condemned cascading down the right side of the work, in Beckmann's image all ascend to the brilliant light Güse supposes to represent Zarathustra who, he writes, compared himself to the sun, and lit the paths of those destined to become *Übermenschen*.³⁹⁰ While this may seem a little fanciful, it is clear that Beckmann launches a conscious assault on certain (Christian) conventions associated with the idea of an afterlife. Given the exclusion of the divinity, we end up asking if Beckmann is talking about an afterlife in anything like the Christian sense. According to such a reading, then, Beckmann's humanity is raised to the immortality of the *Übermensch*, not to that of heaven, and the image of humanity rising to the white light is a metaphor for that development in the human species.

In an attempt to support such a (questionable) reading, we may cite Beckmann's writing. In response to Franz Marc's essay "The New Painting" in *Pan*, 1912, Beckmann wrote his "Thoughts on Timely and Untimely Art", a title which clearly consists of a curious reconstruction of Nietzsche's title *Untimely Meditations*, and that of an essay therein entitled "On the uses and disadvantages of history for life". Beckmann criticises Marc's defence of what the latter calls the "new" art, based in abstract "constructional"

³⁸⁸ The following account of Güse's account is taken from Eberle (1985), pp77-82.

³⁸⁹ The comparison is made in Dube (1984), pp85-86.

³⁹⁰ An interesting point of comparison is the description of the pavilion Behrens designed for the Turin 1902 Exposition: "light flooded the interior in which the industrial might of the Second Reich was on display. Zarathustra, cited explicitly, progresses towards the light." Quoted in Aschheim (1992), p34.

elements of painting, as being essentially decorative. These were precisely those abstract elements which for Marc opened the possibility of an art which could represent the spiritual nature of things. Thus Beckmann writes:

There is something that repeats itself in all good art. That is artistic sensuousness, bound up with artistic objectivity and the reality of the objects represented. When one abandons this, one ends up without fail in the domain of the applied arts.³⁹¹

In contrast to Marc's efforts to lift the "mystical veil of Maya," Beckmann seeks to adhere to Nietzsche's command to "remain true to the earth", to abandon beliefs in the metaphysical, in the "other-worldly".

Precisely this concern for the physicality of life has been seen as the basis for an earlier painting of Beckmann's, *Junge Männer am Meer* (1904/5, reproduced in Buenger (1983)). Barbara Buenger, promoting a decidedly Nietzschean reading of the piece, differs from other interpreters who criticise the work for its lazy hedonism, proposing instead a most serious and energetic expression of "Lebensbejahung", or affirmation of life, which she associates not only with Nietzsche but also the poetry of Dehmel and much German art of his own period.³⁹² She proposes that the work be seen in relation to the tradition of *Freikörperkultur*, as a celebration of the spiritual and physical invigoration of naked bathing. Above, I showed the indebtedness of the theory which underwrote such culture to Nietzsche's philosophy; in Buenger's article, she stresses that Nietzsche's ideas had, by the turn of the century, infiltrated culture in general. In particular she stresses the way works by thinkers and painters such as Nietzsche, Dehmel, Klinger, Thoma, Marées and Hofmann were brought together through the pages of *Pan* and other periodicals about the turn of the century, and focuses particularly on an issue of *Pan* of 1896, in which an extract from *Zarathustra* was

³⁹¹ Long (1993), p100.

³⁹² Buenger (1983), p135.

published next to Klinger's *Der befreite Prometheus* (1894). In so doing she manages to establish within the works of disparate artists in different media a particular discourse which revolves around the idea of nudity, masculinity, beauty and freedom, eventually showing that specific iconography and concepts are manifest in Beckmann's piece, which is then also part of that discourse. She goes on to stress the importance of Dehmel's Nietzscheanism (referring to him as a "key mediator of Nietzsche") coupled with the ideas he brought to and developed from the Schwarze Ferkel group in Berlin. In particular she stresses his intense and obsessive preoccupation with the erotic and often tragic view of the world. Dehmel develops Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of the instincts and sexuality into a rapturous praise of the sensuous pleasures and unabashed eroticism, she writes, adding that he is generally felt to have been one of the most important liberating and directing forces for youth in the early 1900's. But while Beckmann's work may be seen as a "glorification of life, youth and nakedness", Buenger stresses that Beckmann made his bathers emphatically masculine but not obsessively sexual.³⁹³ His concern is with a physical beauty, manifest in proportion, posture and community: in this sense, then, the image may be seen as a representation of sublimated or spiritualised sexuality, and therefore rather closer to Nietzsche than to the Nietzschean Dehmel.

Geographically more remote, yet conceptually very close to certain Expressionists, were painters and writers working outside the German tradition. Nowhere will Nietzsche's hyperbole be more obviously manifest than in the manifestos of Futurism. On the 20th February, 1909, the Paris newspaper *Le Figaro* published on its front page Filippo Marinetti's Futurist manifesto. Among its proclamations were:

1. We intend to sing the love of danger, the habit of energy and fearlessness.[...]

³⁹³ *ibid*, p142.

3. [...] We intend to exalt aggressive action, a feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the punch and the slap. [...]
6. The poet must spend himself with ardour, splendour and generosity, to swell the enthusiastic fervour of the primordial elements.
7. Except in struggle, there is no more beauty. No work without an aggressive character can be a masterpiece. Poetry must be conceived as a violent attack on unknown forces to reduce and prostrate them before man. [...]
9. We will glorify war - the world's only hygiene - militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman.
10. We will destroy the museums, libraries, academies of every kind, will fight fight moralism, feminism, every opportunistic or utilitarian cowardice.³⁹⁴

Later he writes that "Art [...] can be nothing but violence, cruelty, and injustice."³⁹⁵ Not only is the aggressive, hyperbolic tone distinctly reminiscent of certain such declamatory moments in parts of Nietzsche's texts; the content is equally derivative. In that section of *Zarathustra* entitled "Of War and Warriors", for example, Nietzsche had written:

My brothers in war! I love you from the very heart, I am and have always been of your kind. [...]

You are not great enough not to know hatred and envy. So be great enough not to be ashamed of them!

And if you cannot be saints of knowledge, at least be its warriors. They are the companions and forerunners of such sainthood. [...]

You should seek your enemy, you should wage your war - a war for your opinions [...]

You should love peace as a means to new wars. And the short peace more than the long.

I do not exhort you to work but to battle. I do not exhort you to peace, but to victory. [...]

Thus live your life of obedience and war! What good is long life? What warrior wants to be spared?

I do not spare you, I love you from the very heart, my brothers in war!

Thus spoke Zarathustra.³⁹⁶

Nietzsche's celebration of the battle and of war is one upon which commentators have disagreed: at certain moments it does seem as if the philosopher were speaking of quite

³⁹⁴ Apollonio (1973), pp21-22.

³⁹⁵ *ibid*, p23.

³⁹⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp73-75.

physical violence. But he leaves plenty of clues to make clear the more abstract nature of his conflict. The opening lines quoted above, for instance, propose that man is not yet great enough *not* to know hatred and envy: to become great, man must overcome such human emotions. In the meantime, Nietzsche demands that man overcome that morality which would make of such emotions a sin: for Nietzsche, only by embracing these "evils" is it possible to become saintly. In *Ecce Homo*, he summarises his "practice of war": first, he only attacks causes that are victorious; second: he only attacks causes against which he could not find allies; third, he never attacks persons ("I merely avail myself of the person as of a strong magnifying glass that allows one to make visible a general but creeping and elusive calamity"); and fourth, he only attacks things when every personal quarrel is excluded.³⁹⁷ Clearly Nietzsche's celebration of war is far more sophisticated than Marinetti's militarism and Fascism: though Nietzsche's politics are certainly undemocratic and elitist, the war of which he writes in these passages is one of ideas, of intellectual conflict. Yet at the same time it is clear how the philosopher's writing feeds into the Futurist's particularly violent interpretation (and corruption) of his own texts. Their proclaimed love of danger, their exaltation of energy and power, the poet who "spends" himself, the quest for the primordial, scorn for woman and the feminine, the destruction of the "cult of the past", glorification of the everyday world: all are to be found in Nietzsche's texts.

It is suggested that the nature of Futurism's polemic is in no sense unique: admiration for destruction was common at that point at which Nietzsche's influence in Italy and France was at its height. James Joll refers in this context to the *Campagnons de L'action d'Art* group in Paris, whose manifesto of 1907 was based on a combination of anarchist and Nietzschean ideas, proclaiming the need for violence to preserve the

³⁹⁷ *Ecce Homo*, pp232-233.

dignity of art and the inequality of man.³⁹⁸ The history of Nietzsche's influence in France seems to be long and, at certain moments, important. By 1904, most of his works had been translated to French, and long before that articles and selections from his writings appeared in periodicals.³⁹⁹

Writing in his notebooks, the neo-Impressionist Henri-Edmond Cross noted that "A sage is, according to Nietzsche, a creator of values. It is his great task. Nothing, in effect, has value *in itself* [...] The true philosopher is thus the man whose personality is powerful enough to create *the world which interests men*."⁴⁰⁰ In her *Henri Matisse and Neo-Impressionism 1898-1908*, Bock writes that this "exalted view of the creative will" is reflected in the neo-Impressionists' desire to make paintings "'entirely out of their heads'".⁴⁰¹ In reference to Signac, Cross writes of the need "to follow one's own path. As Nietzsche says, 'become who you are.'"⁴⁰²

Both Oppler, in her *Fauvism Reexamined*, and Giry, in his *Fauvism, Origins and Development*, quote Jules de Gaultier's quotation from *Zarathustra*, proposing it be seen as something of a manifesto of Fauvism: "It is a taste, a new appetite, a new gift of seeing colours, of hearing sounds, of experiencing emotions that had hitherto been neither seen, heard nor felt."⁴⁰³ Apollinaire noted that in 1911 Matisse was "indoctrinating his visitors with Nietzsche."⁴⁰⁴ Giry writes that certain other Fauves were influenced by Nietzsche: Derain and Vlaminck began discussing the philosopher in 1900, and in 1906/7 Derain wrote to Vlaminck that he had been reading Nietzsche: "The more I think of Nietzsche, the more he amazes me."⁴⁰⁵ Further, less explicit yet equally

³⁹⁸ Joll, James, *The Intellectual in Politics*, quoted in Taylor (1974), p7.

³⁹⁹ For a summary of these developments see Oppler (1976), pp201-202, and Giry (1981), p15.

⁴⁰⁰ Bock (1981), p54.

⁴⁰¹ *ibid.*

⁴⁰² *ibid.*, p83.

⁴⁰³ Giry (1981), p15.

⁴⁰⁴ Twohig (1992), p42.

⁴⁰⁵ Derain, letter to Vlaminck, quoted in Giry (1981).

important reference to the philosopher is found in the tone of language as well as concepts articulated: "Any motive for expression must spring from the happiness we first have in feeling, then the compassion that compels us to embody our feelings to provide complete proof of the existence of our being. This is the expansion of a lofty egotism."⁴⁰⁶

A similar elitism was later to be proclaimed by another Frenchman, this time a Cubist, Georges Braque, who announced: "instead of having things made clearer, I should like to have them made more obscure. *Il faut toujours augmenter le trouble*."⁴⁰⁷ The great success of Apollinaire's *Les Peintres Cubistes* was, thought Braque, that "far from enlightening people, it succeeds in bamboozling them."⁴⁰⁸ Rosenthal notes that Picasso's familiarity with Nietzsche was undeniable; apart from the interest in Nietzsche among a circle of literary friends and acquaintances in Barcelona, Rosenthal draws our attention to Picasso's co-founding and co-editing of the periodical *Arte Joven* in Madrid in 1901 which carried articles about Nietzsche and which advertised the translated edition of *The Birth of Tragedy* in each edition.⁴⁰⁹ Johnson stresses the importance of Nietzsche to many of the artist's Parisian friends: Apollinaire is described as having absorbed Nietzsche's ideas on woman, the warrior, the poet, and religion.⁴¹⁰ In *Les Peintres Cubistes* he quotes from *Twilight of the Idols*; André Salmon misquotes *Zarathustra* in his *Anecdotal History of Cubism*, and Braque quotes, though much later, from the latter text's "Before Sunrise".⁴¹¹

The most articulate and sophisticated relation of Cubism to Nietzsche, however, is manifest in the pages of Gleizes and Metzinger's *Du Cubisme*. As John Nash has

⁴⁰⁶ Derain, letter to Vlaminck, quoted in *ibid*.

⁴⁰⁷ Quoted in Nash (1980), 435.

⁴⁰⁸ *ibid*.

⁴⁰⁹ Rosenthal (1980), p87.

⁴¹⁰ Johnson (1980), p99.

⁴¹¹ Nash (1980), 441.

shown, it is in response to a particularly neo-Kantian reading of Cubism, such as that later articulated in the pages of Kahnweiler's *Der Weg zum Kubismus*, that the artists brought a decidedly Nietzschean perspectivism to bear.⁴¹² Rivière explained that "The true purpose of painting is to represent objects as they really are; that is to say, differently from the way we see them. [Cubism] tends always to give us their sensible *essence*, their presence; this is why the image it forms does not resemble their *appearance*."⁴¹³ Gleizes and Metzinger retorted with the assertion that "There is nothing real outside ourselves, there is nothing real except the coincidence of a sensation and an individual mental direction." They went on to express their amazement at critics' efforts to explain the difference between their representations of things and the phenomenal appearance of things by reference to the way things "really are", not their appearance. "According to them, the object possesses an absolute form, an essential form [...] What naïveté! An object has not one absolute form, it has several; it has as many as there are planes in the domain of meaning."⁴¹⁴ It is the will of the artist which shapes the chaotic truth of existence: such is the basic function of will to power. That there is not one but many possible ways of configuring the world is Nietzsche's denial of that metaphysical division of the world into a real and an apparent, and is the principle which determines his perspectivism. In Picasso's words, "We all know that Art is not the truth. Art is a lie that makes us realise the truth [...] from the point of view of art there are no concrete or abstract forms, but only forms which are more or less convincing lies. That those lies are necessary to our mental selves is beyond any doubt, as it is through them that we form our aesthetic point of view of life."⁴¹⁵ Gleizes and Metzinger's text,

⁴¹² *ibid*, pp435-447.

⁴¹³ *ibid*, p435.

⁴¹⁴ *ibid*, 439.

⁴¹⁵ *ibid*, 441.

like Picasso's proclamations, repeats precisely Nietzsche's denial of Kant's metaphysics in its attempt to provide an adequate explanation of Cubism.

In response to Nietzsche's destructive, Dionysian will to power, Picasso would announce: "A picture used to be a sum of additions. In my case a picture is a sum of destructions".⁴¹⁶ Each of these summaries of Modernism's relation to Nietzsche relies on the elitist concept of a "higher man", of the artist as creator of a new world order. The principle of destruction, of tearing apart of singularity, is fundamental to certain of these. Yet simultaneously, we encounter an insistence on order and control: consider Munch's portrait of Nietzsche and van de Velde's Monument. Coupled with this tension is that, manifest most clearly in accounts of Beckmann's work, between "this worldliness" and a metaphysical spirituality. Both tensions - destruction and order, immanence and metaphysics - are to be found in Nietzsche's philosophy, manifest in various ways, as we have seen above, depending on which of Nietzsche's texts, and whose interpretation of those texts, we follow. I have sought here simply to show these various and problematic relations to Nietzsche. Below, in consideration of the artists of Expressionism, I will consider more thoroughly how the artists' work relates to Nietzsche's philosophy, how it is that these tensions become manifest, and the reasons why they become manifest.

⁴¹⁶ Johnson (1980), p99.

Subsection II

Der Blaue Reiter

In what follows I will initially treat Kandinsky and Marc together in articulating the fundamentals of the alliance we have come to name, after the almanac of that title, *Der Blaue Reiter*; I will then go on to deal with each separately, allowing their different relations to Nietzsche to become manifest.

In the essay "On the Question of Form" Kandinsky writes of two processes which true art performs:

1. The destruction of the soulless material life of the nineteenth century, i.e., the collapse of the supports of the material [life] that have firmly been regarded as unique, and the crumbling and the dissolution of the individual components thereof.
2. The building-up of the spiritual-intellectual life of the twentieth century, which we too experience, and which already manifests and embodies itself in powerful, expressive, and definite forms.⁴¹⁷

Much of his writing is devoted to the articulation of precisely what is involved in these simultaneous moments of the work of art. Kandinsky's attack upon what he refers to here in a general sense as "the soulless material life" is elsewhere presented in much detail, and at a number of different levels. The "nightmare of the materialistic

⁴¹⁷ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), pp256-257.

attitude",⁴¹⁸ what he saw as the oppressive suffering it had caused, is a result of the "materialistic philosophy" - philosophy which puts faith in only that which can be empirically demonstrated - which had dominated thought in the nineteenth century. Such attitudes gave rise to the "deification of matter" in which "only the physical, that which can be seen by the physical 'eye'" is valued,⁴¹⁹ and this to the exclusion of all other, particularly the spiritual, aspects of life. Particularly in the realms of what Kandinsky calls "positive science" - science which limits itself to that which corresponds to the principles of positivism, which for Kandinsky were synonymous with materialism - such attitudes reach their ultimate form. The opening sections of *On the Spiritual*, for example, are devoted to an account of how such science, and the materialism which underwrites it, has come to dominate man's attitude toward all things.

In the essay "Two Pictures" included in the *Blue Rider Almanac* Franz Marc writes of his belief that "we stand today at the turning point of two long epochs".⁴²⁰ The last had begun at what he calls the fall of the classical world, at a time when "primitives" broke the ground for a long development of a new art, and when "the first martyrs died for the new Christian ideal". Today that development is over, the landscape "still full of ruins, of old ideas and forms that will not give way, although they belong to the past. The old ideas and creations live on falsely, and we stand helplessly before the Herculean task of banishing them and paving the way for what is new and already standing by."⁴²¹ The line which follows directly reads: "Science works negatively, *au detriment de la religion...*".

For Marc, in his writings of the pre-war years, the scientific world-view epitomises all that is wrong with contemporary life. "Today's form-of-being [...] can be described

⁴¹⁸ *ibid*, p128.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid*, p98.

⁴²⁰ Lankheit (1974), p65.

⁴²¹ *ibid*.

with the concept 'Progress'; echoing Nietzsche, he describes this as a concept which has assumed the form, system and beliefs of a religion. He calls it a "religion of self-mutilation", one which through its technological achievements - "the telephone, printing presses capable of mass production and so on"⁴²² - cause a physical and spiritual degeneration in mankind. Underwriting this technology is the principle of logic: the forces which have brought man to this present state are, in words which clearly draw upon those of Nietzsche, "*logisch, allzulogisch*." He writes:

In order to impart powers and values on the world we have served for ages, always with increased skill, an unbelievably deficient system, namely our two and three dimensional mathematics which built itself upon a masked fallacy through so called "numbers". In reality twice two never gives four. When we take two apples from four, it's not two that remain, but still four: we have no space in which we can place the two apples that they are no longer there. This perhaps sophisticated sounding objection points to the centre of the matter: the imaginary ideas of "possession" and "size" are built on the same fallacy as subtraction and addition and dimension, all values, laws which man has written in the sand and which the world wind denies.[...] There are no natural laws, only agreements of men.⁴²³

The whole is clearly to be seen in relation to Nietzsche's writing: system, particularly that of logic, as fundamentally alien to the truth of life and existence; knowledge is represented as no more than the agreements (lies) of men. He goes on to draw our attention to the "irrationality of science", stressing the imaginary basis of its values and their worth. In short, Marc attacks those very structures which underwrite the scientific/positivist world view. For him it is precisely this belief in false values which has given rise to the crisis he identifies as modern existence: his account of that crisis would

⁴²² Lankheit (1978), p122.

⁴²³ *ibid*, p117. This last assertion should be compared with Nietzsche's claim that "man's greatest labour so far has been to reach agreement about very many things and to submit to a *law of agreement* - regardless of whether these things are true or false", *Gay Science*, p130.

seem to echo precisely Nietzsche's history of nihilism. The "spiritual" realities of life are wholly neglected.

For Kandinsky, materialist/scientific attitudes had undermined the original and pure functions of art. Subjected to an ongoing demand that art respond to the critic and public's need for an accurate representation of things, for an "outer accuracy" at the expense of "inner truth", Kandinsky asks: "Is it, then, any wonder that we have fallen upon an era of decadence?"⁴²⁴ Art has been ruled and guided by Realism,⁴²⁵ he writes, an art form which fulfills the aims of the art academies whose function it is to produce men who will create "a 'correct' drawing that is nonetheless dead", devoid of what he called "inner sound".⁴²⁶

The artistic style which had arisen earlier in the last epoch, writes Marc, collapsed "catastrophically" in the middle of the nineteenth century: "There has been no style since."⁴²⁷ In his essay "The 'Savages' of Germany" Marc makes the explicitly Nietzschean assertion that "In this time of the great struggle for a new art we fight [...] against an old, established power. The battle seems to be unequal, but spiritual matters are never decided by numbers, only by the power of ideas."⁴²⁸ Repeatedly he refers to the "purifying force" of the new art: the old world view must be totally negated, for the concurrent process of "renewal must not be merely formal but in fact a rebirth of thinking". For Marc, as for Kandinsky, art was the principal force in that process of renewal.

Yet both Marc and Kandinsky's attitude toward science was, like that of Nietzsche, ambivalent. Particularly in *On the Spiritual* Kandinsky stresses that at its highest levels the latest developments in science undermine the very principles upon

⁴²⁴ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p76.

⁴²⁵ *ibid*, p98.

⁴²⁶ *ibid*, p252.

⁴²⁷ Lankheit (1974), p66.

⁴²⁸ *ibid*, p61.

which it had hitherto been founded. After an extended account of man's dependence upon materialism, and of the science which was its paradigm form, he writes of those intellectuals who, in the course of their examination of matter, "finally cast doubt upon matter itself". Principles of "electron theory, - i.e., the theory of moving electricity, which is supposed to completely replace matter",⁴²⁹ he writes, caused the scientists to "overreach the limits of caution and thus perish in the conquest of this new stronghold of science". Later, in his autobiographical essay "Reminiscences", he summarised the importance of such developments:

A scientific event removed one of the most important obstacles from my path. This was the further division of the atom [...] Suddenly the stoutest walls crumbled. Everything became uncertain [...] I would not have been surprised had a stone dissolved into thin air before my eyes and become invisible. Science seemed destroyed: its most important basis was only an illusion, an error of the learned.⁴³⁰

The coincidence of the process Kandinsky describes and Nietzsche's nihilism as the "self-devaluation" of the highest values is clear. Above, it was "Truth" which turned upon its own method and assumptions and recognised their groundlessness; here, the quest for truth in science is precisely that which undermines (Newtonian) scientific positivism, the very basis of science until about the turn of the century. For Kandinsky the principles which underwrite the dominant, and wholly negative, world view are themselves collapsing, and this process creates the need for a radically different account of things. And it is precisely here - as it had been for Nietzsche - that the arts must begin to create anew.

Kandinsky recognised that the task was only just beginning to be realised: "Only a weak light glimmers, like a tiny point in an enormous circle of darkness".⁴³¹ The artist

⁴²⁹ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p142.

⁴³⁰ *ibid*, p364.

⁴³¹ *ibid*, p128.

struggles for freedom "which we seek by day with a lighted torch"⁴³² - a phrase which draws directly upon Nietzsche's description of the madman in *The Gay Science*⁴³³ - from the constraints tradition imposes upon him. Like Nietzsche's madman, Kandinsky brings a new truth to mankind, one which the crowd does not yet understand, and for which he will be ridiculed. In *On the Spiritual* he writes that art may have "an awakening and prophetic power". "Art", he writes in "Whither the 'New' Art", "is the seer of the future and is a leader."⁴³⁴ In relation to this the individual artist becomes of utmost importance: thus he writes in "On Understanding Art" that in "great epochs [...] one can easily turn into a prophet", and goes on to describe how the "'broad masses'" refuse to believe in this prophet. Precisely the same role for the artist is described throughout Kandinsky's texts, but perhaps most forcefully and at greatest length in the opening sections of *On the Spiritual*. He represents "spiritual progress" by reference to a "large acute triangle divided into unequal parts", the smallest at the top, moving gradually forward and upward such that those at the top occupy a position "today" which those in the next section will not occupy until "tomorrow", by which time those at the top will have moved on. "At the apex of the topmost division there stands sometimes only a single man [...]" Those who are closest to him do not understand him and in their indignation, call him deranged: a phoney or a candidate for the madhouse."⁴³⁵ This individual "who conceals within himself the secret, inborn power of 'vision'" is entrusted with the mission of dragging forward the "obstinate cartload of humanity",⁴³⁶ "struggle as it will!"⁴³⁷ Later Kandinsky made the explicitly Nietzschean assertion that "we should strive to be

⁴³² *ibid*, p75.

⁴³³ The opening of the parable of the madman reads: "*The madman*.- Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the market place, and cried incessantly: 'I seek God! I seek God!'" *Gay Science*, p181.

⁴³⁴ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p100.

⁴³⁵ *ibid*, pp133-134.

⁴³⁶ *ibid*, p134.

⁴³⁷ *ibid*, p149.

'supermen'. That is the duty of the few."⁴³⁸ Kandinsky's hierarchy addresses the whole of his society: the bitter tone with which he refers to the those considered less spiritually developed than the artist - by which he means himself, perhaps together with a select few - betrays an elitism which possibly even exceeds that of Nietzsche himself. However, it should be noted that elsewhere it is precisely against the theoreticians and practitioners of "materialism" - precisely those figures he would, using Nietzsche's language, identify as the "cultural philistines" of his age - and not just humanity in general that Kandinsky directs his vitriol.

Reiterating such views Marc writes that "*The present isolation of the rare, genuine artist is absolutely unavoidable for the moment*",⁴³⁹ for "We know that today the great mass cannot follow us: for them the way is too steep and uncertain."⁴⁴⁰ He writes extensively of the way in which the broad masses made possible the delusions of his age, of the manner in which they had been so readily manipulated by those with power.⁴⁴¹ Particularly in his essay "The High Type"⁴⁴² such elitism gains extended articulation. "What is the hidden goal of thought?", he asks: "The tearing apart of chains, the completion of the type, the spiritual victory of the Europeans." This completion necessitates a withdrawal from the language and understanding of the common man, and ascent beyond him. In this regard "Nietzsche [...] understood to deter the mass and to hold a great distance":⁴⁴³ for Marc an esotericism was unavoidable, even desirable. The position he sought through art was one "opposed to the world of the philistine"⁴⁴⁴, one which would "shatter the strongest fortresses, before the European type as master,

⁴³⁸ In a letter dated 24 April 1923 to Schoenberg, transl. in Hahl-Koch (1984), p78.

⁴³⁹ Lankheit (1974), p68.

⁴⁴⁰ Lankheit (1978), p153.

⁴⁴¹ See, e.g., *ibid* p169.

⁴⁴² *ibid*, pp168-173.

⁴⁴³ *ibid*, p172.

⁴⁴⁴ *ibid*, p104.

as Nietzsche's master-man, arises."⁴⁴⁵ In the battle to break the chains which European men of the past had forged,⁴⁴⁶ it is the few "noble"⁴⁴⁷ creators that shall dominate, for, as we saw above, spiritual matters are not to be decided by numbers, "only by the power of ideas."⁴⁴⁸ And it was in the realm of art that those ideas would be most powerfully articulated.

⁴⁴⁵ *ibid*, p166.

⁴⁴⁶ *ibid*, p170.

⁴⁴⁷ Lankheit (1974), p62.

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid*, p61.

Subsection I

Die Brücke

Erich Heckel writes that it was Karl Schmidt-Rottluff that should be thanked for the group's title which, he writes, suggested multiple levels of meaning, didn't signify a particular program, yet spoke of a move "from one shore to the other". This movement was fundamental to the group's aims. "That from which we had to take leave was clear to us - but where we were going was far less certain."⁴⁴⁹ In a letter to Emil Nolde, Schmidt-Rottluff wrote that "one of the aims of *die Brücke* is to attract all the revolutionary and surging elements - that is what the name signifies."⁴⁵⁰ That Ernst Ludwig Kirchner engaged in precisely this image - together with others, such as the tightrope walker and archer, rich in Nietzschean overtones - is apparent: see, for example, his woodcut for the *Brücke Insignia* of 1905 (fig. 16). It is clear that he too indulges in the idea of a bridge as metaphor for the revolutionary movement to a new world view: his figure stands part way across the bridge, arms outstretched to herald a new realm, a new shore.⁴⁵¹ For Kirchner, as for the other members of the group, "Today is a new beginning in the world."⁴⁵²

⁴⁴⁹ Heller (1988), p8.

⁴⁵⁰ February 1906. Translated in Hamilton (1983), p198.

⁴⁵¹ The figure is clearly reminiscent of Fidus's figure (as noted in Lloyd (1991), p.110), referred to above, in my Introduction, as it is of the figure atop Fritz Schumacher's 1898 temple design, reproduced in Aschheim (1992), illus.7, and which was to symbolise the Nietzschean ascent from *Sklavenmenschen* to *Höhermenschen* (ibid, p48).

⁴⁵² Grisebach (1968), p182.

The relation of this quest for a new shore, for a new world, to Nietzsche's philosophy is clear. In particular scholars have pointed to a specific passage in *Zarathustra* as the source of the name *Brücke*.⁴⁵³

Man is a rope, fastened between animal and Übermensch - a rope over an abyss.

A dangerous going-across, a dangerous wayfaring, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and staying-still.

What is great in man is that he is a bridge and not a goal; what can be loved in man is that he is a *going-across* and a *down-going*.

I love those who live their lives be a down-going, for they are those who are going across.

I love the great despisers, for they are the great venerators and arrows of longing for the other bank.⁴⁵⁴

I quote this passage at length, for the context for the reference to the bridge as a movement to some era to come is precisely that of decadence and renewal described above in Section I. If the assertion that the group took their name from this passage is correct, the process of decline and renewal as the fundamental process of revaluation is drawn ever closer to their own identity.⁴⁵⁵ But for the moment suffice it is to note the importance of this movement into the future to the founding moment of that identity.

The fundamental aspects of the group's project are articulated most concisely in Kirchner's⁴⁵⁶ "Brücke program" (fig. 17):

With faith in evolution, in a new generation of creators and connoisseurs, we call together all youth. And as youth, who carry the future, we want to create for

⁴⁵³ That this title was derived from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* has entered the literature on the group, first articulated extensively in Reinhardt (1977), p29. Heller calls this assumption into question, stressing the long tradition the bridge as metaphor has in the German language: "The metaphor was one which was ready at hand and had prior widespread application within the context of art and elsewhere." See Heller, R., (1988), p11, n16.

⁴⁵⁴ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p44.

⁴⁵⁵ Reinhardt (1977) is the first to articulate this process at any length.

⁴⁵⁶ Heller points out that while Kirchner produced the woodcut, there is no evidence to suggest his authorship, and thus that it is just as likely to represent a communal effort.

ourselves freedom to move and to live opposite the well established older forces. He belongs with us, who renders with immediacy and authenticity that which drives him to creation.⁴⁵⁷

True to a well-formulated manifesto, this establishes precisely the aims which underwrite the intentions of *die Brücke*. The founding force of the call is that of youth, of a breaking with tradition. Kirchner notes how Heckel (who in 1905 produced one of the most obvious symbols of the group's interest in Nietzsche (see fig. 18)) "when he first came to [Kirchner] to draw the nude, ascended the staircase declaiming aloud from *Zarathustra*..."⁴⁵⁸ Lighting Heckel's eyes, writes Kirchner, was a "restless devotion" which he also saw later in Schmidt-Rottluff. Like Kirchner he sought "liberation", a freedom in his work: "and first for the painter was *free* drawing from *free* people in *free* nature"⁴⁵⁹ (my emphases). We shall come to the significance of the nude in nature later. For the moment it is important to stress that it is in precisely the context of freedom, of liberation, that Kirchner chooses to make reference to Heckel's declamation from Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Freedom from what? Clearly, much of Expressionism's oeuvre claims a stylistic freedom in relation to art's history. Equally, there is at times a radical break with what had conventionally been considered suitable subject matter - indeed, at certain moments, with subject matter (in a conventional sense) *per se*. A large part of the following will attend to precisely this. But first we should consider this quest for freedom at a more fundamental level: what was it that underwrote or made necessary that stylistic and iconographic liberation? In his short essay entitled "*Glaubensbekenntnis eines Malers*" of 1919 Kirchner writes of certain men as "spiritual guards of the earth":

⁴⁵⁷ Transl. in Gordon (1987), p129.

⁴⁵⁸ Grisebach (1968), p78. It is interesting in the context of the present thesis that it hasn't entered the literature that Heckel himself isn't so sure that this actually happened, and notes that "perhaps the whole thing was an embellishment in the spirit of the time." See Ketterer (1988), p62.

⁴⁵⁹ Grisebach (1968), p78.

They sometimes wear crowns, sometimes whores' clothes [...] When you are dispossessed of yourself, as you so often are, you belong to them. Be to them as to yourself. You can do everything. It is not forbidden [...] men and women, life is play, and play life, and there is no law except the instinct of the spirit [...] They don't direct you toward rules. You direct yourself. That means: you decide yourself."⁴⁶⁰

Rather than having any particular target (be it political, religious, moral, or whatever), Kirchner opposed generally those forces in contemporary society which placed constraint upon the *individual*. Just as Steiner had quoted Nietzsche's assertion that "everything is permitted",⁴⁶¹ an assertion to be repeated in Kandinsky's defense of abstract form (see below), Kirchner calls precisely that concept to his own text: it is the individual who decides for himself what will be. The artist's instinct for what was right was to allow man to break from the rules of tradition. As an artist it was through art, and through his conception of life as an artist, that that opposition became manifest, and could be seen to oppose the values of his society at a number of levels. Again, aspects of this relationship will follow; for the moment it is the focus upon the individual, which is important.

Just as Nietzsche had placed, in the philosophical context, unprecedented emphasis on the act of creation of the work of art, in a manner unprecedented in an *artist's oeuvre* Kirchner places emphasis upon the experience of the artist as the essence of the work of art. Throughout his writings he refers to the artist whose actions respond to things, and who creates the possibility of change. The artist's self - by which I mean both the "psychic" and "physical" self - is established as the essence of the work. Coupled with the view that art was somehow to revitalise life, breaking with traditions to create anew, together with an already familiar Nietzschean elitism, the artist could soon develop an elevated sense of his own value.

⁴⁶⁰ *ibid*, p181.

⁴⁶¹ Steiner (1985), p10.

Initiated in 1905, the Brücke house-book, we are told, displayed the dictum "*Odi profanum*",⁴⁶² a hatred of the profane, of those outside a community of worship.⁴⁶³ The words are undoubtedly related to those of Horace, where the same appears succeeded by *vulgus*, to read "I hate the profane crowd."⁴⁶⁴ But a more probable, more direct source is historically closer to the artists. In his "Attempt at a self criticism" in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche described the work as "an arrogant and rhapsodic book that sought to exclude right from the beginning the *profanum vulgus* of 'the educated' even more than 'the mass' or 'folk'."⁴⁶⁵ There is no doubt that certain of Nietzsche's attitudes toward what he perceived as the uneducated worker are politically unsound, and dangerous. But it is equally clear that he devotes very little of his time to this group. As he himself points out, it is the "educated" masses that he seeks to exclude, and in so doing addresses. Enough has already been said of the role of the educated in the perpetuation of those traditions Nietzsche sought to attack. When Nietzsche refers repeatedly to "the herd",⁴⁶⁶ it is to these people that he refers.

Whether or not we can infer a direct link to or borrowing from Nietzsche's text isn't clear. But it does seem that the sense of Nietzsche's hatred is wholly appropriate to the intentions of the Expressionists. The members of *die Brücke* seem to concern themselves still less than Nietzsche with the bulk of the populace, little evidence suggesting any political relation to them.⁴⁶⁷ Thus it would seem appropriate to suggest the words are addressed - like those of Nietzsche - to the educated "mass" who

⁴⁶² *Brücke Chronik*, transl. in Chipp (1968), p174.

⁴⁶³ Reinhardt (1977), p31, draws attention to the words "Ich verachte", translating precisely this hatred to German, written on the bottom edge of the small woodcut *Mann mit Hut* of 1905.

⁴⁶⁴ Odes, III,1,i. See Lloyd (1991), p20, for Heckel's suggestion of the importance of Horace. Unfortunately it is unclear where Heckel makes this connection.

⁴⁶⁵ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p19.

⁴⁶⁶ See, e.g., Kaufmann's index to *The Will to Power*, "herd", p565.

⁴⁶⁷ Concerning anti-bourgeoise attitudes, see Heckel's 1905 woodcut *I'm a poor people's child*.

perpetuated the system they opposed, and the bureaucratic institutions which enforced it.⁴⁶⁸

In one sense *die Brücke's Odi profanum* may be seen as no more than an exclamation of radical opposition to those artists and critics who sought to exclude the art of the avant-garde, to maintain and preserve a tradition, as an opposition to those outside their group and its supporters. Nonetheless, the confidence with which the group marginalised itself from convention in an attempt to build in opposition to that convention would seem to imply a certainty that their values were superior to those they sought to overcome. Whether or not this implies a hatred for those who perpetuate those values, the group's bohemian lifestyle, its predilection for subjects traditionally taboo or risqué, its avant-garde manner of pictorial representation, all constitute a radical attack on those values.⁴⁶⁹

An essential site for that opposition, coupled with the quest for what the *Brücke Manifesto* described as the "authentic" and an instinctive immediacy, is what has been described as the artists' "primitivism". The following analysis will attend to precisely this.

⁴⁶⁸ In conversation with Roman Norbert Ketterer Heckel draws attention to the group's confrontations with the police. The poster which Bleyl produced for the first exhibition at Karl Max Seifert's lighting showroom was forbidden by the authorities. As Schmidt-Rottluff has described, they used to go drawing at night together on the Friedhof, and were caught by the police as "Friedhof no-goods". See Ketterer (1988), pp40&44.

⁴⁶⁹ For a summary of those thinkers who sought strong, new leaders who could lift Germany from the malaise of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (as developed more thoroughly in Nazi propaganda), and the importance of Nietzsche to their accounts, see Mosse (1966), pp205ff. In the case of Ernst Bertram's *Nietzsche. Versuch einer Mythologie* (Berlin, 1918), it was Nietzsche himself who was to become the "Nordic prophet" who represented the "lightening breakthrough of the self-knowledge of the Volk at the moment of its greatest inner danger - while, simultaneously, he also represented an awakening and development through the saving will and the saving instincts" (p207).

Primitivism: from Urmensch to Übermensch

The satyr, like the idyllic shepherd of more recent times, is the offspring of a longing for the primitive and the natural; but how firmly and fearlessly the Greek embraced the man of the woods, and how timorously and mawkishly modern man dallied with the flattering image of a sentimental, flute-playing, tender shepherd! Nature, as yet unchanged by knowledge, with the bolts of culture still unbroken - that is what the Greek saw in his satyr who nevertheless was not mere ape. On the contrary, the satyr was the archetype of man, the embodiment of his most intense emotions, the ecstatic reveler enraptured by the proximity of his god [...] one who proclaims wisdom from the very heart of nature, a symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature which the Greeks used to contemplate with reverent wonder.

The Birth of Tragedy, p61.

Writing of the possibility of creating a new Greek academy which would stand in opposition to traditional educational perspectives, Nietzsche described to his friend Erwin Rohde the need for a community which would make possible this break with the past:

In case we get only a few like-minded comrades, I nevertheless believe we will [...] save ourselves fairly from this torrent and that we will attain some small island where we do not have to stuff wax in our ears. Then, we will be mutual teachers, our books just the bait to win over people for our monastic-artistic co-

operative. We will live, work and enjoy for one another - probably, this is the only way in which we shall work for the whole.⁴⁷⁰

In what follows I want, among other things, to suggest that *die Brücke's* status as an artists' community is to be seen in relation to Nietzsche's concept of tragedy as a communal, ecstatic experience. If this seems somewhat fanciful, I stress at the outset that it is not to the formation of a group that I refer - reference to Nietzsche was not necessary for that - but rather to certain aspects of the way the group conducted itself.

In accordance with the idea of a community which sought to differentiate itself from bourgeois society was the creation or appropriation of a space within which this could occur. Calling themselves *Künstlergruppe Brücke* the "artists' group" drew attention to its communal identity, one which underwrote its activities during the early years and which found coherent expression in the *Program*. The principal meeting place for the group was the studio, initially Kirchner's *Bude* which, to cover familiar ground, Bleyl described in his *Erinnerungen* as "that of a real bohemian, full of paintings lying all over the place, drawings, books, materials. Much more like an artist's romantic lodgings than the home of a well-organised architecture student."⁴⁷¹ After visiting Kirchner's second studio in December 1910 Gustav Schiefler could write of "A primitive setting, [...] strongly marked by his own taste. He lived a disorderly lifestyle here according to bourgeois standards, simple in material terms, but highly ambitious in artistic sensitivity. He worked feverishly, without noticing the time of day".⁴⁷² The community atmosphere in which this occurred allowed for the exchange of ideas and readings at the group's meetings (Heckel would read "this or that poem out of Kirchner's books, or would recite it from memory in a manner thrilling, moving, vitally brilliant"⁴⁷³), readings which

⁴⁷⁰ Colli, G. and Montanari, M. (1977), p166; letter of 15 December 1870, referenced in Lloyd (1991).

⁴⁷¹ Lloyd (1991), p22.

⁴⁷² *ibid*, p23.

⁴⁷³ Gordon (1968), p18.

became important in our consideration of links between the group and circles which formed the focus of literary Expressionism.

Schiefler's emphasis on the primitive is important in the present context. Lloyd questions Gordon's emphasis on the relation of the primitive to the work of art as such, his failure to attend to the artists' decorations in the studios as more than mere "trappings".⁴⁷⁴ This, she writes, is to miss the ideological background to primitivism as a whole. Influence of the primitive appeared here first because it was here that they first attempted to bridge the gap between the decorative and fine arts. The first sources upon which the artists drew, the Palau beams and the Ajanta cave paintings, were both forms of interior design, and were used to develop the artists' own interior spaces. Contrary to what Kirchner's *Chronik* might lead us to believe, Heckel seems to have been first to decorate his studio space, and it is here that we find *die Brücke's* first use of non-European art forms. According to Lloyd's interpretation of a photograph of the interior (though little visual evidence is given), this takes the form of two standing female nudes derived from illustrations in John Griffith's *Paintings in the Buddhist Cave Temples of Ajanta*,⁴⁷⁵ which had been in the Central Dresden Library since January 1908.

Heckel's decorations are exceptional in that they depict nudes in an interior, rather than in the context of a bathing scene. This touches upon a second "alternative environment" (this time appropriated rather than created) in which the artists could pursue their opposition: the lakes of Moritzburg, of which more will be said later. As Lloyd notes, Heckel's interior is comparable to the numerous paintings and drawings by both himself and Kirchner showing the bohemian studio lifestyle, often representing couples in the act of sex, more frequently just being in the studio with no clothes on. In a

⁴⁷⁴ Lloyd (1991), p21.

⁴⁷⁵ Heckel referred to the book and the importance of its illustrations in a letter to Amiet dated 30 Jan 1908. See Lloyd (1991), p24.

letter of 1909, Kirchner represented not only *Four Nudes in the Studio*, stylistically indebted to the Palau beams, but sketches of a group of wildly dancing nudes and a couple making love.⁴⁷⁶ Later decorations, such as those shown in the photographs of Kirchner's atelier (fig. 19), have explicit scenes of sexual acts, as though illustrations from the Kama Sutra, though a more important comparison is with the decorative forms which are to be found on the Buddhist temples.⁴⁷⁷ In Heckel's mural, what actually takes place in the studio is represented on the walls of the studio, and this in a manner which borrows from representations of "primitive" interiors.

Thus we have touched upon five essential points for the present analysis: the studio environment; the natural, open air environment; the nude moving freely within that environment; explicit sexuality; and the primitive. While it would be incorrect to suggest they arise interdependently - the studio as a communal environment preexisted the group's visits to the lakes or its explicit reference to the primitive - I suggest they constitute a set of thoroughly interrelated aims and values whose unifying principle is precisely radical difference from bourgeois society's norms and mores.

Let us catalogue the way these interrelations came about. Whatever dubious claims Kirchner made concerning the date at which he first became aware of the connections between his own work and primitive artifacts, it is known that in March 1910 Kirchner wrote a letter to Heckel announcing the re-opening of Dresden Museum in which he drew two figures, both African: a Benin bronze and a Cameroon figure. In June of that year he sent Heckel a postcard sketch of a section of the Palau beams on display in the museum (reproduced in Lloyd (1991), pp26 & 30). The beams first seem to have influenced Kirchner's manner of representation in a postcard dated September 1909, *Bathers Throwing Reeds*. The image, together with the wood cut of the same name produced during the same year (see fig. 20), is supposed, in its colour scheme

⁴⁷⁶ Lloyd (1991), p31.

⁴⁷⁷ *ibid*, p34.

and "spiky figures", to refer directly to the Palau beams.⁴⁷⁸ Thus, it is in the context of the free, open air nudity of the wooded lakes that the primitive first becomes manifest in his work. Emphasising the communal nature of the experience at the lakes, Pechstein wrote in his *Erinnerungen*: "We lived in absolute harmony, worked, and went bathing. Should a male model be needed as counterpoint, then one of us leaped into the breach."⁴⁷⁹ A "return to nature" precedes the appropriation of the primitive.

Subsequent to Heckel's initial decorations, as already noted, interior murals were dominated by representations of scenes of nude bathers. The alternative, bohemian space of the lake enters the other "alternative" space, the studio, bringing with it the style of the primitive. This is quite clear in a painting such as Kirchner's *Girl under a Japanese Umbrella* (1909, fig. 21): the figures in the background are clearly derived from the Palau beams, the nude bodies, whose genitals are (in accordance with their source) given great emphasis, represented in a style derived immediately from the carved beams. This then contrasts with the girl who is represented in a style and pose quite clearly derived from Matisse,⁴⁸⁰ yet whose sexuality is nearly as explicit. The presence of such an oversized phallus in the background can only emphasise her status as a sexual object.

Here we strike upon an important stage in the development of the appropriation of the primitive. Once the primitive style and iconography which informed much of the decorations become themselves an object of representation in paintings, the paintings necessarily adopt - even if we think of them as only representing literally what is actually present - the primitive style. In Kirchner's *Girl under a Japanese Umbrella*, then, though the obvious "content" of the work is represented in a conventional (modern) fashion, the background takes the form of the primitive.

⁴⁷⁸ *ibid*, p29.

⁴⁷⁹ Quoted in Heller (1988), p40.

⁴⁸⁰ In particular his *Blue Nude* in the collection of the Baltimore Museum of Art.

The processes by which the primitive is variously manifest in works after becoming first integrated in these initial stages is complex, and does not concern us here. What is important is the ideology which made the combinations noted above relevant. The Romanticised ideal of natural man, and of a pre-civilised nature, had taken a strong hold in the visual arts during the nineteenth century. At the beginning of the twentieth century Social Darwinist assumptions that non-European cultures represented earlier stages of human development on an evolutionary scale were widely accepted.⁴⁸¹ Social Darwinism also provided theoretical legitimation for the categorisation of women and children in the same way, and regarded both women and ethnic minorities as "children" on an evolutionary scale which ran from infancy to adulthood. Focusing precisely on representations of (and by) ethnic minorities, women and children, the artists of *die Brücke* clearly subscribe to such a scale, except that they tried to invert the scale. Supposing these groups to be closer to man's instinctive origins, they felt that their art would not only differentiate itself from the constraint of civilised culture, but that it would itself become more authentic. This account draws upon much the same evolutionary account as Nietzsche provided, outlined in Section I, above, though it isn't so explicit (nor extreme) in its tracing of origins.⁴⁸² Only in the work of Franz Marc does man really regress to the animal, and even he doesn't go so far as Nietzsche's pre-mammalian creatures. But the connection to the "Darwinist Nietzsche" (as opposed to the anti-evolutionary, anti-Darwinist Nietzsche⁴⁸³) is clear: the work of *die Brücke* corresponds to Nietzsche's evolutionary model in its later stages: using such a model,

⁴⁸¹ Lloyd (1991), p5.

⁴⁸² Concerning the child as the source of a creative revaluation, Nietzsche writes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of the three metamorphoses", that

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 sundered from the world now wins its own world.

⁴⁸³ See below, Section IV.

they situate the "primitive" (Nietzsche writes of "Negroes (taken as representatives of prehistoric man) [...]"⁴⁸⁴) prior to modern man, and thus make certain assumptions about "primitive" man's instinctive and spiritual status. As Nietzsche turned back to the ancient Greeks, treating them as a monument from which the present could learn, so certain artists turned to what they saw as the primitive and made of it a source for aspects of their own activities.

Thus, the artists' primitivism was not conceptualised as a mere representation of things primitive, nor as a repetition of the style of the primitive. Rather, they claimed somehow to reproduce the *process* of creation itself. Worringer wrote in his contribution to *The Battle for Art: An Answer to the "Protest of German Artists"* that "this modern primitivism should not be a final goal [...] [It] should be seen much more as a means of passage, as a great long drawing of breath, before the new and decisive language of the future is pronounced."⁴⁸⁵ Kirchner himself, when writing in the *Chronik* of the moment at which he claimed to have realised the importance of the primitive, noted that "he discovered a parallel to his own work in Negro sculpture and South Sea carvings in the ethnographic museum."⁴⁸⁶ He stressed the need to create as the primitives, but not to imitate what they produced. In reality this was important not only with regard to the immediate act of creating the work but, as we have already seen, to the whole lifestyle of the group.

The emphasis on essential difference from the primitive is important, in so far as it allows for inclusion of the decidedly un-primitive, of the modern issues which concerned the painters. The collision of the primitive and the modern, typified in a work such as Kirchner's *Standing Nude with Hat*⁴⁸⁷ (1910, fig. 22), has become the object of

⁴⁸⁴ *Ecce Homo*, 2, 7.

⁴⁸⁵ Quoted in Lloyd (1991), p57.

⁴⁸⁶ Quoted in Miesel (1970), p16.

⁴⁸⁷ See Gordon (1987), p168 for primitive backdrop, as well as the relation of the work to Cranach's *Venus*.

recent discussion,⁴⁸⁸ and details aren't important to the present analysis. What is important is the overall use value of the primitive in the multi-layered context outlined above. In the *Standing Nude* an uneasy relation is created between the trappings of the modern, in the form of the hat, fashionable shoes and jewelry, and the background drapes decorated with the familiar representations of the sexual act. These are mediated in the form of the woman, whose pubic hair has been shaven to expose her sex: it is precisely her various positions as a modern (in her civilised garb), as an object of the most base instinct, and her elementary (and therefore, according to the Brücke's inverted social Darwinist scale, superior) position on the evolutionary scale which make her the nexus of the multiple concerns of the artist. In works such as this not only are those sources important for the vitality they brought to the work present, but that vitality is brought into contact with the modern artifice which it seeks to revitalise. And in this work in particular, I would suggest, this is precisely what happens: the fetishistic nature of the woman, partially clad with sex exposed, allows for the subversion of the voguish symbols of civilisation as they accentuate the model's sexuality, and therefore her identity with the spirit (as well as the content) of the primitive decorations behind. This is not to suggest that the identity is absolute, for she remains distinct from her environment, both in the modern manner in which she is represented and in her composed gaze at us/the painter: she is simultaneously more sophisticated than her environment, and part of that environment.

The path from the Bude, through the wooded lakes, the ethnographic museums and back to the studios, the nudity and sexuality which accompanies the journey throughout, is one which treads a fine line between a romantic flight to nature and a serious engagement between "alternative" lifestyles and what the artists conceived of as modern decadence. It is one whose origins can be traced back to the various forms of

⁴⁸⁸ The relation of the primitive to the modern underwrites Lloyd's entire text.

Lebensreform, some decidedly Nietzschean in ideology, outlined above in Section II. Relations to that tradition should be fairly self evident, and I want for the moment to focus specifically on the immediate relation to Nietzsche. For the Nietzsche of "On the uses and disadvantage of history for life," man's recuperation of his past should be subordinate to the use value of that past for the enhancement of life. For the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* - a strikingly similar Nietzsche - the rebirth of tragedy was to learn from his reading of pre-Socratic tragedy, but was not to be a repetition of it. The same forces - the Dionysian and the Apollonian - were to inform the nature of modern tragedy, but the form it took was conceived of as more modern, more developed. The primordial vitality he marks as the essential nature of tragedy, the spirit of rapture and ecstasy which was driven away in the person of Socrates, is precisely what underwrites the *Brücke's* evocation of the primitive, of their nudity, of the natural, and of the communality which brought these together. Not only do they look to the original spirit of creation, as Nietzsche proposed, but they adopt precisely that spirit he outlined in detail: the harmony of union with other members of the group, nature and man's "natural" way of being which Pechstein describes, and with the fundamental instincts to creation: these are the fundamentals which unite into a single discourse those five aspects of the group's work outlined above. And, like Nietzsche, that spirit is brought to bear on the artwork which engages modern man's existence. There are, however, points at which it seems the artists stray to the far side of that line between engagement and romantic flight: the nature of that flight, and I would suggest of radical difference from Nietzsche, will be the subject of analysis in the final section of the present thesis.

Emil Nolde.

In the work of Emil Nolde, the importance of the "primitive" in the artist's quest for "origin" and "authenticity", and this in relation to contemporary western culture and beliefs, takes a particular form. In attending to aspects of his work, we uncover a further, and in many ways more sophisticated, relation to Nietzsche.

Often it was difficult to maintain the tension [...] until the work was completed. When the pure sensuous power of vision diminishes, then the coldness of reason, ever ready to help, wants to continue working [...] Reason always wants to be smarter than the artist in man [...], [but] the artist need not know much. It is best when, guided by instinct, he can paint as purposefully as he breathes, as he walks. Intellect is anti-artistic for the creative person. Intelligence can be a false friend.⁴⁸⁹

In *Jahre der Kämpfe* Nolde describes *Zarathustra* as one of the four great, sublime creations of Nordic culture - together with the Eddas, Grünewald's Isenheim alterpiece and Goethe's Faust.⁴⁹⁰ Despite his self-effacing comments in response to Schmidt-Rottluff's talk of great thinkers such as Nietzsche and Kant,⁴⁹¹ it is clear from this that he held a considered position in relation to such ideas. Indeed, though he fostered the picture of the simple rural artist who might be more immediately predisposed to "nature" and man's primal being, an examination of his paintings reveals

⁴⁸⁹ Transl. in Heller (1988), p177.

⁴⁹⁰ Transl. in Chipp (1968), p151.

⁴⁹¹ Concerning *die Brücke*, he wrote in 1934: "Ich bewunderte seinen Scharfsinn und sein Wissen und Wusste nur wenig zu sagen, wenn von Nietzsche und Kant oder Grössen dieser Art gesprochen wurde. Woher sollte ich es wissen." Quoted in Gordon (1968), p456, n33.

concerns far more sophisticated and intelligent than other, supposedly more "literary" painters.

First, to contextualise the myth he attempted to create in the quote above, where he asserts the purely intuitive, unintellectualised nature of creation. In a letter to Ada of 1901, Nolde wrote of his desire to be "at once a natural man and a man of culture, simultaneously divine and an animal, a child and a giant, naive and sophisticated, full of feeling and full of intellect, passionate and dispassionate, gushing life and silent calm",⁴⁹² and in his autobiography he wrote: "Duality has achieved a special position in my paintings and graphics - with or against each other: man and woman, joy and pain, God and the Devil."⁴⁹³ The claim to duality, indeed the specific concerns such as the desire to be simultaneously divine and animal, full of feeling and full of intellect, could be compared with Nietzsche's own comments on his contradictoriness. Precisely these tensions and incompatible relations will be seen to underwrite the works to which we shall attend.

But before we come to such complex relations, a few words about his project. Like the other Expressionists discussed in the present thesis, Nolde sought to articulate through painting an account of things which would escape decadent art and society. It is in this context that he can assert so forcefully the negation of reason, the importance of instinct. Much of his oeuvre after 1906 is given over to an ecstatic mode of representation, in which objects depicted lose their immediate boundedness, joining with whatever else is represented in a flow of gestural brushstrokes: thus an image such as *Maler Schmidt-Rottluff* (reproduced in Urban (1987)) of 1906, an image which can be compared both stylistically and compositionally with Schmidt-Rottluff's *Selbstbildnis* (reproduced in Herbert(1983)) and Heckel's *Mann in Jungen Jahren (Selbstbildnis)* (reproduced in Jähner (1986)) of the same year. Again, in a later work such as *Wildly*

⁴⁹² Quoted in Bronner, S., "Emil Nolde and the Politics of rage" in Bronner and Kellner (1983), p296.

⁴⁹³ Lloyd (1991), pp.163, 166.

Dancing Children (1909, fig. 23), a frenzied sense of movement is articulated through the apparently equally frenzied brush marks which create the whole. The style is particularly modernist, one which seems to become manifest about the time of his initial association with *die Brücke*.

We shall return to this particularly important point of contact between the gestural brushmark and its use in the representation of the dance in Nolde's work later. For the moment, we shall begin to consider a few of the religious works he produced about the same time as the wildly dancing children. Both *The Last Supper* (fig. 24) and *Pentecost* (fig. 25) of 1909 are unusual in relation to works produced before this date precisely for the "boundedness" of objects represented. Objects and faces are not confused with those around them, each maintaining its own identity. (Compare with a typical work such as *Milkmaid* (fig. 26) of the same year.) There is a definite primitive, even mask-like quality to the manner of representation of faces, though to suggest they derive in any way from his interest in those primitive masks which led to his series of mask still-lives would be an anachronism. Rather, we must suppose the stylised, almost formulaic nature of the representation derives from his insistence that depictions of events from the Bible be correct in their physiognomy.

Nolde's engagement with biblical figures attempts to avoid what he saw as the corruption of those figures resulting from a cultural relativism. Thus he wrote in *Jahre der Kämpfe* that

The fact that during the Renaissance the apostles and Christ were represented as Aryans, as Italian or German Scholars, must have convinced the Church that this practice should continue forever, that this artistic deception - to be quite frank - justified further deception. [...] It takes nerves of steel to keep calm when a painter is persecuted on one hand by Jews because he paints them as Jews and attacked on the other hand by Christians because they want Christ and the apostles to look like Aryans. Where will all this lead? If we demand that Biblical figures be painted as Aryans, then can't Chinese Christians represent Biblical heroes as Chinese and the Negroes represent theirs as blacks? [...]

Art is exalted above religions and races.⁴⁹⁴

Nolde marvels at the thought of twelve ordinary human beings following Christ the leader from village to village, asserting the stupidity of those who failed to understand his account of things: evoking tones usually reserved for Christ himself, Nolde wrote in *Jahre der Kämpfe*, "[...] I still remained the doubted, the mocked, defamed Painter, - only among friends, the very few, recognised and loved."⁴⁹⁵ His principal concern in the text are the responses to his nine part *Life of Christ*. The work had been sent to the World Fair in Brussels, to be exhibited in the religious pavilion, where it was to receive a position of honour. "The Catholic Church protested. The work was ordered removed."⁴⁹⁶ He explains - claiming for himself again a naïveté which was surely inappropriate - that he had not asked how religious pictures should look. Thus he wrote that he "created them instinctively, painting the figures as Jewish types, Christ and the apostles too. Jews as they really were, the apostles as simple Jewish peasants and fishermen."⁴⁹⁷ He clearly held these figures with much esteem, writing that he painted them as "powerful Jewish types, since the weaklings were certainly not the ones who followed the revolutionary teachings of Christ."⁴⁹⁸

On the one hand, then, we have the claim that what Nolde is doing is determined by the need for historical accuracy. On the other, there is the rejection of not only the visual and also conceptual falsification in representations approved of by the Church: it is not just that they have got it wrong, but that their falsification is ideologically unsound. This moment of crisis within the Christian Church couples with a more general and profound concern with Christian dogma as propounded by the Church. With reference to

⁴⁹⁴ Miesel (1970), p33-34.

⁴⁹⁵ Heller (1988).

⁴⁹⁶ Miesel (1970), p31.

⁴⁹⁷ *ibid*, p33.

⁴⁹⁸ *ibid*.

Nolde's *Schriftgelehrte* (reproduced in Heller (1988)), Heller describes religious officials based loosely on New Testament descriptions of squabbling Pharisees and Sadducees, interested in the letter of God's law rather than its spirit.⁴⁹⁹ Nolde writes in *Jahre der Kämpfe*:

I followed an irresistible desire for depictions of deepest spirituality, religion and devoutness [in my images of religious motifs] but without much consciousness and knowledge and thought [...] The wise, the stupid, the holy, and the religious: all of them know nothing, we all know nothing. Knowledge and science fail in the simplest questions of time and eternity, of God, heaven and the devil.⁵⁰⁰

What Nolde seeks, in response to that dogma, is a sort of personal, immediate relation to the events described in the Bible, and to God. Thus he is able to bring to the representation emotions and expressions which don't feature in traditional religious imagery. In *Christ among the Children* (1910, fig. 27), for instance, the benevolent Christ, with his back turned to us, is greeted with naïve enthusiasm by flocks of excited children. The Son of God loses not only his halo, but an austere distance that is traditionally more familiar to such representations. The difference between such an image and those of which the Church would approve is quite clear. Indeed, it is a radical departure from a work such as Fritz von Uhde's *Suffer Little Children to come unto Me* (fig. 28) which, less than thirty years earlier, and in spite of the obvious reverence with which the subject is treated, would itself have been unacceptable to the Church, though in this case because of its anachronistic representation of Christ in a nineteenth century schoolroom, as well as the "rustic and bedraggled" Christ himself.⁵⁰¹ Like Liebermann's highly controversial *Jesus in the Temple*, the naturalistic image presents a secularised account of a Biblical event. But Nolde seeks to go far beyond this and imbues the "de-

⁴⁹⁹ Heller (1988), p172.

⁵⁰⁰ *ibid.*

⁵⁰¹ Makela (1990), p27.

institutionalised" Christ with a new vitality. And this he does not only by closing the space - both literal and metaphorical - between Christ and man, but through the manner of representation itself. For although the image departs from the ecstatic forms which had dominated his work since about the time of his encounter with *die Brücke*, much of the free, expressive gesture remains.

Though less dynamic than in *Wildly Dancing Children*, brush strokes become again more suggestive of the movement depicted in *Dance around the Golden Calf* (1910) and the later *Candle dancers* (1912, figs. 29, 30). Religion and ecstasy combine as, in the former, the idol-worshipping Jews depart from their Commandment to evoke a sense of Dionysian revelry; in both pictures their cloven feet, reminiscent of Nietzsche's satyrs, wildly flowing hair and dynamic movements evoke self abandon - a sense of precisely the ecstasy the manner of representation describes.⁵⁰² Most important for our present concern is that we note a meeting of the Biblical, the pagan, and the modern, and this in a manner which establishes a reinterpretation or revitalisation of ancient myth. The overt Nietzschean connotations should by now be apparent, as the divine and the (part) animal - the satyr - combine in a moment of simultaneously religious and orgiastic ecstasy.

After Nolde's encounter with the primitive early in 1911, certain religious images take a new form. It is suggested that again in *Prophet* of 1912 (reproduced in Heller (1988)), Nolde seeks to evoke a sense of historic Israel and early Christianity,⁵⁰³ that he combines an interest in religious subjects and primitive art. Certainly, if by "primitive"

⁵⁰² Nolde's concern with dance extended beyond the merely mythical. Between 1905 and 1910 he saw Loie Fuller perform her serpentine dances, met Clothilde von Derp, and wrote that the "wild, whirling turns and streaming black hair" of the Australian dancer Saharet "suggested some fantastic, primeval creature". Apart from the connections mentioned above to the Dalcroze Institute, Mary Wigman and Laban, Nolde painted, among others, Wigman's student Palucca, who had also appeared in Kandinsky's *Punkt und Linie zur Fläche*. See Schall (1989), p128.

⁵⁰³ Heller (1988), p180.

Heller refers to Nolde's reference to ancient Hebrew culture, and this in relation to modern religion, this could be the case. But if by primitive he means non-western cultures, such as those discussed above, there is little to support the claim: the crude, "authentic" style of woodcut refers to the material and its process in the creation of the work, to a technique and attitude he learnt from the artists of *die Brücke* in 1906, long before there was any explicit reference to the "primitive". Indeed, for Nolde to incorporate "primitive" features into his religious iconography, particularly the Biblical figures he represents, he would be in danger of contradicting his own demand that these remain true to original physiognomy. If the work is in any sense primitive, it would be in this broadest sense of "origin" and "authenticity". Very few religious works, apart from those which explicitly depict primitive artifacts, seem to repeat the types of forms of the artifacts. We might try comparing, for example, the lion in the third panel of *Legend: Saint Mary of Egypt* (1912, fig. 31) and the mask, front right, in *Mask Still Life III* (1911, fig. 32). There seems to be a certain similarity in the form of the face, but whether or not there is any real evidence to suggest influence is open to question. Rather, it is to a work such as *The Missionary* (1912, fig. 33) that we must look for the influence of the primitive on religious works. As Lloyd has shown, the image engages critically the exploitation of non-European cultures by western colonial powers. She describes how Nolde, as a boy, had considered becoming a missionary, and how, about the year 1909, he had experienced complex doubts concerning the absolute validity of Christianity. Thus the image is interpreted as a critique of missionary activity, the horrific-looking representative of Christianity attempting to lead the woman from her indigenous religion, symbolised by the mask behind.⁵⁰⁴ At another level, the work's various ethnographic sources may be read as a critique of a decadent, western religion which seeks to corrupt the authentic religion of the primitive. The whole is a still-life, the missionary

⁵⁰⁴ Lloyd (1991), p214.

drawn from a Korean "way god", the mask from a dancing mask of the Bongo in North-East Africa, and the kneeling woman from a wooden figure of the Yoruba, Nigeria.⁵⁰⁵ While both mask and wooden figure are allowed to represent themselves, and thus - though they don't belong together - remain in some sense authentic, the European missionary's identity is constituted by an artifact from a non-European culture. According to this second reading we assert that Nolde's concern is not racial purity - an interpretation which depends on the reading back into these pre-war works of Nolde's statements made on the subject in the 1930s, by which time his National Socialist affiliations were formulated; it is religious authenticity, and Christianity's decadence in relation to that. In this way, the works Nolde produces after he begins to appropriate from primitive artifacts continue the concern with religious authenticity which was essential to the earlier works.

While Nolde was thoroughly in keeping with his fellow Expressionists' aim to revitalise the arts and contemporary culture, it is not obvious why such a reconsideration and revitalisation of religion, or more specifically Judeo-Christianity, would be so important. That is until we remind ourselves of what Nietzsche had demonstrated in his genealogy of morals: that our own morality, that our existence within that moral code, is thoroughly indebted to precisely the Judeo-Christian tradition. Since we are irrevocably bound to that tradition - at least until we create for ourselves a completely new account of things - all that remains possible is a revaluation of the tradition itself. Thus, to address our being as moral beings is necessarily to address that tradition, and it is precisely this which Nolde does. His recognition of the importance of primitive artifacts some time during 1911 does not mark a radical departure from what went before, simply a broadening of horizons which allows him to consider contemporary Christianity in relation to other, perhaps more authentic faiths. In the end Nolde's re-working of

⁵⁰⁵ Urban (1987), pp434-435.

Christian iconography marks the proximity of Christianity's origins to the primitive. Both sustain Nolde's attack on the "civilising" aspirations of western Christianity, in the form of the Church.

Nolde, then, revitalises Christ; in his work, we move from the primitive to a particular kind of vitality which turns about the notion of ecstasy, religious and sexual. We come to the idea of *Rausch*.

Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, die Brücke, and the Ecstasy of Creation

The following will seek to uncover the important relation between Nietzsche's *Rausch* as accounted for above, and related terms (especially *Ekstase*) in the texts of Kirchner and other members of *die Brücke*. It will attend to artists' statements and work from both before and after the First World War, demonstrating not only continuities within those statements, but a sustained correspondence to Nietzsche's texts.⁵⁰⁶

Concerning Creation.

During the formation of an experience it usually happens that the work, which is born of the ecstasy of the first sight, develops thoroughly subjectively, but that in this formation it becomes more encompassing and stronger than the original experience. By the second sight and formation, this process comes to me in the form of exact objective contemplation, which is almost sobering: in order to process the experience, I must restrain myself. The result is solid, more exact and to my feeling more boring than the original apprehension. But this phase is necessary for the final, 3rd form, because it is in the 2nd that I ascertain technical possibilities and their selection.

The third version, which is mostly formed anew from the memory, ties together the first and second works into a new third which moves furthest from the natural impression; of course, nature comprises the content, sharpens the meaning and unequivocally forms the work, and in the successful work is the actual final artwork. Naturally, it is often necessary for more resolutions in each phase, and often there is a 4th, 5th version in other techniques: the picture develops from the sculpture, or from the graphic work the sculpture develops as the final form. [...] often the last version comes years after the first experience.⁵⁰⁷

⁵⁰⁶ Throughout much of the discussion which follows, particular reference is made to the writings of Kirchner. I will move more or less freely between texts written before and after the war with the assertion that conceptual continuities link the texts referred to in a way which overcomes chronological and geographical difference.

⁵⁰⁷ Grisebach (1968), p128.

Ecstasy, excess and the origin of style.

The passage quoted above makes clear what Kirchner considers the condition which gives rise to the work of art: echoing Nietzsche, for him the founding moment for the work - that from which it is born,⁵⁰⁸ as in the title of Nietzsche's first published work - is one of ecstasy. What does Kirchner mean by ecstasy? He uses the word in a number of contexts: "The pictures receive ecstasy";⁵⁰⁹ "thus I begin again slowly to see in ecstasy";⁵¹⁰ he refers to "ecstatic expression",⁵¹¹ "ecstatic feeling",⁵¹² and claims that his hieroglyphs are "born from the ecstasy of creation".⁵¹³ In a letter written to Botho Graef, who did not fail to note the "Zarathustran" nature of his work,⁵¹⁴ the artist writes of his earlier work: "with insight into the limits of human interaction, I undertook the withdrawal of the self from itself and its *dissolution within the other person's psyche* for the sake of a more intense expression. The less I was physically involved, something which quickly occurred as a result of my mood, the more easily and completely I *entered into* and depicted my subject"⁵¹⁵ (my emphasis). In a later letter to Grisebach he writes: "Think of it, a person sits across from us and we talk, and suddenly there arises this intangible something which one could call mystery [...] If I am able to join him in such a moment, I might almost call it ecstasy, I can paint his portrait."⁵¹⁶ Kirchner's ecstasy is true to the word's etymology: it is an *ekstasis*, a standing outside or beside the self. "It is

⁵⁰⁸ See *ibid*, p205.

⁵⁰⁹ *ibid*, p49.

⁵¹⁰ *ibid*, p58.

⁵¹¹ *ibid*, p73. Kirchner uses the word "expression" frequently. In what follows, I will show that his use of the word equates with that account of language (musical, the dance, the gesture) Nietzsche presented as fundamentally Dionysian: an articulation of the subject's experience in its ecstatic engagement with the world. My own use of the word will move toward that same definition.

⁵¹² *ibid*, p143.

⁵¹³ *ibid*, p205.

⁵¹⁴ See Gordon (1968), pp25-26: "See, I teach you the meaning of the earth, as it is said in Zarathustra; it is this which Kirchner paints." Gräf, "Über die Arbeit von E.L. Kirchner", 1919, transl. in *ibid*, p26.

⁵¹⁵ Miesel (1970), p18.

⁵¹⁶ Grisebach (1962), pp76-77; transl. in Miesel (1970), p19.

the ability of losing one's own individuality that one can make this contact with others", a breaking of the bound of the principle of individuation.⁵¹⁷ And it is precisely this meaning which Nietzsche develops initially in his *Birth of Tragedy* as a fundamentally Dionysian state.

These few statements carry much material to be unpacked in the context of the present analysis. In what follows I shall attempt to show that the concept is fundamental to Kirchner's process of creation/ expression. First, so as to co-ordinate to some extent with the sequence of analysis of Nietzsche's *Rausch* above, I shall deal with what we could call a second moment of ecstasy, terms related by their common association (see above, p43) to the term *Rausch*: intensity, frenzy, and excess. We will return to the first sense of ecstasy later.

Kirchner refers to both his painting and sculpture as "modes of artistic expression", often transferring ideas from one mode of expression to the other "until he found the solution offering the strongest expression".⁵¹⁸ Through an intense process of studying natural forms, writes de Marsalle,⁵¹⁹ coupled with the assistance of the imagination, the artist was enabled to create a new form of "far stronger and more intense effect than a naturalistic rendition." He writes that the sculpture *Crouching Woman* (fig. 34), which he describes as an "absolute hieroglyph of the term crouching" (more will be said of Kirchner's "hieroglyphs" later), "could not have been rendered more intensely or unequivocally". Later he describes forms in the *Lovers* series (see fig. 35) as "strongly and intensely" expressive.⁵²⁰

Perhaps nowhere will we see more clearly Kirchner's initial moment of experience - and thus, we would expect, the manifestation of the moment of ecstasy -

⁵¹⁷ c.f. Schopenhauer, below.

⁵¹⁸ Louis de Marsalle, "Concerning the sculpture of E.L.Kirchner" in: Barron (1983), p42.

⁵¹⁹ Kirchner's pseudonym.

⁵²⁰ Barron (1983). Concerning the *Lovers* series, see below.

than in rapidly executed drawings and pastels made directly from the object. Bleyl, in his *Erinnerungen*, recalled how the group decided to teach themselves to draw and paint, producing nude studies for which "only a quarter hour was allowed for each pose. So it was necessary to observe quickly and depict with broad strokes, and after two hour's work we were all pretty much wrung out."⁵²¹ The speed with which he worked was of importance to Kirchner: "How stupidly and superficially people make their judgements, they do not see that precisely the most important thing about my drawing is its rapidity, because through it I capture the finest, the first sensation. If I were to make such a drawing slowly, this first fine feeling would be lost"; "How hastily had Rembrandt sketched the woman sitting on the bed in the drawing of the sick woman! One had to try to draw like that; then one could perhaps find a way to give pictorial form to contemporary life";⁵²² "Through the speed of the work [...] abbreviations took place in the sketches [...] I was struck with astonishment: there was after all a form which could represent, say, a man or a movement exactly and for all that depart from the objective form in nature."⁵²³ To him such a work would be true in a way that a more fully worked piece could not. In his short essay aptly entitled "*The ecstatic drawing as the fundament of the new art*"⁵²⁴ the artist expresses the primacy of the drawing in precisely this connection.

Of his drawing of a Chinese person juggling dishes (fig. 36) Kirchner writes that the essential elements of the activity - head and turning plates - are emphasised by means of a compartmentalised composition which ascends from the lower left corner. Created by the artist's feeling, new "hieroglyphs" are said to emerge from the "almost chaotic tangle of line". Of these hieroglyphs Kirchner wrote that certain shapes were

⁵²¹ Heller (1988), p12.

⁵²² Gordon (1968), p15.

⁵²³ *ibid*, p19.

⁵²⁴ Grisebach (1968), p64.

such "in that they convey the natural forms in more simplified planar forms, and suggest their significance to the observer as the written word "horse" places the image horse before everyone's eyes. They are not hieroglyphs in the familiar sense of the word, whereby a certain shape is always used for the same object or concept."⁵²⁵ His "hieroglyph" could, presumably, emerge from the same thing in different ways according to particular conditions. For the moment, suffice it is to conclude that they acted as abbreviated notations, a kind of short-hand for things/events, equivalent to, yet in some sense more flexible than, words.

The speed with which this work - together with the others reproduced in the 1920 Marsalle essay concerning Kirchner's drawing - was produced, is apparent. It would seem to conform to Kirchner's account of his own intention that the speed of execution, the freeness, vigour and apparent spontaneity of line contribute to an overall sense of movement and energy which the viewer perceives. Here line reveals "the inner life of what is represented",⁵²⁶ a dynamism appropriate to the performance: anatomical inaccuracies (the hieroglyph could as easily represent an Oriental person performing an exaggerated goose-step as one juggling plates) are of little importance to Kirchner. But the same speed and brutal vigour seem to have determined the process of representation in other, more tranquil scenes reproduced in the essay. A "sunny river landscape is made out of a few lines and planes": the tree Kirchner encounters is reduced to a couple of hastily executed vertical lines, and some (scribbled rather than drawn) "zigzag horizontals" to represent trunk and branches. The bottom right corner of the drawing of two girls in bed (fig. 37) presents the viewer with a chaos of lines - one which never manages to untangle itself to form any order. Kirchner's pen has traced a series of frantic movements which have no apparent iconic function. Lines which delimit features of the faces pay little heed to anatomical structure as they suggest only

⁵²⁵ Gordon (1968), p20.

⁵²⁶ Grisebach (1968), p186.

essentials with the harshest of forms, portraying faces with the most violent of means. Throughout these works Kirchner's line threatens to, and occasionally does, transgress the limit at which it ceases to create a "likeness" of things. Precisely this freedom of line - the failure of the line to enclose and delimit shapes which correspond to things - is what allows them to suggest such dynamics.

"I must draw to the point of frenzy, only draw. Then after a little while select the good ones."⁵²⁷ The others he destroyed. "Frenzy" (*die Raserei*) may be rendered as a derangement, delirium, a temporary insanity, as of a violent temper.⁵²⁸ The violence these works perform is apparent: a sense of delirium or madness as the source of this violence may be too much to infer upon the creative act, but clearly Kirchner's moment of ecstasy results in a fairly radical violation of things. The resultant "hieroglyphs" strive to represent the "inner life" of experiences; that is to say, the speed and vigour with which the works are produced itself penetrates to that part of the experience Kirchner considered essential, and those lines collectively form into a unity which signifies what is essential.

Of the painting *Two Women with Masks* 1909, Paul Fechter wrote in the *Dresdener Neueste Nachrichten* that "the synthesis depicts the essentials of the impression with the *most forceful means*. More vigorously than in his other [exhibited] works, Kirchner's picture shows this tendency most clearly"⁵²⁹ (my emphasis). Fechter, who did not fail to indicate the Nietzschean nature of much visual Expressionism, isolates as the most significant feature of the works precisely their force and vigour. The work (fig. 38) is clearly not one of Kirchner's most "finished" pieces, yet, seen within the context of his oeuvre, in which we note that even in pieces which we could call finished evidence of spontaneity and speed of execution is generally quite apparent, the work is

⁵²⁷ Gordon (1968), p29.

⁵²⁸ OED

⁵²⁹ Gordon (1968), p62. The painting is referenced in the text as *The Masks*.

quite typical. In many of these works lines, brush strokes and hastily laid-in areas of colour recall that sense of impulse and frenzy which initiated the work. Rarely is this founding moment completely lost.

Other members of the *Brücke* group may be seen to subscribe to a similar sense of ecstasy. Though Schmidt-Rottluff spills little ink developing and accounting for the creative act (remember his comment in "The New Programme" where he writes: "Actually, if you want my honest opinion, I'm convinced you can't talk about art. At best, all you will have is a translation, a poetic paraphrase, and as for that, I'll leave that to the poets"⁵³⁰), he does provide sufficient evidence for us to propose a similar intent to that of Kirchner. In a 1911 letter to Ida Dehmel, Schmidt-Rottluff described how, on reading just a few lines of Richard's poetry, he always felt "something Dithyrambic in [him]", something which he equated with "the rush of blood";⁵³¹ in May 1907 he wrote to Gustav Schiefler: "Rhythmics - this is a word for which I am especially grateful to you. The rhythm, the rush (*Rauschen*) of colours, it's that which always spellbinds and occupies me."⁵³² In July of the same year he wrote, also to Schiefler, repeatedly using the word "powerful" to account positively for his experiences, initially regarding the quality of Munch's work.⁵³³ Equally important is the letter he wrote to Richard Dehmel in October 1917, in which he chooses to make repeated reference to *Rausch*: "The wave of your war-time experience came over me - rapturous (*rauschend*) as it came out of your mind [...] as the lethargic German people was overcome in your new drama by the consciousness of its Dehmel, rapturous and enraptured [*rauschend und berauscht überkommt*]."⁵³⁴ Also to Schiefler, he wrote:

⁵³⁰ Miesel (1970), p29.

⁵³¹ Quoted in Reinhardt (1977), p159.

⁵³² Thiem (1989), p80.

⁵³³ *ibid.*

⁵³⁴ *ibid.* p87.

In various ways I have arrived at an intensification of forms, which certainly contradict scientifically derived theories of proportion, but which correspond and tally in their spiritual relationships. I have often hugely exaggerated heads in relation to other bodily parts, as the seat of the psyche, of all expression. It's just the same with breasts. They are an erotic moment. But I want to free this from the transitoriness of experience and to establish a relationship between cosmic and earthly moments. Perhaps we could speak of transcendental intense eroticism. In our cynical times that sounds a bit mystical, but remains to us in the art of the past - Egyptians, Michelangelo. What lends them their eternal interest? Above all it's the experience of transcendence in earthly things.⁵³⁵

However, it would be wrong to suggest that precisely the same account of the creative act was common to all members of the group. While Heckel makes reference to the "rage" or "fury" inherent to the work, this was not necessarily the origin or goal of his work. In conversation with Ketterer, he said that in Kirchner's early work there was the tendency to seek to realise movement, and in this connection variety performances were of importance: the dancer, the balancing act or the horse running about the ring.⁵³⁶ Heckel notes that Kirchner tried to represent everything in the most concise form, while he was himself interested in the static rather than dynamic form. Yet he does speak of a certain "Elan", first manifest in the group's woodcuts, and which was somehow related to their communal living in nature. In this context, he comments, it was necessary to work quickly: technical and conceptual approaches changed quickly. The positions of the bathers, the changing light: all demanded a speed of execution which resulted in selective exclusion, a grasping and sharpening of that which was most transient:

One is excited when he wants to capture a vast, brilliant colour on a body. Naturally one takes the the strongest red on the palette and covers the body and its forms. [...] Naturally the object resembles a human form, but certainly doesn't result in a human figure such as those modelled with much care earlier in the

⁵³⁵ Lloyd (1991), p72, transl. altered.

⁵³⁶ Ketterer (1988), p41.

studio. It depends essentially on the capturing of what one sees, and that is just a movement.⁵³⁷

This is particularly to be seen in the work of Kirchner, he says. In the time in which someone plunges into the water and runs back out again, he would have captured in most concise outline the whole scene. Heckel uses as an example that picture in which "we threw reeds as arrows", which Kirchner represented as no more than swift strokes, quickly captured with the crayon. This speed and spontaneity of execution is a theme to which he refers repeatedly, suggesting that it is the nature of the object depicted which makes this necessary.

The "expressive" originates in my opinion after the wish to hold fast a tree in its environment, a hill, with the sky, a cloud [...] Naturally that happens not in a slow and careful way, but in a rushed and seizing manner. That seems to me to be the common point of all *Brücke* artists during the Moritzburg and Dresden period: that each of us sought seizure, swift notation.

For Heckel, such concerns came to an end once all key members of the group had moved to Berlin.

Expression: ecstasy and feeling.

Ecstasy as loss of "self", as abdication of individuation (the first moment of ecstasy), coupled with excess, frenzy and so on - what I have thus far called the second moment of ecstasy - as I have accounted for it this far, might be compared with what Nietzsche called the Dionysian, the state of excess, violence and intoxication, in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Here man returned to the "mystical ground of being", re-united in a primordial-oneness. In the context of certain artists of *die Brücke*, the first moment of ecstasy, the movement beyond the limits of the self, coupled with the encounter with things beyond the self - what we might call a third moment of ecstasy - may be shown to

⁵³⁷ *ibid*, p61.

be fundamental to the creation of the (expressive) artwork. And it is essential that we recognise this third moment as distinct, for it may be seen as the return of Apollo, as the principle of individuation and form engendering force. It is a form as such (an object) which experience entails, and which is the means of the second moment of ecstasy's containment; since it is not "abstract form" (geometric or other) which performs to this end, we may suggest, *for the moment*, that the process is a consequence of a duality (Dionysus and Apollo) and not that of the later Nietzsche's principle of self-overcoming: form forces itself upon experience, upon the moment of ecstasy.

We should remind ourselves of Kirchner's comments regarding his insight to the "limits of human interaction," his attempts to withdraw "the self from itself and its *dissolution within the other person's psyche* for the sake of a more intense expression". We now confront the moment at which the self engages with that which was beyond itself: the artist as subject engages with the object. Here psyche meets *psyche*. Elsewhere we shall see that the artist's psyche can encounter any object in this moment of ecstasy.

"The less I was physically involved, something which quickly occurred as a result of my mood, the more easily and completely I entered into and depicted my subject." Kirchner now refers to his *mood* as determinant in the process. Elsewhere "feelings", various manifestations of the "soul",⁵³⁸ determine the work of art: "It doesn't matter how far one's work involves nature, it only matters that everything is made with true feeling"; "Feeling is always creating new hieroglyphs";⁵³⁹ and retrospectively, "[line] forms the plane which alone speaks and clarifies and says what we felt."⁵⁴⁰ Far more sophisticated experiences can be expressed (Kirchner uses the term *ausdrucken* freely) once the more subtle affects of the subject join with, or become manifest in, the initial

⁵³⁸ Grisebach (1968), p67.

⁵³⁹ Miesel (1970), p23.

⁵⁴⁰ Grisebach (1968), p132.

excess associated with ecstasy. Thus it is that Kirchner is able to refer to the complex of things which "appeared before his physical or [(this is a conjunctive rather than disjunctive "or") spiritual eyes".⁵⁴¹ He writes:

The nervous face of people of our time reflects every small irritation [...] I see in a head very much that isn't dependent upon the anatomical structure. From this comes the dissimilarity of my heads with the original. And they are in a higher sense much more similar [to the original] than the photograph, because they give the character and feeling in spiritual form.⁵⁴²

Perhaps this "spiritual form" refers to a rather more mystical concept⁵⁴³ of the "inner nature" of things than Nietzsche would permit, but the fundamental principle in which the artist seizes that which is to be represented and forces it to take form from him, in accordance with his will, is wholly Nietzschean. Indeed, what Kirchner has described to this point conforms wholly with the Nietzschean account of the creative act: above, the philosopher wrote that creation is an "explosive state", one in which "one bestows upon things, one compels them to take form from us, one violates them." (See above, p45.)

Further, as Heidegger points out, for Nietzsche what is essential to the precondition of art (*Rausch*) itself is feeling, manifest as mood, which is always the "basic way we are outside ourselves" (Heidegger), that is to say, the way we are in relation to other beings.

This is why, when Kirchner does achieve the state of ecstasy, when he is "ready to paint a portrait", what he paints does not necessarily correspond to the anatomical account of the head. The artist's feelings, his affects, engage in the moment of ecstasy

⁵⁴¹ Miesel (1970), p22.

⁵⁴² Grisebach (1968), p142.

⁵⁴³ For Kirchner the world is permeated by a "great mystery which stands behind all events and things (sometimes like a phantom) [...] We can never represent it directly, we can only symbolise it in forms and words": a portrait "does not represent a single personality but a part of that spirituality or feeling which pervades the whole world." See his letter to Grisebach, 1917, reproduced in Miesel (1970), p19. It should be noted that such mystical tones are rare in Kirchner's writing.

with the object of experience. It is precisely this collision which initiates the work of art as "expression". What is expressed is the artist's relation to things.

Sexuality

When Kirchner approaches the nude, whether the female nude or mixed groups, the sense of Kirchner's "ecstasy" could be seen to take on a further implication, even a fourth moment. The sense is associated with the erotic, sometimes manifest in the explicit portrayal of the sexual act. In this context, Kirchner writes of what he identifies as the two types of "real" artist:

The one, in whom the force comes from the erotic, and in whom about the fortieth year the physical eroticism extinguishes, and the other, where the force also comes thoroughly from the erotic, but is still supplied from truly spiritual forces.⁵⁴⁴

The latter, spiritual form of eroticism, is surely close to Nietzsche's sublimation, and its concomitant term, *Vergeistigung*, which he defines as "the marriage of *Geist* and passion."⁵⁴⁵ As we saw above, Nietzsche had written that "without a certain overheating of the sexual system a Raphael is unthinkable- Making music is another way of making children". The most spiritual forms of life are dependent upon the most "base" instincts. As we have already seen, iconic representation of the nude body, particularly the female nude, was fundamental to the artist's oeuvre. Likewise, explicit representations of sexual acts were important. Now, the instincts which underlie that which is represented come to determine the *process* through which the representation itself is made. In a moment, we will come to see how the body itself, in a much more general sense, also moves beyond

⁵⁴⁴ Grisebach (1968), p154.

⁵⁴⁵ Quoted in Kaufmann (1974), p228.

the realm of that which is represented to underwrite and control the process by which all things are represented.

Kirchner's ecstasy evokes both senses of *Rausch* encountered in Nietzsche: rapture as sexual and as religious (or, at least, spiritual) ecstasy. But the first of Kirchner's two forms of erotic artist does at times seem to dominate the second, thus becoming more carnal than spiritual. In his moment of ecstasy, the artist moves out beyond the self and engages the other. In the case of the female nude this engagement and subjection of what is engaged to the artist's will could be interpreted as a moment of "colonisation" (perhaps particularly pertinent in view of his repeated representations of non-European women), and therefore political. In the sense of "rapt" as a "carrying away", especially of woman, indeed of rape,⁵⁴⁶ etymologically linked in an obvious way to our "rapture",⁵⁴⁷ the feminist attack upon Kirchner's status in relation to the depicted female nude could be found to have basis in his own theory.

The body: gesture as embodiment of ecstasy.

All art exercises the power of suggestion over the muscles and senses, which in the artistic temperament are originally active: it always speaks only to artists - it speaks to this kind of a subtle flexibility of the body. [...]

This is where languages originate: the languages of tone as well as the languages of gestures and glances [...] even today one still hears with one's muscles, one even reads with one's muscles. [...]

One never communicates thoughts: one communicates movements, mimic signs, which we then trace back to thoughts.

The Will to Power, #809.

"The power of the Expressionist picture is its direct impact [...] physiology and physics give us the laws of this effect."⁵⁴⁸ (Herwarth Walden, *Die neue Malerei*, 1919.)

⁵⁴⁶ OED

⁵⁴⁷ I can find no evidence to suggest such an etymological link in German.

⁵⁴⁸ Translated in Schall (1989), p127.

Again, we may attend to Kirchner's *Brücke* manifesto as a starting point. For the author the mechanically produced type face was inappropriate: only the hand carved block would provide the authenticity - only this could generate through its multiple processes of signification - its author required. Clearly, the essential difference lies in the trace that the "free hand" produces: this trace, the "imperfect" trace of the body, carries meaning absent from that of the mechanical face.

In his essay "Concerning the sculpture of E.L.Kirchner" de Marsalle writes that, on one hand, Kirchner's sculptures are "born" from the "immediate perception of today's life", and on the other that "each curvature and cavity [is] formed by the sensitivity of the creator's hand, each sharp blow or tender carving expressing the immediate feelings of the artist".⁵⁴⁹ This, writes Marsalle, should be kept in mind when viewing the works.

To come to terms with what Kirchner is suggesting, we should recall, first, what was said above concerning the decadence of language, the way in which it became necessary to in some sense destroy or destructure language before rebuilding, and second, the need described by Nietzsche in *The Birth of Tragedy* of the Apollonian Greeks to create a new system of symbols upon the coming of Dionysus. Regarding the second, I shall re-quote the passage concerned:

The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols; and the entire symbolism of the body is brought into play, not the mere symbolism of the lips, face and speech but the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic movement. Then the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward, particularly those of music, in rhythmic, dynamics, and harmony.

Above (Section I) it was essentially the grammatical structure of language which became the topic of analysis: as the nexus of language itself, grammar carries with it the

⁵⁴⁹ In 1931 Max Sauerland wrote of Kirchner's sculpture: "The pure saturated colours applied to the wood never hide the structure of the wood nor the traces of working. Every blow of the axe and every cut of the knife remain directly available to our eye - as if we can feel and taste them." Quoted in Lloyd (1991), p68.

metaphysical constructs Nietzsche sought to counter. In Kirchner's program grammar remains in tact, but the letters which make up the words - indeed, the cutting strokes which make up those letters - signify something which actually serves to reinforce the "message" or content of the text. This something, I suggest, is the body, and the complex of physical and psychic forces which constitute that body. The text signifies not only symbolically, as would be the case with any mechanical text, but also *indexically*.

We must recall Ludwig Klages' assertion that body and spirit are united through motion, and that the slightest gesture of the hand, and the track of that movement, the line, is an indication of character. While we might not suggest Kirchner seeks to betray the "essence of his character" as Klages' account would imply, it seems clear that he thought that the traces which signify the physical activity which produced the artwork did express something essential to that work. As such, we begin to see how the trace created by that physical activity relates directly to Nietzsche's "symbolism of the body": rather than the language of Apollo, it is that of nineteenth century decadence, of the age of the machine (to summarise in Nietzsche's terms, the language of Socrates) that is inadequate and, in the face of a new world view, is supplanted by the body.

But Kirchner's account goes beyond that of Klages: rather than some essential idea of "soul" or "character" which underlies and will be accessed through the gesture, as was the case in the graphologist's account, Kirchner's various moments of ecstasy, outlined above, underwrite the bodily act of creation. In this sense, the artist's account should be compared directly to that of Nietzsche. In that passage of "The Will to Power as Art" in which the philosopher outlines his account of the *physiology of art*, he asserts that when speaking of the importance of the body to the artwork, it is *Rausch*, Dionysian intoxication, rapture and *ecstasy*, that will be the artist's precondition. It is this state of ecstasy and excess which underwrites and determines the artist's corporeal involvement in the work. I suggest the same applies to Kirchner's account of the creative act, and that it is possible to show that the gesture whose origin is such

ecstasy is in some sense essential to certain of those works we call "Expressionist". Kirchner has described a moment of ecstasy in which he, in a rather complex sense, moves beyond the bounds of the self to engage the other. In this moment a certain feeling or feelings help to constitute an experience which becomes manifest in (or as) the artwork. The total experience consists in an ecstatic (in all its various forms outlined above) engagement of the artist as subject with the object of representation, and with an expressive medium through which the experience is articulated and made manifest. The artist's body, then, is the nexus of this engagement.

Drawing immediately on man's instinctive being, Kirchner's gesture corresponds to the manifestation of Nietzsche's Dionysian impulse of nature: it is a fundamentally bodily, immediate articulation, initially manifest without the intervention of conscious deliberation. But, as had been the case in Nietzsche's account of art, Kirchner could not simply produce some immediate expression of a "blind" emotion or feeling. In order to become a coherent, intelligible experience, form and order are necessary. Of course, Kirchner always represented things, so the gestural marks he used were always already structured by the need to present a likeness of the thing to be represented. But, at the same time, he wanted to distort that representation so as to allow for the articulation of whatever emotions were generated in response to his ecstatic engagement with the object of representation. Kirchner's interest in dance - a medium appropriate to Nietzsche's Dionysus - could be seen as an important source for the refinement of the immediate gesture into formal expression.⁵⁵⁰

It is particularly new forms of dance which were of interest to the artists of *die Brücke*. Schall lists the "cakewalk" (which Kirchner showed in a lithograph of the same name in 1910), with its roots in black America, the two-step, the turkey trot or one-step,

⁵⁵⁰ For a convincing account of *die Brücke*'s interest in the dance, and this in relation to the philosophy of Nietzsche, see McCullagh (1984). Concerning the dance and the body, see Colin Rhodes' "The body and the dance: Kirchner's Swiss work as Expressionism" in Behr (19

and the fox-trot as important examples of contemporary dances first adopted from the United States by the cabaret and variety club dancers. Not only were they adopted by these marginal members of society, but their morality was itself marginal: apparently the dances were outlawed by the police as they made explicit the erotic basis of dance.⁵⁵¹ Grohmann (1968) lists in Kirchner's oeuvre six oil paintings whose subject is dance, and thirty nine whose subject is dancer(s). Five issues of *Der Sturm* whose cover showed works by *Brücke* artists depicted dance themes. But apart from this, perhaps the most concrete evidence of Kirchner's interest in dance, and the most important for our present concern, are the pages he wrote concerning his visit to the dance studio of Mary Wigman in 1926. He wrote: "I perceive the parallel, how the single *movement* strengthened through repetition is expressed in her dances in the *movement of masses*. It is unendingly stimulating and attractive to draw these *bodily movements*. I will paint large pictures from them [...] The new art is there. M.W. unintentionally uses much from modern pictures, and the creation of a modern idea of beauty is at work in her dances as in my pictures."⁵⁵² (My emphases.) I suggest that while Kirchner attempts to stress what Wigman learns from contemporary painting, more important is what his painting can learn from contemporary dance. Here we focus precisely on what the artist stresses most, the movement of masses.

The drawings which he produced in the dance studio clearly emphasise dynamic movement: rapidly executed, multiple lines serve on one hand to delimit the physical form of the dancer as perceived visually, on the other to suggest movements of that form. Looking at, for instance, the person stood one from the right in figure 39, lines seem to ascend from lower thigh level (where the hands would hang naturally, arms relaxed and to the side), through an elegant curve to the position in which the hands themselves are drawn, above the head. What Kirchner uses here is not so far removed

⁵⁵¹ Schall (1989), p135.

⁵⁵² Grisebach (1968), p115.

from the later developed Benesh system of dance notation in which dance movements are recorded by lines which trace paths followed by extremities of the body as they move through space, a system which is also reminiscent of the techniques used to similar ends by Kandinsky in *Punkt und Linie zur Fläche*. The significant difference would be that such notation seeks an "objective" account of the movements, Kirchner's a subjective expression.

And it is in a work such as this that I suggest we see manifest most clearly Kirchner's accounts of the creative act as I have just presented them. While I don't suggest that in such a work the artist is concerned in his moment of ecstasy to engage with the other person's psyche, as he describes in the case of a portrait painting, it is apparent that an ecstatic engagement with the object of depiction does occur. Kirchner's line suggests not only the movement of the dancer's body, but also very clearly that of the artist's. In a sense his body repeats the movement of that of the dancer, and in this regard his prediction that he will produce large pictures from the drawings is important: in such work his whole body could become involved in the "repetition". But it is not merely a repetition: in the process the work articulates the experience of the viewer in relation to the movement of his object: his ecstasy engages movement *as such*. He (the artist) gives himself over to, and *re-presents*, the dance. His own psychic experience of the dance is rendered through his own bodily movement, and the trace this leaves on the paper. Thus the drawing is a *residue* of the artist's experience of the dance, an interpretation made possible by the involvement of the artist's own body as well as his psyche, both bound together in the expressive medium. Kirchner's ecstatic moment is precisely the encounter with - as involvement *in*, response *to* and *embodiment of* - the dance.

What is most important is to recognise that Kirchner enrolls the most gestural of arts to educate the gesture within his own: "the entire symbolism of the body is brought into play, [...] the whole pantomime of dancing, forcing every member into rhythmic

movement. *Then the other symbolic powers suddenly press forward*". Recalling Nietzsche's assertion that to exclude the body from experience is to become dumb, (above, p111), in a very real sense, Kirchner creates, in his ecstasy, "beyond himself."

Control: phases of the work, techniques.

Much of the passage from Kirchner's text with which this section began was devoted to drawing our attention to the importance of consciousness to the act of creation, and this in relation to the ontologically privileged moments of ecstasy and instinct. Continuing from the above cited passage in which Kirchner described the two types of "real", "erotic" artist, he writes that the artist is "Conscious in the sense that [he...] becomes conscious of his means", and that "'conscious' does not mean the opposite to feeling". Thus he asks:

what is conscious, what is feeling in art?

To be conscious is to know your means, to have knowledge of how colour works, to have experience in composition, knowing of the rules of division, of harmony, of proportion, anatomy, the psychical effect of definite forms, etc.

Feeling is imagination, the invention of ways of forming, the invention of objectives, the application of known laws in a certain direction - everything, all else remaining in the work of art, which is not explainable by the intellect.⁵⁵³

But we never really see Kirchner formulate anything of these "rules" as such. For example: though Kirchner claims to have studied the "science of color based on optics", which he associates with Goethe's colour theory, we see no evidence in his writings, and I can find none in the artworks, which suggest he adopted or adapted that theory in his own work. While Kirchner establishes anatomical drawing as a fundament for young students of art, and even goes so far as to develop a system whereby a grid is used to assist the student in the precise representation of his model,⁵⁵⁴ there is precious little

⁵⁵³ Grisebach (1968), p154, using transl. in Gordon (1968), p31, where possible.

⁵⁵⁴ Grisebach (1968), p147.

evidence to suggest that such rigorous (by which I mean, in this case, academic) anatomical study ever formed part of his own work.

Perhaps the closest we come to such consideration and formulation in his own texts is in the short essay entitled "Vom Wesen und Art der Kunst".⁵⁵⁵ Early he establishes his oft repeated rule that composition is the subsumption of individual parts under the general purpose of the whole. Rules of composition are the relationships in rhythm, parallelism ("etc. etc.") between things. Precisely the attempt to know these rules has occupied artists of all times, the present's preoccupation with naturalism making it an exception. When these questions are re-asked, the trend Kirchner sees is no more than an "aping" of old rules: instead, the arts should seek the new rules which modern life offers so numerous. From these man can, writes Kirchner, create an art which belongs to "our time". Certain ground rules remain the same, but our beauty is fundamentally different. We discern beauty in the racing car, the turbine, he writes; the beauty of the proportions of the Golden Section is no longer adequate. The sky-scraper offers different relations: exceeding the 5x8 of the Golden Section, Kirchner's age embraces the 4x17 as beautiful. To the ancients our wheel, for instance, would have seemed fat and ugly, while in the combination of steel, rubber and air the modern age discerns beauty in the different forces of the materials. This, he tells us, points to a new, different nature of art.

It is not my intention to formulate Kirchner's "theory of art" in any general sense, only to examine those aspects important to an uncovering of the artist's relation to the ideas of Nietzsche. Thus, suffice it to say that while Kirchner recognised the need to establish a "conscious", perhaps empirical system of rules in art, his theory never moved beyond, on one hand, a conscious statement of what occurs largely unconsciously or instinctively (the analysis of which has occupied the present analysis

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid*, pp132-134. The essay dates from 1926.

so far), and on the other the sorts of statements in which it is stated that the new aesthetic may take forms (examples of which are frequently given) which to earlier viewers may have been inappropriate.

Rather than pursue the idea of a formal set of rules which might co-exist with as they limit the instinctive moment of creation, what might be described in Nietzsche's terms as a Socratic moment of artistic creation, I will now attend to what he says about the works themselves in an attempt to uncover the way in which such control is manifest in the act of creation itself.

We have already established that for Kirchner the creative act involves the engagement by the artist of things: "Always I recruit from the actual form";⁵⁵⁶ "it is the real world which guides creation even if it is pure fantasy. All art needs this visual world and will always need it".⁵⁵⁷ His assertion that the hieroglyph is "the transformation [Umgestaltung] of natural form in an art-form" reinforces this fundamental principle of his work. As we have seen, above, Kirchner's representation of the moment of ecstasy is always already controlled - to a greater or lesser extent - by the image of the object which is an integral part of the experience. His gesture is never "formless": form is part of its origin.

A second aspect of the work itself is perhaps most important in the present context. Above we saw that engagement with the medium in which expression (which forms an indivisible part of the ecstatic experience) occurs, is itself an indivisible part of the experience. In dance, it could be said that the only medium is space; in other art forms a material aspect is implied. In his essay "Concerning Kirchner's prints" de Marsalle writes of the artist's desire to "define clearly and conclusively the singularly loose forms of drawing": printmaking "releases powers in the artist which do not come

⁵⁵⁶ *ibid*, p47.

⁵⁵⁷ Miesel (1970), p24.

into play in the much more easily managed techniques of drawing and painting".⁵⁵⁸

Kirchner clearly establishes that certain media will provide differing levels of resistance to the process of creation. Drawing, as we have seen, is most appropriate to the immediate experience. With the print, on the other hand, comes the possibility or necessity of prolonging that act. It matters not that the process is extended to cover a period of weeks or even months. Using different techniques, material is found to resist immediate expression.

Throughout the essay Kirchner stresses the complex and innovative nature of his technique, whether it be lithographic, woodcut or etching, yet maintains the "freshness" and ease his skill affords such processes. Etching, for example, allows him to make his first notes directly from nature: "The uninhibited capriciousness of this art is completely realised." Yet "there are plates which have been worked over repeatedly so that everything is highly finished": etching, he tells us, "is a refined technique."⁵⁵⁹ The woodcut, a medium of "great skill and concentration", is for Kirchner the most painterly of printmaking techniques. By means of the simplification of things which he sees as natural to the process, these works served to prefigure the formal vocabulary of his other pictures (among which he presumably means paintings).

In a letter to Emil Nolde he wrote: "I have completed two new wood sculptures - the wood was very hard, but it is a fine thing to come up against resistance and then have to employ all your physical strength."⁵⁶⁰ We have already seen the importance the artist attached to the manual techniques of sculpture, each curvature and cavity being formed in "sharp blows" or "tender carving" "by the sensitivity of the creator's hand". Clearly, the frenzied motions of the initial moment of ecstasy could have no place in such works: at a most mundane level, the representation of a body on paper could

⁵⁵⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p26.

⁵⁶⁰ 2 March 1907, quoted in Lloyd (1991), p.67.

tolerate the sweeping movement of the pencil across its surface in a way that the corresponding movement of a chisel across a wooden sculpture may be disastrous!

Of course, there is nothing unusual in an artist choosing to use different media in his work, nor in his realisation that those media demand differently of the artist's skills and time. What is significant here is the attention Kirchner pays to these differences, the importance he seems to place on this, and the way this fits into the scheme of things so far described.⁵⁶¹

In both the essay on printing and that on sculpture Kirchner explains at some length the failing of modern artists' choice to simplify the process by which the work is created - whether by the use of, for example, transfer paper in lithography, or the employment of assistants in the casting of sculptures: "the end result and all work toward it is done by other hands". We return to Kirchner's insistence on the authenticity of the work. Once the marks which constitute the work record the trace of another hand, the work is no longer a part of the original experience which should constitute it. This much we have already seen. What is new is the demand to continue working and re-working the piece: for it is this which Kirchner's constant experimentation and consequent technical innovation⁵⁶² implies. Rather than produce a run of identical, uniform prints, the artist frequently altered and adjusted conditions so as to render each print individual. As an integral part of the artistic experience, Kirchner is aware that the medium involved may prolong the moment of creation, forcing those powers (somehow more cognitive than instinctive) which he identifies as not performing in the process of drawing to come into play. The medium, either through its complex process, or through

⁵⁶¹ In this context, Janice McCullagh (1984), p640, is significant. In reference to the Expressionists' use of the image of the tightrope walker, she draws the reader's attention to Karl Joël's *Nietzsche und die Romantik*, published in 1905, which clarified the meaning of Zarathustra's image thus: "Feeling and Reason are tightrope walkers dancing one next to the other [...] the one scorns the other and would like to surpass him."

⁵⁶² For an extensive account of *die Brücke's* printing techniques, and the innovations which resulted from experimentation, see Carey and Griffiths (1984).

its very "weight", makes demands on the body which seeks to manipulate it, and in so doing not only slows down but complicates the process of the experience itself.

Above (page 198), it was noted that Kirchner's account of the act of creation related in important ways, at that point, to Nietzsche's account of the relation between Dionysus and Apollo. Kirchner's ecstasy begins with the self, in a movement beyond the self. This is the initiating Dionysian moment, to be augmented in the dream image, manifest in that third and equally essential moment of ecstasy, the encounter with that which lies beyond the self, the thing whose appearance is subordinated to the artist's ecstatic experience. But that appearance does not simply collapse in the face of the frenzy which characterises the second moment of ecstasy; like the relation of Apollo to Dionysus, both forces - appearance and frenzy - must be maintained in the work of art.

This account, however, does not preclude the possibility that, like Nietzsche's *Rausch*, Kirchner's ecstasy acts to engender its own form. Indeed, as we followed Kirchner's account of the creative act, it became clear that the body and the medium of expression - both integral parts of the moment of Kirchner's sexual and spiritual ecstasy - *as well as* that which is engaged in the moment of ecstasy (the object beyond the artist's self) contributed to the containment of that moment of ecstasy which is defined by the terms "excess" and "intensity". The body is the nexus of sexual and spiritual ecstasy, and it is the body, and the medium in which the experience of ecstasy in the work of art occurs, that is the principal source of overcoming. Second to this is the thing which is engaged in the moment of ecstasy. With such a formulation we move away from a simple formulation of the relation of Dionysus to Apollo, and indeed of Socrates (reason, which seemed repeatedly to fail in Kirchner's account) in relation to Dionysus, and move toward the rather more complex principle of ecstasy's self-overcoming, equivalent to Nietzsche's *Rausch* as form engendering force. Precisely that which gives rise to Kirchner's ecstasy is that which controls its most destructive moments.

Yet we will constantly be struck by the extreme distortion of conventional form in certain of Kirchner's works. So destructive is his manner of representation in places that to speak of any "form engendering force" in the manner Heidegger describes of Nietzsche's texts, particularly of the *Grand Style*, is difficult: it is Nietzsche's later *Rausch* as accounted for in Vattimo that seems most relevant to the works, *Rausch* as a predominantly destructive force. Not only both Apollo and Socrates, but also the principle of self-overcoming itself is repeatedly destructured in Kirchner's moment of ecstasy.

Wassily Kandinsky

I go new ways, a new speech has come to me; like all creators, I have grown weary of the old tongues. My spirit no longer wants to walk on worn out soles.

All speech runs too slowly for me [...]

I want to sail across broad seas like a cry and a shout of joy [...]

Zarathustra, "The Child with the Mirror". 563

There are two dominant aspects of Kandinsky's writing style which call attention to their proximity to those discussed above in Nietzsche's texts. The first is the imagery the artist uses in his attempt to draw attention most forcefully to what is written. The second is the tonal devices he uses in that process.

The image of the battle of the spiritual against the material is one we have already seen, and is one we will repeatedly encounter in a reading of Kandinsky's texts. "In every realm of the spirit, values are reviewed as if in preparation for one of the greatest battles against materialism,"⁵⁶⁴ he writes. Such imagery will always recall the lines which Nietzsche wrote, and which were used as the opening section of *The Will to Power*, of the "history" of the next two centuries, of the *advent of nihilism*: "For some time now, our whole European culture has been moving as toward a catastrophe [...] restlessly, violently, headlong, like a river that wants to reach the end[...]"⁵⁶⁵

Nietzsche's relation to existent forms of thought was always one of conflict: throughout his entire works battles rage, violence reigns. As we have seen, in the section "Of War and Warriors" of *Zarathustra* he writes: "if you cannot be saints of knowledge, at least be its warriors [...]. You should love peace as a means to new wars. And the short peace more than the long."⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p108.

⁵⁶⁴ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p88.

⁵⁶⁵ *The Will to Power*, p3.

⁵⁶⁶ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, pp73-74.

Particularly at those points in the artist's texts at which the struggle between the spiritual and the material becomes most intense, Kandinsky draws upon language apocalyptic both in imagery and tone. "Spiritual night falls gradually deeper and deeper. Darker and darker it becomes, surrounding [...] dismayed souls", as a "darkening of the spiritual atmosphere" threatens mankind. In that section of *On the Spiritual* where the scientific worldview begins to be undermined he writes of the destruction of man's "spiritual city":

Here, part of the massive wall lies fallen like a house of cards. There, an enormous tower that once reached the sky [...] lies in ruins. The old, forgotten cemetery quakes. Old, forgotten graves open, and forgotten ghosts rise up out of them. The sun [...] shows spots and darkens, and what can replace it in the fight against darkness?⁵⁶⁷

Such tones are not far removed from those found repeatedly in Nietzsche's texts. Using precisely the same metaphor as Kandinsky he refers to the "darkening of the sky,"⁵⁶⁸ to the "dark cloud that hangs over mankind".⁵⁶⁹ In the section "Of Science" in *Zarathustra* he refers to man's search for security in science "-today, when everything is tottering, when all the earth quakes." And in one of his most apocalyptic passages, Nietzsche writes:

when truth enters into a fight with the lies of millennia, we shall have upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes, a moving of mountains and valleys, the like of which have never been dreamed of. The concept of politics will have merged entirely with a war of spirits; all power structures of the old society will have been exploded - all of them are based on lies: there will be wars the like of which have never yet been seen on earth.⁵⁷⁰

⁵⁶⁷ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p142.

⁵⁶⁸ *Genealogy of Morals*, p67.

⁵⁶⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p45.

⁵⁷⁰ *Ecce Homo*, p327.

It is apparent that Kandinsky's use of apocalyptic language is meant in a wholly Nietzschean sense. In the essay "Whither the 'New' Art?", for instance, he follows a particularly apocalyptic account of "our epoch" as a time of "tragic collision between matter and spirit" with the assertion that "for a few people it is a time of presentiment or of precognition of the path to truth." Alone, such an assertion fits more or less the conventional Judeo-Christian account of apocalypse in which a new reign on earth follows the battle between good and evil. But Kandinsky, in the next sentence, writes that "everything that once appeared to stand so eternally [...] that seemed to contain eternal, true knowledge, suddenly turns out to have been crushed [...] Consciously or unconsciously the genius of Nietzsche began the 'transvaluation of values'. What had stood firm was displaced - as if a great earthquake had erupted in the soul. And it is this tragedy of displacement, instability, and weakness of the material world that is reflected in art by *imprecision* and *dissonance*."⁵⁷¹ It is at precisely this point that he brings the essay to a close; the vortex about which the history he has described in the essay - that of the death of materialism, the rebirth of the spiritual - is to turn, is precisely this Nietzschean apocalypticism. As in his "Reminiscences",⁵⁷² the fundamental re-creation of values which it is art's duty to perform at this moment of revolution is described by the artist as the "transvaluation of values". Equally, it is essential to note that references to Nietzsche's attack on morality in *On the Spiritual* follows shortly on the extended and apocalyptic account of man's realisation that science and materialism are failing: "when religion, science and morality are shaken (the last by the mighty hand of Nietzsche), when the external supports threaten to collapse, then man's gaze turns away from the external *toward himself*."⁵⁷³ Amid the destruction and havoc Kandinsky's apocalyptic struggle between matter and spirit creates, it is the name of Nietzsche which is - in both

⁵⁷¹ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p103.

⁵⁷² *ibid*, p378.

⁵⁷³ *ibid*, p145.

texts - brought to mankind's salvation: through his name, it is the arts which will create anew.

But before we come to a consideration of that revaluation we should pursue the question of style in Kandinsky's texts a little further. In reference to the essay "Whither the 'New' Art?" it has been suggested Kandinsky makes use of a Biblical or Zarathustran tone.⁵⁷⁴ Clearly the apocalypticism we have uncovered so far in his texts refers to both the Biblical and Nietzschean apocalypse; to both, because Nietzsche's own style at such moments draws so heavily on the Biblical (while creating its own implications, established by the context he creates for it), and because we know of Kandinsky's own (particularly iconic) commitment to parts of the Bible. To the questions he asks concerning the meaning and aim of life, Kandinsky writes:

And the surrounding silence answered: There is no aim in life.
The darkness gathered, the air thickened, all escape was blocked.
And unrecognised the soul was sick.
And there poured fourth a turbulent flood of violence, outrage, war, murder,
suicide.⁵⁷⁵

The archaic structures and tone determine the association of the artist's prophetic words with those of its sources. The short sentences, each forming a paragraph, laid out rhythmically down the page so as to reinforce - in a manner particularly reminiscent of many of Zarathustra's proclamations - the declamatory style, which is further reinforced in Kandinsky's essay included in "The Battle for Art" by the sustained use of alliteration.

Particularly interesting is the manner in which Kandinsky seems to "perform" such style, adopting the appropriate tones and structures, metaphors and other rhetorical devices, and then returns to an "analytic" mode with which to explain what has or will happen. After the section from "Whither the 'New' Art?" quoted above, he

⁵⁷⁴ *ibid*, p97.

⁵⁷⁵ *ibid*, p99.

explains that art is only needed by the people as a “lackey”: “‘I’ve ordered a portrait, so get on with it [...]’ says the complacent client to the meritorious artist [...] ‘Give me a bit of nature in a landscape’”.⁵⁷⁶ The tone moves from an evocation of the sublime to a parody that ridicules. “And the artist does his best to give gratification,” writes Kandinsky, returning to his role as analyst and narrator. The equation with Nietzsche’s “most multifarious art of style” is clear.

The various voices the author adopts work together to animate and thereby reinforce the narrative he seeks to articulate. However, amid this talk of style, of rhetorical devices, we should not lose track of the possibility - a danger we recognised in reference to Nietzsche’s apparent hyperbole - that at least some of Kandinsky’s imagery is not metaphorical, is not an adopted style, but is in fact meant quite literally. We shall return to precisely this point in a later section of this thesis, in a consideration of the possible incompatibility between certain of the Expressionists’ ideas and those of Nietzsche.

Language

Human being speaks to human being of that which is superhuman [*Übermenschlich*] - the **language** of art.⁵⁷⁷

The “transvaluation” of which Kandinsky writes is, in the artist’s own terms, dependent on the “revitalisation” of the arts. Like Nietzsche, Kandinsky recognised language as the nexus of existent thought, and as the potential source of its overcoming. For Kandinsky, “Just as every word spoken (tree, sky, man) awakens an inner vibration, so too does every pictorially represented object.” But both words and pictures have come, in the age of science, to represent no more than the “external”,

⁵⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁵⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p83.

material aspects of things. For the artist “[certain] symbols have gradually become incomprehensible, and we are no longer able to decipher their inner value”.⁵⁷⁸ the figure of a Chinese dragon used in ornament, then, creates no more of an impression than a tablecloth embroidered with daisies, he writes. We are reminded of Nietzsche's account of language in the essay "On truth and lies in a nonmoral sense". Seeking an analogy with which to describe the manner in which language had lost its power to communicate truth, Nietzsche wrote of coins which have lost the image which, stamped into their surface, had made them a thing for exchange, a promise to pay bullion. After extensive use and wear the coin reverts to being no more than a metal disc, a structure devoid of meaning. Language becomes a system of redundant symbols which, as became the case in Kandinsky's account, no longer signify their original meaning.

The task of creating a language which could once again be significant is essentially Kandinsky's formal/stylistic project. Having devoted much space in the chapter entitled “The language of forms and colours” in *On the Spiritual* to the effects of colours, he writes that the account is necessarily “extremely provisional and clumsy”, as is the characterisation of the emotions appropriate to those colours, “(joy, sorrow etc.)”, which are “no more than material states of the soul”: “The different tones of the colours [...] are of a much subtler nature and awaken far subtler vibrations in the soul than can be described in words. With time, every tone can very probably find its own material expression even in words.”⁵⁷⁹

The revitalisation of language that was to bring about the transvaluation of all values began - as we saw above - with man's “turn away from the external *toward himself*.” Like Nietzsche, one of whose basic tenets was the need to respond to one's own will rather than the pressures of tradition, Kandinsky realised that through an

⁵⁷⁸ *ibid*, p199.

⁵⁷⁹ *ibid*, p189-191.

examination of his own spiritual, intuitive being, the artist could generate from within himself more meaningful expression.

A fundament of this process of revitalisation was the realisation that all things could have significance which was not necessarily determined by their conventional meanings. "Words", he writes, "are *inner sounds* [...] Skillful use of word (according to poetic feeling) - an internally necessary repetition of a word twice, three times - can lead [... to] unrealised spiritual qualities of the word. Eventually, manifold repetition [...] makes it lose its external sense as a name."⁵⁸⁰ For Kandinsky, words had come to function as labels for things, and little else. With this quest for inner meaning - by which he means something like the effect things have on man's spiritual aspect (the soul) rather than on the cognitive faculties - "great possibilities open up for the literature of the future" as language breaks from the constraints of its traditional usage.

The series of poems Kandinsky included in his album *Sounds* exploit this particular device as they oppose other fundaments of linguistic convention. The poem "Sounds" of 1913, for instance, reads as follows:

Face.

Distance.

Cloud.

...

...

There stands a man with a long sword. The sword is long, and broad, too. Very broad.

...

...

He often sought to deceive me, and I confess he succeeded - in deceiving me. And perhaps too often.

...

...

Eyes, eyes, eyes ... eyes

...

...

A woman who is thin and not young, who has a cloth on her head, which sticks out like a shield over her face, leaving her face in shadow.

The woman pulls a calf on a rope, still small and shaky on its crooked legs. Sometimes the calf runs along behind quite

⁵⁸⁰ *ibid*, p147.

willingly. Sometimes he doesn't want to. Then the woman pulls
on the rope. It lowers its head and shakes it and splays its legs.
But its legs are weak, and the rope does not break.
The rope does not break.

...

...

Eyes look from a distance.
The cloud ascends.

...

...

The face.
The distance.
The cloud.
The sword.
The rope.⁵⁸¹

The atmosphere the work suggests is quite sinister: the man who, our author warns, is untrustworthy, stands with his long, broad sword as the calf, barely able to stand, unsure whether to co-operate or not, is pulled onward by a rope about its neck. At the end of the piece there is no mention of the calf - only of the sword and the rope. Clearly the work echoes the violent metaphors we saw Kandinsky using above in his theoretical texts.

Apart from the obvious repetition of "eyes", the poem repeats already clear assertions: the events described in the poem are so limited that the audience is forced to attend to possible hidden meanings. Such is the fundamental Symbolist aesthetic. And in such a work those meanings will be articulated less within the order of a conventional narrative - what he calls the "literary element"⁵⁸² - than by the sounds of the words, the silences, and the rhythms created thereby.

Another poem included in the album provides even less conventional narrative, but leads us into another aspect of the poems, and of Kandinsky's work in general.

SEE

Blue, blue, rose up, and fell.
Sharp, thin whistled and pressed in, but could not prick through.
There was a droning in every corner.

⁵⁸¹ *ibid*, p317.

⁵⁸² *ibid*, p205.

.....There was a crash.....583

articulate the whole.

between text and that which is outside the text becomes ambiguous: the very instability

583 *ibid.*, pp297-298.

of the text itself undermines its distinction from everything else. In other words, Kandinsky has managed to overcome the relationship between text and image where one serves as explanation or illustration of the other. In what he named the “Monumental work of art” this principle gained most coherent articulation; like Nietzsche’s account of ancient tragedy in which the various arts unite to form a single experience, the concept must be seen in relation to Wagner’s theory of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.⁵⁸⁴

For Kandinsky “painting is an art”, and art “is a language that speaks in its own unique way.”⁵⁸⁵ And for the painter it was in the realm of painting that that language would be most thoroughly explored. To understand how he conceived of the nature of painting, it is necessary to attend to his account of the creative act. He writes: “In a mysterious, puzzling and mystical way, the true work of art arises ‘from out of the artist.’”⁵⁸⁶ Artistic form was not to be determined by the physical appearance of things, but by the artist’s feeling for what forms - abstract or representational - are necessary for the expression of some “emotion” or “value” which is generated within him. “Consciously or unconsciously”, he writes, the artist seeks form for this value: “Thus the spiritual value seeks materialisation. Matter is here a reserve of supplies from which the spirit [...] selects what is *necessary* in this case.”⁵⁸⁷ This demand for expression Kandinsky calls “inner necessity”, a fundament which will recur throughout his writings. Discussing the various merits of “real” form (by which he means things, objects) and “abstract” form (lines, colours etc. detached from things), he writes that it is of “*absolutely no significance*” which the artist uses. “The question of form does not in

⁵⁸⁴ This point is made in Rensburg (1987), p249.

⁵⁸⁵ *ibid*, p212.

⁵⁸⁶ *ibid*, p211.

⁵⁸⁷ *ibid*, p235.

principle exist”,⁵⁸⁸ he writes: for Kandinsky, quoting Nietzsche, “*Everything is permitted.*” (Kandinsky’s emphasis.)⁵⁸⁹

Such is the “question of form” as established in the *Blue Rider Almanac* essay. Elsewhere, Kandinsky clearly problematises any form of “naturalism”: his statement that “natural forms impose limitations that in many cases hinder [spiritual] expression”⁵⁹⁰ seems to deny the equivalence he asserts in the almanac. Indeed, for Kandinsky the history of art is precisely the progression toward “art in the abstract sense”, toward the eventual achievement of “purely pictorial composition”.⁵⁹¹ The evaluation of purely artistic, abstract means to which he devotes so much space in *On the Spiritual* is a preparation for the moment at which the artist must choose those forms most appropriate for his expression: “And [painting’s] task today is to examine its forces and materials, to become acquainted with them [...] and to attempt to use these materials and forces in a purely painterly way for the purpose of creation.” The notion of progress, which is so important to Kandinsky in the form of both stylistic and spiritual development, determines that painting “will eventually achieve purely pictorial composition”,⁵⁹² that this is the ultimate form of art.

Despite the confidence he expresses in certain pieces of writing, much of his theory admits what his paintings confirm, that he was not ready to use purely abstract forms in his work.⁵⁹³ In *On the Spiritual* he writes that “Today we are still firmly bound to the outward appearance of nature and must draw our *forms* from it.”⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, painting’s “*emancipation* from direct dependence on ‘nature’ is in its very earliest

⁵⁸⁸ *ibid*, p248.

⁵⁸⁹ *ibid*, p241.

⁵⁹⁰ *ibid*, p208.

⁵⁹¹ *ibid*, p162. Kandinsky refers repeatedly to this sense of continuum whose whose logical development determines the development of an abstract art.

⁵⁹² *ibid*, p162.

⁵⁹³ See editors’ comments, *ibid*, p116.

⁵⁹⁴ *ibid*, p199.

stages.”⁵⁹⁵ The great danger Kandinsky recognised was that painting, should it leap too soon into the realm of the abstract, would become no more than decoration or fantasy,⁵⁹⁶ or mere chaos devoid of the structure which objects had provided.

His solution was that painting should alter that which was represented so as to allow the abstract elements more complete expression than they attain when employed in their more conventional role. There are two intimately related aspects to this. First, Kandinsky writes of “distortion”⁵⁹⁷ of forms, a “dislocation of individual forms upon the picture surface.”

If, e.g., facial features or different parts of the body have been dislocated or “distorted” for artistic reasons, one comes up against not only purely pictorial problems, but also anatomical ones.⁵⁹⁸

He writes that “good draughtsmanship” is produced “regardless of whether [it] contradicts anatomy or botany or any other science”: objects - which are chosen to accord with the artist’s “internal necessity” - will be subjected to alterations which are themselves determined by internal necessity. As such, what Kandinsky describes is close to what we saw above in relation to Kirchner’s work: a subjection of the object represented to the artistic will which represents it.

But for Kandinsky the second aspect of this artistic process, the actual liberation of colour and form from their representational functions, is the principal aim of this “distortion” or “dislocation.” “The more freely abstract a form becomes, the purer, and also the more primitive it sounds. Therefore, in a composition in which corporeal elements are more or less superfluous, they can be more or less omitted and replaced by purely abstract forms, or by corporeal forms that have been completely

⁵⁹⁵ See also *ibid*, pp166 & 155.

⁵⁹⁶ *ibid*, p197.

⁵⁹⁷ *ibid*, p170.

⁵⁹⁸ *ibid*, p171.

abstracted.”⁵⁹⁹ The only “judge, guide and arbitrator”, he writes, “should be one’s feelings”.

Yet, as form and colour became more and more liberated from their conventional representational function, Kandinsky was still faced with the task of establishing a new order within the work. In his attempt to find resolution, he was forced to incorporate to the painting the lessons he learnt from other artistic mediums, with the result that again he undermined the barrier between one art form and another. In this context, consideration of the artist’s emphasis on the dance becomes important.

Gret Palucca, Wigman's student during the 1920s (the decade in which Kirchner visited Wigman's studio to produce the drawings considered above), appears as a model in Kandinsky's "Dance Curves: The Dances of Palucca" (*Das Kunstblatt*, 1926) and in *Punkt und Linie zur Fläche* (1926, fig. 40). Most important for our concern is Kandinsky’s assertion in the latter text that

In dance the whole body, in modern dance every finger, draws lines with a very precise expression. The "modern" dancer moves across the stage in exact lines, which he incorporates as an essential element into the composition of his dance (Sakharov). Apart from which, the dancer's entire body, right down to the fingertips, is at every moment a continuous linear composition (Palucca)⁶⁰⁰

Kandinsky’s emphasis is on precisely the trace of bodily gesture and movement; an emphasis which, as I suggested above, draws his representation of the dance close to that developed by Benesh. But, again, for the artist, his is not merely a representation of the dance which occurs before the artist: something of the dance enters into the process of representation itself.

Writing in *On the Spiritual* of the "Monumental Art" he had predicted, Kandinsky concluded that stage composition would consist initially of:

1. musical movement,

⁵⁹⁹ *ibid*, p169.

⁶⁰⁰ *ibid*, p619.

2. pictorial movement,
3. dance movement.⁶⁰¹

Dance movement is perhaps the most literal movement, in that things (parts of the body) are actually displaced through space. Kandinsky writes that the bodily movement which concerns him is the one most fully divorced from purposive action: he seeks a kind of pure movement, uncluttered by practical concerns.⁶⁰² Musical movement, on the other hand, can be a term to indicate divisions within a musical work, having a distinctive melodic and rhythmic structure of its own; and it can describe the way a piece "moves", its melodic progression, tempo or speed of a performance. Pictorial movement refers principally to the illusion that figures represented suggest a sense of movement, and at points in the text Kandinsky clearly makes use of this sense. Thus he writes, when distinguishing individual forms in a work from the overall composition, of "the flexibility of individual forms, the so-to-speak internal-organic changes they undergo, their direction within the picture (movement)".⁶⁰³

Yet, given his propensity to appropriate from musical terminology, I would suggest he also has in mind, when referring to the principles of pictorial movement, something rather similar to movement as melodic progression, and, at the same time, given the context of the threefold principles of stage composition, something akin to dance movement. That is to say, for Kandinsky, pictorial movement has something in itself of those other movements. Thus, using analogies which gain their strength from precisely a combination of these forms of movement, he writes that overall pictorial composition may be constructed according to principles of consonance and dissonance, confluence or dismemberment of individual forms, the combination of "the rhythmic and

⁶⁰¹ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p206.

⁶⁰² Much space is devoted to the historical process by which the dance loses its practical (sexual) function and becomes non-purposive in the essay "Painting as Pure Art", in *ibid*, pp349-354.

⁶⁰³ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p171.

arhythmic on the same surface", "the meeting of individual forms", and so on.⁶⁰⁴ These various forms of movement are fundamental to the language he uses in his account of the principles according to which abstract pictorial elements are to be ordered on the picture plane.

For the moment, it is dance movement that will be our concern; as we saw above, in relation to certain of Kirchner's work, the body's presence in the (visual) work via the medium of dance allowed a sustained consideration of the relation of such works to the philosophy of Nietzsche. But the movement Kandinsky describes in the text which precedes the above cited passage is devoted to an account of the "inner nature" of dance movement. He describes the three aspects of Monumental Art, or stage composition, as "the threefold effect of internal movement."⁶⁰⁵ Kandinsky insisted that the "inner" nature of things is not only non-purposive in some abstract sense, but that it is fundamentally spiritual. Given this fundament, together with the essentially illusory basis of pictorial movement described above, what relevance is literal, bodily movement?

In the essay "Painting as Pure Art", the artist's account of the history of painting is precisely the history of dance's rejection of its sexual and thus "practical" origins, and the development toward the spiritual. At first, such a rejection of the most basic instincts may seem decidedly un-Nietzschean. But the artist describes the process by which "the original bodily or practical impulse" is subject to a "process of refinement (or spiritualisation)",⁶⁰⁶ a process which must be compared with Nietzsche's insistence on an ongoing process of sublimation or of *Vergeistigung* of man's basic instincts.⁶⁰⁷ That is to say, what Kandinsky describes is the exclusion of some practical element, the

⁶⁰⁴ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁶ *ibid.*, p351.

⁶⁰⁷ See Kaufmann (1974), p228 ff, for the close correspondence between Nietzsche's use of "sublimation" and of "Vergeistigung".

necessary maintenance of the physical and bodily element, and the enhancement of the spiritual aspects of the whole. The body, then, is a necessary part of the process of spiritualisation. In the essay "Whither the 'new' art" Kandinsky develops this, writing that the "spiritual atmosphere is like the physical one [...] Like the body, the soul grows by exercise. Like the body, it grows by movement. Movement is life, life is movement."⁶⁰⁸ Having asserted that movement is essential to both a healthy body and a healthy soul, Kandinsky notes that precisely that movement - in both its spiritual and physical senses - is life itself: both physical and spiritual movement are essential to life as such. If there is a point at which it would be possible to suggest Kandinsky has in mind a consideration of the importance of movement of the physical body in the creative process, it would be in this passage, where he seems to echo Wolfskehl's assertion, noted above in Section II, that physical and spiritual movement form a unity, a further echo of Steiner's Nietzsche who insists on the unity of body and soul. Kandinsky proposes that each of the arts which is to contribute to the Monumental Art should learn from the other arts, and it is in this context that it is possible to see that painting should learn from dance in a physical as well as a spiritual way.

Those passages which assert the importance of the physical body and of the dance are supported by the wealth of evidence which the paintings provide. More so than in any other Expressionist works, Kandinsky's paintings resist the viewer's involvement with conventional iconographic details. Rather than becoming engaged in a reading of the work which depends on such detail, we are forced to consider the process through which the work was created: the work is essentially composed of those indexes which signify the movements which, as we saw above to a lesser degree in discussion of Kirchner, constituted the creative act. Thus, in a work such as *Kochel - Landscape with Manor* (1902, fig. 41), a work fairly typical for that time, Kandinsky

⁶⁰⁸ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p101.

makes explicit the strokes which applied paint to canvas. Traces in the thick paint follow the contours of objects represented: vertical strokes in the left front of the picture seem to indicate some sort of foliage, horizontal lines the flat ground, and so on.⁶⁰⁹ Individual strokes as such are more obvious in *Holland - Beach Chairs* (fig. 42), where colour blocks extend to trace more extensive brush movements. By 1906, in *Sevres* (fig. 43), perhaps due to more complex iconography, the representational function of line becomes less clear. While most still adhere to the form, it is far from clear what those marks to the right of and above the first building on the left actually represent. In the lower foreground, they become almost non-representational.

But it is not the well trodden road to non-representation as such that concerns us. Rather, it is the increasingly forceful presence of a particular kind of index. In the paintings we see manifest precisely the application of colour and the creation of form - the traces of the absent body which is so obviously implied in the work. The lower half of the angel depicted top right in *All Saints II* (fig. 44), for instance, is outlined in one continuous stroke. While this need not have been executed with speed, its spontaneous, unlaboured appearance suggest a confident though complex gesture. In a predominantly abstract work such as *Improvisation 21A* (1911, fig.45), particularly those complex traces in the lower centre, these gestural lines begin to dominate as the tension between line as outline and detail of depicted objects, and line as an independent function, as a record of the movement which created it - in Kandinsky's terms, as outer form for spiritual content - becomes the nexus of the work. With the abstract lines in such a work Kandinsky orchestrates, he conducts, and he dances, as the work draws upon as it draws together those various art forms which would constitute the Monumental work of art.

⁶⁰⁹ Artistic precedents for this type of stroke are to be found, and are recorded in the literature on the development of Kandinsky's styles.

Clearly privileging those “non-objective” forms which arise intuitively from within the artist, and, now, as embodiment of the artist, Kandinsky’s theory and practice will return repeatedly to the unstable relation between abstract forms, on the one hand, and images, representations of things, on the other. The *analogy* with Nietzsche’s Dionysus (whose source is the “primordial truth” of existence, directly manifest as the abstract realm of music, embodied in the dance), and his Apollo (to whom belongs the world of appearance, of sculptural form), together with the fact that the continuous development of art is bound up in the conflict between these two elements, is clear. The fundamental difference is that for the artist the ultimate goal of the one was the exclusion of the other; for the philosopher, man could not experience the one without the other without himself perishing.

For Nietzsche, the “destruction of phenomena”,⁶¹⁰ of the world of images, which characterises Dionysus, was most fully achieved in music.⁶¹¹ Tragedy is born “out of the spirit of music” which, then, is the precondition of the rebirth of tragedy which it is the object of the text to articulate. Nietzsche writes that “music stands in a symbolic relation to the primordial contradiction and primordial pain in the heart of the primal unity, and therefore symbolises a sphere which is beyond and prior to all phenomena.”⁶¹² The world of Dionysus, and with it, its analogous realm of music, is ontologically privileged. Writing of the failure of “figurative speech” to begin to articulate this primordial world, to teach man of the Dionysian content of music, Nietzsche writes:

⁶¹⁰ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p104.

⁶¹¹ For a contemporary account of Nietzsche’s influence on modern music itself, see Paul Reisenfeld’s “Nietzsches Bedeutung für die moderne Musik,” *Allgemeine Musik-Zeitung* 32, 1905, referenced in Aschheim (1992), p31.

⁶¹² *The Birth of Tragedy*, p55.

We have now to transfer this process of a discharge of music in images to some fresh, youthful, linguistically creative people [...] and the whole linguistic capacity is excited by this new principle of the imitation of music.⁶¹³

For both Nietzsche and Kandinsky, art is to strive toward the most abstract form, toward that which articulates most faithfully the essence of things: toward music.

Kandinsky writes of the envy with which the painter views music which has “for several centuries been the art that uses its resources not to represent natural appearances, but to express the inner life of the artist and to create a unique life of musical tones”. “Music”, he continues later, “does not need to borrow forms from anywhere in order to create its language.”⁶¹⁴ But the key attraction for Kandinsky is the “grammar”, the principles of harmony, which music has available for the ordering of its abstract elements. “Hence the current search for rhythm in painting, for mathematical, abstract construction, the value placed today upon the repetition of colour tones, the way colours are set in motion, etc.”⁶¹⁵ Hence Kandinsky’s oft repeated suggestion that one day painting will achieve the “Generalbaß der Malerei”, the “grammar of painting”⁶¹⁶ which he thought Goethe had predicted.

In particular Kandinsky was impressed by the manner in which the Austrian composer Arnold Schoenberg argued for recent developments he had made in musical harmony. The section of the chapter “On Parallel Octaves and Fifths” from Schoenberg’s *Theory of Harmony* which Kandinsky translated to Russian for inclusion in Izdebsky’s *Salon 2* catalogue, and to which he added extensive footnotes, concentrates on concepts he thought of importance to the arts in general. Here Schoenberg writes of the limitations imposed on musical harmony, specifically the exclusion of parallel octaves and fifths, suggesting that such limitation is purely conventional, an

⁶¹³ *ibid*, p54.

⁶¹⁴ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), pp154-155.

⁶¹⁵ *ibid*, p154.

⁶¹⁶ *ibid*, p176.

unnecessary constraint upon the means available for artistic expression. By reference to the history of musical theory he sought to show that “the distinction between dissonances and consonances is only gradual, one of degree”, to justify his own use of unresolved dissonances. Kandinsky recognised the analogy between such developments in the principles of tonality, on one hand, and the exclusion of representation (of objects as the principle of structure) he was describing in the realm of painting, on the other. He proceeded to borrow from musical terminology those elements which helped the articulation of what he clearly saw as a parallel movement taking place in the realm of painting.

Writing of the manner in which forms are ordered upon the canvas, Kandinsky notes that rhythm is present in all things, that where things appear arhythmic this is simply the result of a hidden order: the “distinction between rhythmic and arhythmic is, therefore, wholly relative and conventional (like the distinction between consonance and dissonance, which at bottom doesn’t exist.)”⁶¹⁷ Quoting more or less directly from Schoenberg, Kandinsky establishes a principle which to a great extent determines his account of the possible order of the new painting. While he could not show literally that dissonances in painting existed, he could write of “equivalents”. Thus, in an earlier section of *On the Spiritual*, he writes of the “consonance and dissonance of [... individual forms], i.e., the meeting of individual forms [...] the jostling, the confluence or dismemberment [Mit- und Zerreißen] of the individual forms [...] the rhythmic and arhythmic upon the same surface, of abstract forms - on one hand purely geometrical [...] on the other, indescribable in geometric terms[...].”⁶¹⁸ The principle by which traditional continuity is broken down is thus established by reference to dissonance’s relation to consonance, leading to a more general attack on that continuity. And for Kandinsky this had a very specific purpose:

⁶¹⁷ *ibid*, p217.

⁶¹⁸ *ibid*, p171.

Clashing discords, loss of equilibrium, “principles” overthrown, unexpected drumbeats, great questionings, apparently purposeless strivings, stress and longing [...] chains and fetters broken [...] opposites and contradictions - this is our *harmony*.⁶¹⁹

Apart from the artist’s admiration for musical form, Kandinsky’s account relates to that of Nietzsche at a number of other levels. The correlation between Kandinsky’s assertion that the distinction between the rhythmic and arhythmic, between consonance and dissonance, is purely conventional and fundamentally fictional, could be compared with Nietzsche’s critique of the illusory opposition good/evil, his assertion that good is in fact born of what we describe as evil.⁶²⁰ More fundamental is the comparison between Kandinsky’s account of the harmony most suited to his world, and Nietzsche’s assertion (which we encountered above in Section I) that Dionysian suffering and contradiction is most fully represented in the musical form of dissonance.

Kandinsky seeks to tear apart the language of tradition to articulate the crisis of precisely that tradition, and at the same moment to create anew the language which would make possible a radically different existence. Continuing his quest for principles of construction in painting, Kandinsky frequently evoked notions of logic, mathematics and geometry. We have already encountered his assertion that the artist seeks “mathematical, abstract construction”, that geometric forms would comprise part of his new vocabulary. Writing in *On the Spiritual* of the artist’s need to uncover the “constructive forms of our age”, he describes Cubism as a “transitional form” which reveals how natural forms must be “Forcibly subordinated to our constructive ends”;⁶²¹ earlier, he wrote that Picasso (and with him Cubism) “seeks to achieve the constructive

⁶¹⁹ *ibid*, p193.

⁶²⁰ The principles by which Nietzsche attacks such binary oppositions are laid out most concisely in the opening passages of *Beyond Good and Evil*.

⁶²¹ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p208.

element through numerical relations.”⁶²² Elsewhere he writes, in relation to the importance of numbers in the new construction, that

Every formula is as cold as an icy mountain top, and, being the ultimate [geometric] reality, as immovable as a block of marble [...] This ‘mathematical’ construction is a form which sometimes must lead to - and, when used consistently, does lead to the ultimate degree of destruction of the material connection between the parts of objects.⁶²³

But despite Kandinsky’s enthusiasm for such formulae, his insistence that the work of art be not the product of some theory, “but only suddenly inspired by feeling”⁶²⁴ devalued such method. Thus he writes that the relationship between forms may ultimately be expressed in mathematical form “except that here one will perhaps operate more with irregular than with regular numbers.” Kandinsky attempts to escape the confines of conventional logic with the suggestion of a new, spiritual one.

“Mathematically, $1+1=2$. Spiritually, $1-1$ can $=2$.”⁶²⁵

Pursuing the relation of the artist to Nietzsche, it is clear that when Kandinsky does succeed in escaping the Apollonian impulse toward the image, when he articulates painting according to the principles appropriate to the most Dionysian of arts - music - that medium immediately becomes subject to the persona of Socrates. Kandinsky, then, could be seen to seek to become that “artistic Socrates” about which Nietzsche had mused in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Except that the artistic moment of this questionable coupling becomes precisely the subversion of the principles which underwrote the “man of reason.”

⁶²² *ibid*, p152.

⁶²³ *ibid*, p253.

⁶²⁴ *ibid*, p176.

⁶²⁵ *ibid*, p259.

At those points at which Kandinsky articulates the most fundamental aspects of his art theory, he comes closest to Nietzsche, particularly (though not exclusively) as found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. What is more, it is to precisely the fundamentals of the philosopher's ideas that his theory corresponds: first, the decadent nature of language; second, the need to dismantle language and create it anew; third, the interrelatedness of the arts in this new language; fourth, musical form (as the most abstract artistic form) as a paradigm in this process; fifth, dissonance as the archetype for the new linguistic structure; and sixth, both authors gesture (rather vaguely) toward the possibility of a scientific basis or principle of construction for the new form of art. Yet, in spite of this series of correspondences, it is equally clear that aspects of Nietzsche's thought, even in this, his first published (and most metaphysical) text, differ in important ways from that of the artist. These differences will be addressed below.

Franz Marc.

While Marc shared Kandinsky's preoccupation with things apocalyptic,⁶²⁶ it is in the articulation of other ideas that the relation of Nietzsche's language to his texts is most evident. Indeed, the nature of that relation is different, in that, particularly in his later writing, Marc uses more readily and more explicitly language lifted directly from the philosopher's texts.

It seems obvious to me that we should look for a rebirth in the cold dawn of [primitive] artistic intelligence [...] we will have to become ascetics [...] We will have to renounce absolutely almost everything which was precious and

⁶²⁶ See Levine (1979).

indispensable to us as good Central Europeans; we will have to feed [our ideas] on locusts and wild honey, not history - we must, in order for all of us to escape our European lack of taste.

Marc, letter to August Macke, January 14th, 1911⁶²⁷

This passage draws together certain key concepts which underwrite the relation of Marc's texts to those of Nietzsche, and to which much of the following will be devoted.

We have already seen that for Marc, by the middle of the nineteenth century, art had declined to the point of a catastrophic collapse. According to the criteria he considers important, we could infer from this that for Marc the works produced at that time failed to communicate the "inner realities" of life, that art had become no more than a representation of things unrelated to the "spiritual" aspects of existence. In short, those practices which for Marc constituted art no longer represented or referred to that which was essential to man. Thus, in the essay "The 'Savages' of Germany", Marc writes that the aim of the new artists is "To create out of their work *symbols* for their own time, symbols that belong on the alters of a future spiritual religion, symbols behind which the technical heritage cannot be seen."⁶²⁸ Such a demand recalls again that passage in *The Birth of Tragedy* in which Nietzsche writes of the coming of the Dionysian to the Apollonian Greek: "The essence of nature is now to be expressed symbolically; we need a new world of symbols, and the entire symbolism of the body is called into play, not the mere symbolism of the lips [...]." We are familiar with what Nietzsche means by this assertion, and it is clear - not just from the similarity of the language he uses to express the idea - that Marc has something strikingly similar in mind. Of course the relation between Apollonian culture and that of mid-century Germany is not obvious, but from both (and this is what makes the connection so important) that which is essential to, that which transcends, all being, is absent: in the case of the former, Dionysian culture as the manifestation of the "Ur-eine", the "truth"; in

⁶²⁷ Miesel (1970), p67. Transl. altered.

⁶²⁸ Lankheit (1974), p64.

the case of the latter, the transcendent "spirit". Again, we might remind ourselves of the comparison with Nietzsche's account of the coins in the essay "On truth and lies in a nonmoral sense": like Marc's art of mid-century Germany, language no longer signifies that which is meaningful or, rather, language is no longer meaningful.

As had been the case for Kandinsky, the symbols with which Marc sought to re-create language had their source in the "spiritual" or "inner" nature of artistic form and colour: "Blue is the *male* principle, severe and spiritual. Yellow is the *female* principle, gentle, cheerful and sensual. Red is *matter*, brutal and heavy [...]" ; and so he continues.⁶²⁹ More important are the principles which underwrite and determine the nature of Marc's symbols. He writes:

I am attempting to enhance my sensitiveness for the organic rhythm that I feel is in all things; and I am trying to feel pantheistically the rapture of the flow of "blood" in nature, in the trees, in the animals, in the air.⁶³⁰

Marc's pantheism will be considered later. In a manner that bears comparison with the "ecstasy" of certain artists of *die Brücke*, more so than in the theory of Kandinsky, the concept of rapture is important to Marc's work. Having devoted much space above to the nature of Kirchner's ecstasy and its relation to Nietzsche's *Rausch*, it would seem important to see in which ways Marc's rapture relates to the same. An initial glance at Marc's work, however, tells us that it will be manifest somewhat differently. In consideration of the "dance", of what I called the gestural element of certain moments of painting, particularly in relation to those figurative parts of the painting which drew attention to themselves as "expressive" elements, it was to the action and to the body of the artist which created them that the mark was shown to refer immediately. Yet as we look at a work of Marc's, that sense of immediacy which characterised at least the initial

⁶²⁹ Levine (1979), p.57.

⁶³⁰ Roethel (1971), p105.

moments of the work seem absent. While we could assert that the marks - whether essentially figurative or abstract - refer us back to the moment of creation, to a gesture, the control which seems to have created such marks denies the spontaneity which was so important to Kirchner. The marks are no more gestural than those found in many other modernist paintings.

The "rapture" of which Marc writes could be said to have been - in Nietzsche's own terms - sublimated, or perhaps more appropriate to the artist's own intentions, subject to a Nietzschean process of *Vergeistigung*. The bodily aspect of the act of creation is in Marc's works marginalised; having thus differentiated Marc's rapture from one aspect of Kirchner's ecstasy, we should see if anything remains of the artist's sense of rapture in relation to that of Nietzsche .

As was the case for Kandinsky, the truth of which Marc's art speaks is one known intuitively rather than empirically or logically to the artist, one which arises without the intervention of logical and reasoned thought. And, as we saw in Kandinsky's work, "feeling" plays a fundamental role in this regard. True to Marc's pantheistic concerns, it is not only the artist, but that which he seeks to represent which is subject to feelings. Thus he writes in his "Aufzeichnungen auf Blaettern in Quart" that "The artistic logic of Picasso, Kandinsky, Delauney, Burlyuk etc. is complete and faultless; they don't 'see' the deer at all, and they don't care about that; they give 'their' inner world; the subject"; clarifying, he goes on to write: "I can paint a picture: the deer. Pisanello has painted thus. But I can also want to paint a picture: 'the deer feels'. What infinitely finer senses the painter must have to paint that!"⁶³¹ At this moment, then, Marc writes as if he is able to represent the feelings of bodies beyond himself. Later in the same essay he writes that as an artist he may paint a cube as manifest in the world of things; "But I can also represent the cube, not as I see it, but [as I feel it. Feelings

⁶³¹ Lankheit (1978), pp99-100.

penetrate objects, material[...] Picasso sees [something] truly spiritual in the material. He paints his subjective spirituality."⁶³² (Marc's brackets, except omission.)

On one hand, then, the feelings which inhere in things; on the other, the feelings of the artist in relation to things. This is precisely Marc's attempt to "feel pantheistically" which we encountered above. His metaphysics allows for a correspondence between what is internal to the artist, and what is beyond the artist: both are part of a pantheistic continuum. For Marc, art which attends to the "spiritual" in experience would have to work through a combination of the artist's feelings in relation to his world, and the feelings which the world (in a decidedly mystical manner) feels in itself. The artist's rapture, at this moment, is manifest in a decidedly spiritual ecstasy which allows for communion with bodies beyond the artist's self.

Feelings and "artistic logic" (after his attack upon conventional logic, outlined above, he is careful to distance it from any order which pertains to the creative act) are the source and syntax for the spiritual in art. Yet the structures which the paintings depend upon for their order, whether the complex of arabesques such as we find in *The Red Horses* (1911, fig. 46), or the more mechanical geometric forms of a later work such as *Tirol* (1913, fig. 47), call the viewer's attention to precisely that conventional logic and order Marc seeks to deny. It seems that in the earlier works Marc has chosen the curves and arabesques which compose the pictures to create for the viewer a sense of continuity, of pantheistic harmony between things: one thing - a horse, perhaps - is connected to the next by the curves which echo or actually continue one another. Perhaps a little obvious, the technique could nonetheless be seen to respond to the artist's need to represent this continuity. By 1912, in a work such as *Tiger* (fig. 48), Marc had imposed upon his representations a somewhat different, more mechanical order. By *Tirol* those vestiges of spontaneity which may have existed in the earlier works -

⁶³² *ibid*, p100.

gestural brushmarks to describe forms such as those seen in the background of *Blue Horse I* (1911, fig. 49) - have become completely overwhelmed by the complex of geometrical structures and forms which create the apocalyptic whole.

Yet it is particularly in these later works that we are most forcefully confronted with that sense of "rapture" to which their author had referred in 1908. The explosive power, the sense of frenzy - and this in relation to destruction, pain (the suffering of the animals) and joy (Madonna and child) - which *Tirol* evokes, at least equals that of any of the works of his fellow editor of the almanac. If there is a point of comparison with Nietzsche's account of the creative act, then it is not simply in the relation Apollo-Dionysus: the tensions which occur in such works arise from the relation of Dionysian excess to geometrical, almost mathematical form: in particular, this bears comparison with the intervention of Socrates as the principle of abstract order. Were we to accept that these abstract, geometric forms arose somehow from within the artist's process of creation, we should draw comparison with the later Nietzsche's account of *Rausch* as articulated in Heidegger: that is, the rapture which underwrites the work generates the means for its own containment. To contextualise such Nietzschean readings of Marc's painting, it is necessary to attend rather more closely to his writing on art.

The quotation with which the present section begins makes much of the artist's relation to the "primitive". The work of the primitives he has uncovered is as yet only in a "cold dawn", unlike that of Japan or the Italian Renaissance which has already passed through a thousand years of development. It is fresh, embryonic. The author writes that he has come to understand what it is to be an artist: "we will have to become ascetics - don't get excited; I'm only talking about intellectual matters,"⁶³³ he writes to his friend. It is about *ideas* that he is writing; those ideas which are rooted in all that is of the Good

⁶³³ Miesel (1970), p67.

European will have to be subverted: historical tradition will no longer be their source, but "locusts and wild honey". The food of the savage is to be the new food of the ascetic European intellect; for, as Nietzsche makes clear in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, all things which man has made great depend upon the ascetic ideal: "Apart from the ascetic ideal, man, the human *animal*, had no meaning so far."⁶³⁴ For Marc, the primitive state evinced in the works he had seen in the ethnographic museum had *meaning* - that which had escaped modern existence. As had been the case for Nietzsche, the primitive - on the evolutionary model to which Nietzsche sometimes subscribed, a point from which modern man had developed - contained within itself that which was essential to the revitalisation of modern man. Primitive man's instinct - Marc uses the word repeatedly⁶³⁵ - could again become part of our experience, could be picked up and used again in our lives. In "intellectual matters" Marc envisages a process of rejuvenation, indeed, a *rebirth* (more of Marc's repeated use of this metaphor later) of "artistic intelligence."

And so we come to later texts, those written about the outbreak of war. As we have seen, in the essay "The High Type" Marc writes:

What is the hidden goal of thought?
The tearing of chains, the completion of the type, the spiritual victory of the Europeans.

That he should choose to title his essay as such suggests not only a concern with an elite comparable to that of the philosopher, but a direct response to Nietzsche's own

⁶³⁴ *The Genealogy of Morals*, p162.

⁶³⁵ For the importance of "instinct" to Marc see, for e.g., his letter of 12.4.1915 reproduced and translated in Chipp (1968), p181, where he uses the word five times, always positively, and this in the context of his movement away from people and back to "animality".

question asked in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "Was ist vornehm?". Summarising what he describes as the "pathos of distance", the craving after the "development of ever higher, rarer, more remote [...] states", Nietzsche writes: "in brief, simply the enhancement of the type 'man'".⁶³⁶ Of the "noble caste" he writes that "their predominance did not lie mainly in physical strength but in strength of the soul".⁶³⁷ It is in this sense that Marc's "spiritual victory" must be seen: his victory is the final development of the European's soul.⁶³⁸

Nietzsche writes disdainfully of the consciousness of Europeans that it raves, "under scientific disguises", over a coming society from which "the exploitative aspect" will be removed, in which all men will become equal. Such is the philosopher's anti-democratic stance echoed in the attitudes of the artists already described. But Nietzsche's use of the term "European" is generally more positive, particularly when prefigured by the adjective "good". In the aphorism "European man and the abolition of nations", of *Human, all too Human*, he highlights the dangers of nationalism and goes on to state that "one should not be afraid to proclaim oneself simply a *good European* and actively to work for the amalgamation of nations: wherein the Germans are, through

⁶³⁶ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p201.

⁶³⁷ *ibid*, p202.

⁶³⁸ This soul was, in Nietzsche's words, part of "*whole* human beings". Yet it must be stressed that Nietzsche's use of the word "soul", like his use of "spirit", must always be distanced from the metaphysical in which they are historically grounded. Nietzsche recognised that language was the nexus of our metaphysics, and that until we could break from that language we would remain unable to break from that metaphysics. Simply to exclude words from our vocabulary would not do; rather, a process of subversion was necessary. Nietzsche's use of "soul", while it necessarily evokes that metaphysics, always attempts to break from its illusions. While it seems no such critique of the word "soul" is at play in Marc's text, it is apparent he is aware of the problems inherent in the metaphysics upon which the concept depends. In particular, Marc's essay devotes much space to man's invention of "nature", to his need for nature as a concept outside of which he could place himself, the better to consider himself, and stresses the (decidedly Nietzschean) need "to return in the *fully* human." "Already man has persisted long enough with that bold duality to come to himself", he writes, echoing precisely Nietzsche's demand that man overcome the metaphysical distinctions which divide him from himself.

their ancient and tested quality of being the *interpreter and mediator between peoples*, able to be of assistance."⁶³⁹

Stressing the need to "shun nothing more passionately than narrowness of feeling and national ambition", Marc writes in his essay "In War's Purifying Fire" that "The European type of the future will be the German type; but before that happens, the German must become a good European."⁶⁴⁰ Like Nietzsche, Marc repeatedly criticises (German) nationalism, a force he encountered at a cultural level in Vinnen's *Protest of German Artists against the Importation of French Art*, and to which he responded along with Kandinsky, Pechstein and other members of the German avant-garde in *The Battle for Art: An Answer to the "Protest of German Artists"* (1911). His response claimed that "Today a strong wind blows the seeds of a new art over the whole of Europe and where there is good, unworn land the sowing follows natural law." Ridiculing those who sought to halt this process, Marc made explicit what was elsewhere - particularly in the *Blue Rider* almanac - implicit. Exhibitions organised by the editors of *The Blue Rider*, like those of Kandinsky's earlier exhibiting societies, brought together works by artists of different nationalities emphasising artistic developments apparently without concern for national identity of their authors. For the editors of the almanac the various works presented showed an "*inner* relationship" despite a lack of surface relations.⁶⁴¹ This reference concerns not only questions of style, but all aspects of the work:

It should be almost superfluous to emphasise specifically that in our case the principle of internationalism is the only one possible. [...] in the last resort [...] national coloration is merely incidental. The whole work, called art, knows no borders or nations, only humanity.⁶⁴²

⁶³⁹ *Human, all too Human*, 475, p175.

⁶⁴⁰ Miesel (1970), p163.

⁶⁴¹ Lankheit (1974), p250. See below, Section III, for a more complete discussion of concepts suggested in this claim.

⁶⁴² *ibid*, p251.

In texts written during the war the metaphysical concepts (which will be discussed more fully below) which underwrite these ideas are displaced by a more Nietzschean Europe. Thus by 1915 he would write that

Germanic qualities will spill over all boundaries after this war. If we stay healthy and strong and do not wish to lose the fruit of our conquests we will need immense power of assimilation and a life force of such power that it will be able to pervade everything without any fear or consideration of the foreign or the new things which our power in Europe will bring [...] but only if [Germany] is not thwarted by narrow minded nationalism.⁶⁴³

Both tone and content are explicitly Nietzschean. In the chapter "What is Noble?" Nietzsche had written that "life itself is *essentially* appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation".⁶⁴⁴ It is from precisely this perspective of power that the artist himself begins to write.

And thus to the war itself. Of course, the arrival of the word in Marc's text betrays not an intellectual but a material imperative. Yet the manner in which he talks of the war shows quite clearly a significant interest in what Nietzsche had to say on the subject. For the philosopher, war - whether a military or an intellectual affair⁶⁴⁵ - was a precondition for a healthy existence,⁶⁴⁶ an antidote to the complacency and mediocrity which characterised modern man. But at the same time it was a vortex about which epochs could turn: we saw above, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche's apocalyptic "war of spirits" which would explode the power structures of the old society, as well as the opening section of *The Will to Power* in which he writes of the catastrophic history of the

⁶⁴³ Lankheit (1978), p161.

⁶⁴⁴ *Beyond Good and Evil*, p203.

⁶⁴⁵ In his accounts Kaufmann repeatedly attempts to convince the reader Nietzsche's violence is a metaphorical rather than literal one. To present Nietzsche's texts at such a purely intellectual level is surely reductive.

⁶⁴⁶ See discussion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, "Of War and Warriors", above.

next two hundred years. War for Nietzsche could act as a force of obliteration which itself is a precondition for transvaluation.

The title of Marc's "Im Fegefeuer des Krieges"⁶⁴⁷ reflects precisely this sense. Reinforcing in the first few lines of the following passage the metaphysical nature of his internationalism, he wrote in "The High Type" that

The view-of-the-world [*Welt 'an' schauung*] of the old world becomes the view-through-the-world [*Welt 'durch' schauung*] of the new world.

To this free last battle the heavy chains, which the European man of the past has formed, must be torn apart.

Thus the war.

The war stirs up as a cleanser all slumbering [...] Now is the hour in which all values are measured anew, and in which thoughts take their new, free form.⁶⁴⁸

The European, the "noblest and finest", had choked for too long on his tradition: "Never was an action so unavoidable as this [war]". Later in the same essay Marc writes: "We stand on the other side, we few, the youngsters whom the throat of war has spat out on the far shore like the disagreeable Jonah [...] The great war has refreshed and freed us."⁶⁴⁹

In the essay "Im Fegefeuer des Krieges" he asks:

[...] when the war is over someday, what then in Germany?

Will there be an artistic Germany along with a political Germany?

For several years we have been saying that many things in art and life were rotten and done for; and we pointed to new and better possibilities.⁶⁵⁰

Suddenly the war came, he writes, pushing aside words to make space for the deed. That deed was to be a cleansing which would allow for the generation of a renewed

⁶⁴⁷ Lankheit (1978), pp158-162.

⁶⁴⁸ *ibid*, p170.

⁶⁴⁹ *ibid*, p173.

⁶⁵⁰ *ibid*, p159.

culture. Marc's concern for the future of art after the war stems from the recognition of a crisis which had been established long before.

In the essay "David Strauss, the confessor and writer" Nietzsche wrote that "Culture is, above all, unity of style in all the expressions of the life of a people",⁶⁵¹ that "barbarism" - the opposite of culture - is a "lack of style or a chaotic jumble of styles."⁶⁵² Indeed, much of the text is given over to an examination of what culture was or had become since Germany's victory over France, and the false assumptions made by Germany's "educated". For Nietzsche, in Germany "there no longer exists any clear conception of what culture is": the German of today dwells in a "chaotic jumble of styles".⁶⁵³ The concept "style" here underwrites "culture." As we have seen, in the *Blue Rider* almanac Marc had asserted that "the artistic style that was the inalienable possession of an earlier era collapsed catastrophically in the middle of the nineteenth century. There has been no style since." From that moment, he writes, "serious art has been the work of individual artists".⁶⁵⁴ Clearly, Marc, like the early Nietzsche, seeks stylistic continuity as the basis for culture, and recognises discontinuity of styles as the symptom of a weak culture.

Prizing culture and politics apart, Marc writes in "Das Geheime Europa":

[...] the war will cleanse. For this cleansing the war will run and the sick blood will be forgotten.

One thing is missing in Europe today: the free, open forum upon which such thoughts may be expressed with "open interest"; for this open interest today still stands too close to politics.⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵¹ *Untimely Meditations*, p5.

⁶⁵² *ibid*, p6.

⁶⁵³ *ibid*, pp5-6.

⁶⁵⁴ Lankheit (1974), p66.

⁶⁵⁵ Lankheit (1978), p163-4.

Such thoughts exist, writes Marc, "silently and happily" within many people: this he calls the hidden Europe, an "all hopeful Europe of hidden spirits, the 'good European' type which Nietzsche already uncovered and loved."⁶⁵⁶

Die 100 Aphorismen.

Written in 1914-1915, the very form of Marc's *Die 100 Aphorismen. Das zweite Gesicht* betrays a proximity to Nietzsche, one accentuated by the immediate inclusion of the words

And it must seem bliss to you to press your hand upon millenia as upon wax.

Preceding this major work is this direct quotation from Nietzsche, one which had also appeared in its totality in Steiner,⁶⁵⁷ and in Brandes.⁶⁵⁸ That the text is written very much with Nietzsche in mind is further reinforced when we realise that the words with which Marc finishes the whole,

We live in a hard time.
Our thoughts are hard.
Everything must become harder

correspond to precisely that same passage of *Zarathustra*.⁶⁵⁹

Further, the subtitle - The Second Sight - is also found in Nietzsche, this time in *Ecce Homo*.⁶⁶⁰ Nietzsche writes of a "dual series of experiences", of an access to apparently separate worlds repeated in his own nature: "I am a *Doppelgänger*, I have a

⁶⁵⁶ *ibid*, p164.

⁶⁵⁷ Steiner (1985), p103.

⁶⁵⁸ Brandes (1914), p48.

⁶⁵⁹ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p231.

⁶⁶⁰ *Ecce Homo*, p225.

'second' face [*Gesicht*] in addition to the first. *And* perhaps also a third." This possibility of a third face also occurs in Marc's text.⁶⁶¹

In the first aphorism Marc writes that the relativity of things - and in this context he refers to the importance of truth in relation to appearance - is a product of lazy spirits. The overriding theme of the first three aphorisms is that of unity behind apparent discontinuity. The "mask of things blinds us so": a *Schein* which, in its luminosity, hides that from which it emanates, recalls Nietzsche's Apollonian world of *Schein*, a world which itself stands in relation to, and is founded upon, the transcendent world, primordial oneness. While the concept is particularly Schopenhauerean, Marc's description of appearance (*Schein*) as a *mask* whose shining *blinds* - together with the description of those who don't even recognise such distinctions as "lazy spirits" - is decidedly Nietzschean in tone. Indeed, this attack on lazy spirits recurs: later he criticises those artists who opt for the "'comfortable life"'; most, Marc writes perhaps approvingly, "prefer to die than 'make with the new', the *vita nuova*".⁶⁶²

To overcome the mediocrity which characterises the lazy spirit "there is only one possibility: that in Europe there arise men with sufficient genius and force to break the spell of highest public opinion, the prophets and great untimely ones [...]".⁶⁶³ Reference to men of genius, of force; prophets, and great untimely ones ("*grossen Unzeitgemaessen*", as in the title of Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*); this is presented in the context of the overcoming of the masses, and of convention. In precisely the same vein, Aphorism 17 begins: "There are times when silence is cowardly and criminal. The courage of proud untimeliness [*Unzeitgemaessheit*] is the sign of true prophets."

⁶⁶¹ See below, Aphorism 45. Footnotes and main text will reference aphorism rather than page numbers. The original is in Lankheit (1978), pp 185-213.

⁶⁶² Aphorism 53. Comparison with Nietzsche's suggestion that there is a need to "push under" the weak and lazy, to destroy the decadent - see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* - is reasonable.

⁶⁶³ Aphorism 16.

The theme of tradition as a (negative) restraint upon human action first finds coherent form in the third aphorism when Marc writes that the world of appearance, an "evasion before the truth", is articulated historically: in the present period of transition the old becomes "sickened and pessimistic". The sixth begins: "*Lange, allzulange* the European sought to avoid the battle for the new *Lebensreform* [...]" Tradition and reform were seen by most as a solution. Under tradition man understood values of old culture to persist for centuries until they no longer really existed and, in their wretched nakedness, their impotence became apparent". Traditional values become impotent as they are gradually laid bare through the passage of centuries.

In this context he writes: "Traditions are a splendid thing; but they should be created, not lived on."⁶⁶⁴ They are, he writes in the following aphorism, treacherous, never solid: the person who he calls the builder and "shaper of form" must seek out a solid foundation which can be found only in the present. Marc's sustained insistence on the role of the creator/builder as the origin of a new tradition is surely a Nietzschean one. Developing the same, he goes on to write that "The creative man honours the past by leaving it in peace and not living on it."⁶⁶⁵ Our forefathers sought to develop richness from the past: in so doing they "ran the gamut of past cultures and lost the ability to create their own." He writes that "Today we dismantle the sick, brittle, always deceptive nature and submit them, according to our will, together again. [...] Material and space lose for us their boundaries, their godly boundedness. Everything is newly figured for our eyes."⁶⁶⁶ The process Marc has in mind is clearly a destructuring, and a subjection to the will as the counter-movement; the loss of godly boundedness, which occurred in Nietzsche's *Gay Science* upon the death of God, is the precondition for the re-figuration Marc describes.

⁶⁶⁴ Aphorism 31.

⁶⁶⁵ Aphorism 39.

⁶⁶⁶ Aphorism 39.

At his most poetic Marc accounts for this break as follows:

In the great war, in each heart, once stood an hour and a second, a totally still, small, singular moment; and then with soft, new knocks again hammers slowly against the future.

That was the hidden hour of death in old times.⁶⁶⁷

Simultaneously the passage might be compared to two sections of *Zarathustra*. "The stillest hour" reads: "The hand moved, the clock of my life held its breath - I had never heard such stillness about me: so that my voice was terrified".⁶⁶⁸ The second is "At Noontide", an extensive parable in which Zarathustra falls asleep at noontide, awaking after much discourse to discover the sun still standing directly above his head. "What has happened to me? Listen! Has time flown away? Do I not fall? Have I not fallen - listen! into the well of eternity?"⁶⁶⁹ Both passages refer to the passing of a moment, particularly the latter a moment whose principle significance is the separation of the past from the future; a now redundant past from a future pregnant with possibilities.

Presenting tradition as the history of artistic decline, Aphorism 36 asserts that the "bridge of beautiful tradition has collapsed," that between the Europe of Hoelderlin and Beethoven and that of today "lies the great decline, the interregnum of formlessness. The empty art of the nineteenth century was our nursery." Artistic form had decayed such that art no longer had form: from this artistic nihilism the artist of the new age was to begin to create. Thus, in the realm of painting, "this interregnum lasted until the venerable Cézanne came, and with shaking hands groped about in the emptiness"; with

⁶⁶⁷ Aphorism 85.

⁶⁶⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p167. It is significant that August Macke, a close friend of Marc and fellow contributor to the *Blaue Reiter*, referred to precisely this passage of Zarathustra in a letter to his future wife, Elizabeth, in 1905, writing that the lesson was that "the greatest experiences are not our loudest but our stillest hours." Quoted in McCullagh (1984), 640. For Macke's interest in Nietzsche, see especially Erdmann-Macke (1962), pp55-56.

⁶⁶⁹ *Zarathustra*, p288.

his work the world freed itself.⁶⁷⁰ A similar freedom is established as a result of the war; thus Marc states that "European misery changes with the noble⁶⁷¹ emotion of a new hope. [...] From [the war] the new world wills and develops to form."⁶⁷² This new hope is constituted in the "new European outlook, in a new *Weltanschauung*"; a new vision which will "reshape our art".⁶⁷³

Kant, writes Marc, saw far ahead, beyond the nineteenth century into the new age.⁶⁷⁴ After this great, mythical figure, he writes in Aphorism 28, we encounter a very singular voice, "a green island in the time prior to our epoch, whose work is *philosophised with a hammer*."⁶⁷⁵ He put the bridges of a comfortable time behind us and threw us to the cold, hard shore of a new era" (my emphasis). The language used to describe this unnamed figure - so obviously Nietzsche himself - is explicitly Nietzschean; "we younger ones, we warriors, thank him for everything [...]. The war, this 'sublime celebration of philosophy'" tore the old ground of the past from beneath our feet. From this Marc derives his "freedom to action": "We reel on nothingness. We must now create, fill the world, *to make life possible*" (my emphasis). That the state of *Das Nichts* - especially when conceived of as a goal - is unhealthy, is clear in Nietzsche's texts: that man must create from within in order *to make life possible* is a recurring *Leitmotif* of those texts.

While Marc asserts that "Through reinterpretation, transvaluation, and not through demolition and overturning, the creator strides forward strongly", it is apparent that more generally he conceives of a sudden break with the past. Thus he writes that

⁶⁷⁰ Aphorism 37.

⁶⁷¹ For a brief statement of the importance of the concept "noble" in Nietzsche, see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p220.

⁶⁷² Aphorism 43.

⁶⁷³ Aphorism 67.

⁶⁷⁴ Aphorism 27.

⁶⁷⁵ The subtitle of *Twilight of the Idols* reads "or How to Philosophise with a Hammer".

the great war prepared for "hopeless forces a quick end."⁶⁷⁶ Tradition is to be collapsed at a singular, apocalyptic moment, a cleansing of the European forum. Marc devotes much of the seventh aphorism to an account of the "practical degeneration" of European man. Important here is the use of metaphors of pathology and particularly physiological sickness in the diagnosis of the cultural condition. The problem of European sickness is an impoverishment of man through machines, formulae and books, a reminder of Marc's earlier comments concerning the physical and spiritual demise of man in a mechanical age. This becomes particularly marked in Aphorism 80, the whole of which is devoted to such diagnosis: "The spiritual life of the brain knows the same herds of infection and bacillus-carriers as the roots of the physiological world that is only the paradigm of the spirit [...] Only in decadent products, in the decomposition of the old, lurks danger to the spirit." Again it is the notions of science and "progress" which Marc explicitly draws into question.⁶⁷⁷ We have considered above in some detail his attitude to the former. Nietzsche formulated the problem of the latter in *Will to Power*: "Faith in 'progress' - in the lower spheres of intelligence it appears as ascending life; but this is self-deception; in the higher spheres of intelligence as descending life [...as] nihilism."⁶⁷⁸

From this image of sickness, writes Marc, derives our concern for the "wild", and our "awe before animals". This sickness, he writes, is only a symptom of a "*vast shift of force which the European type notices*." Precisely the same is found in art: its state is alarming, but it too, Marc assures his reader, will overcome the machine. During the nineteenth century, and in recent preparations for the war, the "will to art" had suffered a monumental collapse: "Art was at best a stimulus to over fatigued nerves."⁶⁷⁹ This section is more or less a quote from Nietzsche's *Case of Wagner*. Writing of his former

⁶⁷⁶ Aphorism 6.

⁶⁷⁷ Aphorism 7.

⁶⁷⁸ *The Will to Power*, 113, p70.

⁶⁷⁹ Aphorism 8.

friend, the philosopher notes that "Our physicians and physiologists confront their most interesting case in Wagner, at least a very complete case. Precisely because nothing is more modern than [Wagner's] total sickness, this lateness and overexcitement of the nervous system, Wagner is *the modern artist par excellence* [...]"⁶⁸⁰ Further, "Wagner's art is sick"; "*Wagner est une névrose*"; and finally, "Wagner represents a great corruption of music. He has guessed that it is a means to excite weary nerves - and with that he made music sick."⁶⁸¹ With this final formulation we have arrived precisely at Nietzsche's account of (artistic) decadence, the dangerous loss of instincts⁶⁸² described above in Section I. Nietzsche's aphorism from which these extracts are taken is followed two aphorisms later by that passage quoted above to describe literary decadence. If there is a fundamental theme to the text, it is that of decadence. And it is to this that Marc's text must also refer.

The ninth aphorism begins with the horror and dread of war, the uncertainty, and finally the "will" which "intoxicated [man's] blood", leading to the "will to destiny which only those who have the second sight can see." This affirmation of destruction, of the necessity of war and violence, is Nietzsche's *amor fati*. Aphorism 21 writes of those who sought to accelerate the war and forced it to its climax. Again, "The old *amor fati* has pushed them onward." Reiterating his dependence on Nietzsche for the formulation of the account, he begins the following aphorism stating: "We esteem our opponents", recalling Zarathustra's assertion that "You must be proud of your enemy: then the success of your enemy shall be your success too."⁶⁸³

Underscoring the decidedly Nietzschean nature of his account of the war, Marc asserts that "Nietzsche laid his powerful mine: the thoughts of Will to Power. They

⁶⁸⁰ *The Case of Wagner*, p166.

⁶⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁶⁸² *The Antichrist*, p134.

⁶⁸³ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p75.

exploded to terrible effect in the great war."⁶⁸⁴ Later he writes that "Each thought has only its particular breadth and force of tension; but like every force it changes itself according to the law of energy into a new one. *From the Will to Power the Will to Form will originate.*" This is surely one of Marc's most intense passages. Metaphors of mines and explosions when speaking of Nietzsche's ideas, in the context of an account of a very real war, attributes the philosopher's ideas a truly prophetic status; they not only articulate the events of the war, but actually constitute it. Aphorism 41 writes that "The transvaluation of Nietzsche's Will to Power in the knowledge of power - after long wars which we fight and continue to fight under Nietzsche's banner - that becomes our belief, our time, it comes to be the time of Europe." But the notion of power, the "particular breadth and force of tension" of each thought, is not simply a notion of explosivity: it is a force which will always change itself to a new relation, to a new state. Thus what he here calls the "Will to Form" (more of this in the following section) originates from the Will to Power. In Aphorism 29 he writes that "our burning hope aims that after the war the heat energy of the warish Will to Power will not be diverted to a latent warmth, but will be led by strong spirits in the waves of oscillation of the Will to Form." Art, he writes in a manner reminiscent of Nietzsche's formulation of Will to Power in *The Will to Power* (see above, Section I), "is never anything other than Will to Form." Will to power, then, is both the explosive power of the war, and the very origin of that which will overcome/rebuild after it.

"What confused irony that our language derives the concept 'naturally' from nature! Nature is never natural, straight and simple. It reaches everything by detours, secret paths; under the most unbelievable wasting of force."⁶⁸⁵ Following the hidden paths and riddles of nature, "Our knowledge was first caught in things which lay furthest from humanity: one began with the stars and numbers in order finally today to turn the

⁶⁸⁴ Aphorism 26.

⁶⁸⁵ Aphorism 13.

formulae of knowledge against men."⁶⁸⁶ When Nietzsche entitled the first section of *Human, all too Human* "Of first and last things" he gave a title to his critique of the history of man's focus on the metaphysical (whether that be the Platonic form, scientific formula, heaven) to the exclusion of things closest to man. He was surely the first philosopher in the western tradition to draw attention to the importance of what we eat and drink, to head-aches, to vomit.⁶⁸⁷ The condition of attending exclusively to things so remote from, even unreal to, man, he called nihilism. Marc's formulation coincides: science pursues nature in its realms - that which is abstract, fabrication. For Marc "true being" is overwritten with our creations, "with our 'person', we establish states; mobilise politics; found religions [...]".⁶⁸⁸ These, it seems, are our errors, our "lies." Those who fail to recognise this Marc calls the "fat nihilists".

Aphorism 19 is essentially a restatement of Marc's distaste for utility, specifically with regard to science. Applied science is to pure science, he suggests, as vice is to purity. Vice has beautiful and audacious strength, but it is also a force of compromise and equalisation. While he concedes that utility and knowledge are not polar opposites, he asserts that "the useful application of knowledge is its abuse." For Marc, pure knowledge, uncontaminated by practical concerns, "gives birth to", as in the title of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*,⁶⁸⁹ European thought.⁶⁹⁰ The coming European will escape the "beautiful and dreadful *Schein*" - the dual and contradictory formulation is surely Nietzsche's - to live in the second sight. Developing this particularly Apollonian account of art, and this in the context of the coming of the Socratic demon, Marc writes: "The decadence of art begins with the appearance of purposive thought - the Will to

⁶⁸⁶ Aphorism 15.

⁶⁸⁷ The opening sections of *Ecce Homo*, for example, focus on physical well being, and this in relation to food and the stomach; see, e.g., pp237ff.

⁶⁸⁸ Aphorism 15.

⁶⁸⁹ Elsewhere Marc writes that "Each belief gives birth to form", and in Aphorism 51, "Each new knowing of the world [...] gives birth to a new form."

⁶⁹⁰ Aphorism 20.

Form becomes weak with the will to use."⁶⁹¹ The theory of *l'art pour l'art*, he writes, "was a notable and spiritual route from this state in the nineteenth century", but "art as pleasure is essentially only a graceful variation of utilitarian thought. To speak essentially of pleasure in art is a blasphemy and a bad habit."

Likewise, Nietzsche criticised the idea of an art which served ends which were alien to his concept of art. For the philosopher, the value of the Symbolist aesthetic is its undermining of what he called the moralising tendency in art. Yet, like Marc, he recognised that this established, that aesthetic became redundant. For both writers art becomes useless: for Marc, in shaking off its conventional (practical, utilitarian) role, art becomes no more than a source of pleasure and happiness of the majority (Utilitarian in the philosophical sense), unable to function according to art's true (spiritual) goal; for Nietzsche, art ends up unable to do anything: "Art is the great stimulus to life: how could it be thought purposeless, aimless, *l'art pour l'art*?"⁶⁹² Both thinkers maintain the idea that art has a purpose, but that purpose is divorced from what each (separately and differently) accounts for as the conventional status of art. Nonetheless, in Nietzsche's attack on the concept of a purposeless art lies a rejection of a particular account of art - that of Idealism, manifest in the disinterestedness of Kant's aesthetic experience - which will serve to undermine the correspondence of the two writers' accounts. This will be addressed below.

Marc presents a critique Nietzschean in both content and tone - I am thinking particularly of the last sentence of Marc's text quoted, pleasure in art as a "blasphemy" and a "bad habit" - of Utilitarianism. "Utility, entertainment, pleasure lie at the outer periphery of artistic feeling, where art dilutes and deteriorates [...] Nietzsche said once: 'Man does not strive after happiness, only the Englishman does that'". On that island, he

⁶⁹¹ Aphorism 58.

⁶⁹² *Twilight of the Idols*, p91.

writes, art "dies a miserable death."⁶⁹³ For Marc, the war will bring about the end to such thought. And it is about the German, having not sought happiness, that a new art will generate; not an art of consolation of today, but "the *great yes-saying* to the spirit of the time"(my emphasis).

Returning to science, Marc writes in Aphorism 35 that the art to come will "give form to our scientific convictions. This art is our religion, our centre of gravity, our truth". There is no doubt that the aphorisms bring to the fore the artist's ambivalence to the scientific worldview: here and elsewhere the founding moment of the "second sight" is science. He writes that "we do not place, as our fathers did, beliefs beyond the boundaries [of knowledge], but hypotheses, knowledge with reservation or, when it serves us better, an X."⁶⁹⁴ One completely misunderstands the spirit of the European, he writes, if one assumes that behind this X lie the old, traditional values. Marc sees modern knowledge as the source of a radical break with the groundless beliefs of tradition. "Our belief is the second sight, the second step of knowledge, exact science." Later he refers to "the most wonderful triumph of our 'battle-like science,'"⁶⁹⁵ and to "the pure majesty of [scientific] knowledge", of a "religious sense of science".⁶⁹⁶ Yet, as if to undermine the absolute status he attributes science in parts of the text, he adds to this latter assertion that "Science is not the goal, but a division of our thought, our symbol and the new fable."⁶⁹⁷ Indeed, he writes that "The decisive moment of the spiritual turn

⁶⁹³ Aphorism 58. See also Aphorism 59, the beginning of which is given over to Nietzsche's uncovering of the English as the antithesis to the European, and the role of the German in excluding him.

⁶⁹⁴ Aphorism 42. It is interesting to compare this passage and those in which Marc criticises science for creating a fictional realm divorce from the existential realities of life with that passage near the beginning of *The Will to Power* in which Nietzsche writes: "The nihilistic consequences of contemporary natural science (together with its attempts to escape into some beyond). The industry of its pursuit eventually leads to self-disintegration, opposition, an antiscientific mentality. Since Copernicus man has been rolling from the center toward X."

⁶⁹⁵ Aphorism 64.

⁶⁹⁶ Aphorism 66.

⁶⁹⁷ With this formulation Marc underwrites the proximity of his text to Nietzsche's assertion of the contingent nature of science as described in *The Birth of Tragedy*, now by implicit reference - both

in Europe will be when *modern man attacks knowledge like a beam of lightning* [...]"⁶⁹⁸
(my emphasis).

The importance of this confused relation to science is great. Above, we noted in the texts Marc produced about the time of the *Blue Rider*, a clear assault on not only science, but on the system of logic which underwrote the scientific account of things. In the Aphorisms, on the other hand, we uncover a much more positive (though now rather contradictory) relation to science. The importance of this change is that it follows rather clearly on another development in his writing of the war years: *repeated* reference to the Good European. The combination of these concepts maps a significant change from texts produced after meeting Kandinsky and during the *Blue Rider* period, grounded essentially in a spiritualism and idealism which we might compare in many ways with the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy*, to a new found interest in a more empirical account of things, articulated in Nietzsche's own rejection of his earlier metaphysics, and developed especially in the 1878 text *Human, all too Human*. As we have already seen, this is a title to which the artist repeatedly alluded (in the forms of "*Lange, allzulange*", and "*logisch, allzulogisch*", for instance) in his own writing. It was surely the harsh realities of war which drove him to consider, beyond the metaphysically based internationalism of the *Blue Rider* period, the political significance of national identity in the form of the Good European. Perhaps it was the same realisation of the importance of the material basis of life which led him to think more positively of science, perhaps even to lose faith in the mystical account of things to which he had adhered prior to the war. Yet, as the foregoing has clearly shown, Marc never did lose faith in that spiritual, mystical account of things: just weeks before his death he announced that

The *substance* of thought about life and death continually remains the same. The idea that people can, through poor management of their biblical burden in daily

linguistic and conceptual - to that powerful section of *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "How the 'Real World' Finally Became Fable".

⁶⁹⁸ Aphorism 64.

life, disturb the sweet peace of eternal life is indeed an all-too-human, all-too-inhuman invention.⁶⁹⁹

The text moves by various turns through a critique of those aspects of tradition and contemporary experience Marc considered most harmful, and establishes the conditions and manner which would be necessary to overcome them. There can be little doubt that the *100 Aphorisms* is a fundamentally Nietzschean tract. Though I have quoted heavily to illustrate the relation, I have also excluded much which more or less repeats the same. I shall begin the following section, which addresses the complex of relations which undermine the continuity of the Expressionist texts and practices with Nietzsche's writing, with a deconstruction of this same text, with the aim of establishing that it draws heavily upon intellectual sources which must conflict with its Nietzschean source.

⁶⁹⁹ From the letter Marc wrote to his mother, two weeks before his death on the battlefield, quoted in Levine (1979), p173.

Section IV

Nietzsche contra Expressionism

LAST

God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. - And we - we still have to vanquish his shadow, too.

The Gay Science, 108.

In what follows I will attempt to problematise the foregoing accounts of the relations between certain Expressionists and Nietzsche, attending to those same texts referenced above, in order to gain a more complete understanding of those relations. Elsewhere, I have explored the relation of Kandinsky's theoretical texts produced until 1914 to their various textual sources, demonstrating the radically eclectic method of their author, and the consequent instabilities of the texts themselves. The study challenges recent attempts to account for the artist's work by reference to particular intellectual concerns as the *essential* context for those works,⁷⁰⁰ replacing them with an insistence upon multiplicity and discontinuity. I shall follow a similar approach below, except that it is my intention here to make manifest the particular instabilities between those parts of the text which pick up on Nietzsche's ideas, and those which pick up on the ideas of other thinkers and conflict with those particularly Nietzschean ideas.

As we have seen, one of the problems with the attempt to establish what is and what isn't Nietzschean is that the philosopher occupied so many different and

⁷⁰⁰ E.g. Ringbom (1970)'s focus on Theosophy and Anthroposophy; Weiss (1979)'s Munich Symbolism and her "Kandinsky and 'Old Russia': An Ethnographic Exploration", *Syracuse Scholar*, 1985, pp43-62 .

contradictory positions that in the end everything could seem Nietzschean. The only way the present analysis can work is by establishing that at a particular moment an artist relates to Nietzsche in a particular way, and therefore makes manifest a particular Nietzsche, and then proceeds to articulate a position which differs in important ways from *that* Nietzsche. Thus, I seek contradictions in which Nietzsche's name might be involved, to make manifest the intertextual and therefore inconsistent nature of these texts.

The Blue Rider

I begin where I left off, with Franz Marc's *100 Aphorisms*. Reading the aphorisms we will uncover not only various and contradictory ideas, but certain of these particular ideas will be seen to revolve around a set of thematically related concepts fundamentally at odds with the Nietzschean moments of the text outlined above. The text fluctuates between discussion of the general principles of these concepts as variously manifest, and discussion of, and borrowings from, individuals whose writings have contributed to variations on the theme which runs through them.

While Marc may have taken his "*Zweite Gesicht*", as well as the possibility of a third sight, from Nietzsche's, it is clear that *Ecce Homo*'s "*Gesichten*" arise from Nietzsche's proclamation that he is a decadent and its opposite: both are *faces*, neither directly related to Marc's second *sight* (both act as translations of *Gesicht*) which is - in a manner strikingly different from Nietzsche's - somewhat reminiscent of the clairvoyant.

"Everything has its cloak and its kernel, appearance and essence, mask and truth."⁷⁰¹ Later, in Aphorism 35, Marc writes that the new form of the future will not be based on the "outside", the stylised facade of nature, but will be built from within. In its earliest form Nietzsche formulated his response to such metaphysics thus: "Knowledge

⁷⁰¹ Marc, *100 Aphorisms*, Aphorism 1.

[...] no longer acts as an agent for transforming the outside world but remains concealed within a chaotic inner world which modern man describes with a curious pride as his uniquely characteristic 'subjectivity'. It is then said that one possesses content and only form is lacking; but such an antithesis is quite improper when applied to living things. This is precisely why our modern culture is not a living thing [...]"⁷⁰² This forms an early part of that critique of the division of the world into the "real" and the "apparent" we saw above in Section I. And a reading of the relation Apollo/Dionysus as the opposition exterior/interior, or form/content, will not do to abridge the gap between artist and philosopher: as my reading of *The Birth of Tragedy*, above, made clear, the relation is far from a simple opposition; rather, a close reading reveals more of an identity, a continuity from the one to the other, or rather one (the Dionysian) as the origin of the other.⁷⁰³ As Marc evokes the concept - one which will recur throughout certain Expressionist texts - his text reveals an allegiance to a system thoroughly alien to even the earliest Nietzsche. It is surely ironic that the metaphysics with which Marc seeks to overcome the cultural/stylistic crisis he identified taking place in mid-nineteenth century is precisely that dualism which for Nietzsche is *the* reason "our modern culture is not a living thing".

Marc's sense of mysticism is furthered by the immediate inclusion of a reference to the mediaeval mystic to whom Steiner had made extended reference,⁷⁰⁴ Angelus Silesius, a quotation which employs man to "become of the essence", to escape precisely those contingencies of life which Nietzsche affirmed repeatedly: "I tell you: one must have chaos in one, to give birth to a dancing star. I tell you: you still have chaos in you."⁷⁰⁵ Nietzsche's account of chance is far from the "cruelty and madness" of Marc's.

⁷⁰² *Untimely Meditations*, p78.

⁷⁰³ See above, pp19-20 and pp 49-50.

⁷⁰⁴ See Washton-Long (1980), p15.

⁷⁰⁵ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p46.

A further leitmotif of Marc's text is the repeated reference to "Truth", encountered first in the third aphorism. And again, this is in the context of singularity (essentialism) in relation to diversity and multiplicity, what in Aphorism 5 he calls the German "love of Truth, of the Absolute." But it does seem that Marc is aware of a critique of such ideas: in reference to the "German dream of absolute forms", he writes that "this naïve seeming, happy dream of an absolute world of forms becomes thought of with emotion in later centuries." It is as if Marc were, in the context of Nietzsche's perspectivism, aware that what he proclaimed was some sort of Platonic fiction, as if what he proclaimed depended upon suspension of his own disbelief.

Aphorism 8 introduced the idea of "Kunstwollen", and this in an explicitly Nietzschean context. The "catastrophic collapse of the will to art" resulted from the fact that "Art was at best a stimulus to over fatigued nerves". Here, and at the various other points referenced above at which Marc writes of "Kunstwollen" in such a context, he brings together, principally, Nietzsche's "Will to Power" and the "Will" of a later theoretician, Alois Riegl, as mediated through the texts of Wilhelm Worringer. Presenting Worringer's thoughts as his own, Marc wrote

I caught a strange thought - it had settled on my open hand like a butterfly - the thought that people once before, a long time ago, like alter egos, loved abstractions as we do now. [...] What made them possible, these productions of a sheer will to abstraction? [Aphorism 87]

Earlier he had written that from Nietzsche's "will to power" the "will to form" will originate. While the formulation is woven in a manner we wouldn't expect to find in Nietzsche (prefixing all "foregrounds" or manifestations of will to power with the words "will to" did not feature in Nietzsche's texts; that the transvaluation of Nietzsche's will to power "in the knowledge of power is our *belief*" (Aphorism 41) is a decidedly un-Nietzschean idea), the idea that such a motivation should exist does seem to conform to the earlier

thinker's account. Indeed, Worringer's psychological formulation in which man encounters the world as either hostile and alien, resulting in a will to forms which are abstract, geometrical, creating stability and certainty in a world of flux, or in a relation of empathy in which he feels at one with the world, resulting in organic forms which declare a more open approach to the world, could be seen to map onto Nietzsche's account of the arts as the relation of the Apollonian to the Dionysian, the former relating to the principle of abstraction, order and distance, the latter to the ecstatic abandonment of the self to the world as it really is. Yet such a comparison immediately falls short, as it is the former which consists of images of this world, the latter exclusion of such representations, and therefore approximation to the abstract. The relation is less specific, and more fundamental: for Nietzsche, as for Worringer, both are art impulses manifest in the products of the artist, the result of a particular relation to the world; for both it is the struggle of two contradictory impulses which determine art's history. And for both Marc and Nietzsche it is the will to power which underwrites this relation. Will to form, writes Marc, is the definition of art.

Making reference to the "dumb will of true being" which lies behind this life, Aphorism 15 calls to the text the concept of a "blind will" which underlies all phenomena, a concept which, as we shall see below, may have seemed more at home in Schopenhauer's *World as Will and Representation*; this reference will prove a telling one for later analysis of Marc's ideas, particularly in relation to those of Kandinsky as manifest in the *Blaue Reiter*. Later, Marc asserts that after Schopenhauer the victory of the will over representation had been celebrated, until "our" age in which this became the victory of *knowledge* over representation.⁷⁰⁶ Again, Marc affirms the convention of duality, of Schopenhauer's use of the Kantian division of the world into the real and the apparent. Aphorism 45 is something of a watershed for those parts of the text which

⁷⁰⁶ Marc, *100 Aphorisms*, Aphorism 40.

want to assert the essential nature of the mystical spirit: beyond the much praised natural laws, he writes, lies a "greater oneness", one law which our "third sight" recognises as the new "'unifiedness of the world'". In relation to this, all other laws are merely foregrounds. Marc asserts the existence of another layer to existence, a fundamental (and thoroughly metaphysical) essence which becomes a fundamentally mystified - and mystical - version of Schopenhauer's "Will".

As we have already seen, Marc frequently directs the focus of the text to attend to the overcoming of certain traditions, which we now see as the historical process through which privileged aspects of those dualities he presents (the spiritual over the material, essence over appearance, etc.) come to the fore. In places, this account becomes historically specific, and this to the detriment of the positive relation of Marc's texts to those of Nietzsche. Marc's reference to Rousseau as a key figure, along with Jesus and Luther,⁷⁰⁷ in the history of revolutions, is positive in a manner Nietzsche, as we saw above, could not have accepted: repeatedly Nietzsche criticised the Romantic's response to the Enlightenment in a manner which excluded the possibility, even in texts as self-contradictory as his own, of praise. This difference is furthered by a passage which charges Napoleon (who Nietzsche had praised unequivocally) with a profound misunderstanding of the French Revolution, a subversion of its goals based upon the inordinate ambitiousness of the individual. Just how far the ideals of equality, fraternity and liberty are from Nietzsche's texts is clear from a most summary reading; Marc's evocation of explicitly Nietzschean language in the following sentences of the aphorism ("prophets" and "great untimely ones" who destabilise public opinion) serves to underline the distortions it manifests.

While Marc's criticism of emphasis on the purely functional value of science in Aphorism 19 is indeed Nietzschean, and is couched in explicitly Nietzschean language,

⁷⁰⁷ Aphorism 16.

we ought not forget that here again the artist's texts draw close to those of German Idealism, to the "disinterestedness" of Kant, to the "pure will-less contemplation" of Schopenhauer, in a decidedly un-Nietzschean manner. At this point, Marc's critique of "purposive" art moves furthest from Nietzsche's, as it moves into this rather specific realm of German Idealism. Practical, material concerns in such philosophy are marginalised or excluded. For Nietzsche, modern materialism had grown out of proportion in relation to other more cultural or spiritual (*geistig*) aspects of life, but there is little chance of reconciling his anti-metaphysical account of things with the form of Idealism evoked by Marc's language. Just where Marc stands in relation to this is not clear: he uses language which evokes Idealism, while simultaneously drawing on Nietzsche's language ("the useful application of knowledge is its abuse", the "equation vice suppresses purity" is "hard but true"). Marc's thoughts are not developed fully enough in any particular direction to assign him to any intellectual camp: as we will find repeatedly in considering the relation of artists' works to intellectual sources, they comprise inconsistent assemblages rather than coherent wholes.

Aphorism 24, by reference to the function of words, lends Marc's "second sight" the character of symbolist aesthetics, a concept still further removed from Nietzsche's "faces". On the topic of faces, Marc refers to Goethe and Kant as the two faces of Janus, Goethe as backward looking, Kant seeing well into the twentieth century, the new age. Of course Nietzsche attacked Kant most ferociously. But, as we have seen, he saw only those he esteemed as his true enemies, those he would trouble to attack. Nietzsche without Kant (particularly as mediated through Schopenhauer⁷⁰⁸) is unthinkable. Marc's disparaging account of Goethe, however, could not equate with the philosopher's assertion that "*Goethe* is exemplary [...]" One should read Eckermann and

⁷⁰⁸ On the importance for Nietzsche of Schopenhauer's interpretation of Kant see Heidegger (1991), pp107-114.

ask oneself whether any human being in Germany ever got so far in noble form."⁷⁰⁹ And Nietzsche was not equivocal in his admiration for Goethe, in particular for his damning of Romanticism ("The classical I call healthy, and the romantic, the sick"⁷¹⁰), for his embodiment of a "Faustian-Dionysian frenzy"⁷¹¹ which would underwrite much of Nietzsche's later thought. Marc's Goethe is a great figure whose importance is wholly past; for Nietzsche he is a higher man who shapes the present and future.

While both Marc and Nietzsche recognised the importance of Kant, Nietzsche's relation to him was far more negative. For Nietzsche "Kant is boring": as we saw above, he is, like Hegel, a "philosophical labourer", one who orders what already exists, not the philosopher capable of the creation of new values. Kant does not create a morality; rather, he creates a transcendental realm in which moral freedom is possible;⁷¹² Nietzsche's critique of the division of the world into the real and apparent, exemplified in Kant's distinction between phenomena and noumena, makes for the most radical difference between the philosophers - and eventually, between himself and Marc.

Interesting for its international source, Aphorism 22 makes reference to that now familiar concept of "war's cleansing fire," a concept to compare with Marinetti's "Fascistic Nietzschean" proclamation in the First Futurist Manifesto: "War - the world's only hygiene," one which Marc combines with an apocalyptic notion of rebirth, highlighting the spiritual tone which recurs in his texts. Most important in the present context is the Nietzschean nature of Marinetti's text which, manifest in Marc's, draws another link between artist and philosopher, but one which has been once already mediated by the Italian. Futurism's influence on Marc's work goes beyond the widely recognised pictorial.

⁷⁰⁹ Quoted in Kaufmann (1974), p155.

⁷¹⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹¹ *ibid.*, p156.

⁷¹² *The Will to Power*, 575.

Aphorism 33 announces specifically religious concerns, including the proclamation: "In the beginning was the word". An ocean of Biblical implications floods through the text as Marc draws our attention to what he calls "holy knowledge." This is not merely a passing reference: later we see that much of the aphorisms is in fact based in explicitly religious material. Indeed, the next aphorism refers to today's European as still spiritually deaf and blind, to a "new Gothic without cathedral and Bible". These remarks could be interpreted as mere gestures toward Judeo-Christian convention, but the context for Marc's thoughts render them more literal: Aphorism 32 had referred to culture as "knowledge of salvation"; Aphorism 35 tells that the new form to come, the new art, is "our religion [...] our truth", and Aphorism 37 describes Cézanne as the Moses of the new time. At certain moments Marc's text is not only religious, but explicitly Judeo-Christian in content.

Mystical passages, which co-exist in the text with conventional religious ones, reach a climax in Aphorisms 95 and 97. He writes:

A tree, which I looked upon, began calmly to sigh and broke apart; its green leaves fluttered singing from the blue sky; and where the tree stood was written in words in the sand: who has redeemed me from being a tree, seek not my soul in the kernel of the apple, nor in the will to form, but only in the necessity of being a tree, in the pain and constraint to mis-form. The artist should not sing the love of our awful being, but our Dryad-will to be Other. That we appear to you as juice and wood and form is our fate.

The materiality of the tree is the "essential" tree's imprisonment, its falsity. He writes that "It is not true that the seat stands; it is contained, otherwise it would fly from itself and bind with the spirit."⁷¹³ Underwriting such accounts is the pantheism which recurs throughout Marc's texts. No specific intellectual source for the way in which these passages are written is apparent, suggesting that Marc has actually formulated the accounts himself. Here Marc's dualism is articulated as spirit "captured" in material form.

⁷¹³ Aphorism 97.

The artist's concerns as presented in this war-time text are still underwritten by those of the pre-war years. Those earlier texts are perhaps more coherently and consistently metaphysical. To have written of the present as "the turning point of two long epochs",⁷¹⁴ and to have situated this within a specifically Christian account of history, is to underwrite all particulars with this meaning. The explicitly Nietzschean references in the earlier essay ("Two Pictures") are surely subordinate to this metaphysics. When Marc writes elsewhere that he sought to express through his art the rhythm of nature which flows pantheistically through all things, he underscores his primary concern. His art is, writes its author, to find its place above the alters of the new religion.

The aphoristic, and more disjointed, nature of the Aphorisms requires that that metaphysics be reassembled before it becomes recognisable as fundamental to the text. Clearly the essential (though variously manifest) discourse about which particulars turn in the Aphorisms is a fundamentally metaphysical one; indeed, it articulates precisely that set of metaphysical dualities which we saw the later Nietzsche attack in Section I, above. While we might attempt to suggest that that metaphysics corresponds to certain moments of Nietzsche's overtly metaphysical *Birth of Tragedy*, it is clear that even in this early text the philosopher isolated religious (as well as scientific) systems as fundamentally flawed. Further, as I suggest above, the artist's metaphysics which he does articulate in that text does not correspond to the essential dualism - spirit and matter, content and form - which underwrites the artist's account. In this extraordinary text, Marc combines ideas clearly drawn from Nietzsche's later texts, beginning with *Human, all too Human*, with ideas drawn from sources which even Nietzsche's earliest published work had already rendered obsolete.

⁷¹⁴ Miesel (1970), p65.

The aphorisms, like Marc's earlier writing, weaves Judeo-Christian and mystical as well as Nietzschean ideas in a manner which its author, presumably, thought lent strength to his fundamentally religious view of things. Such concerns gain more coherent and sustained articulation in the writing of his fellow editor of the prewar years, Kandinsky.

One of the most forceful contexts in which Kandinsky calls upon Nietzsche is found in those apocalyptic passages of *On the Spiritual* and "Whither the 'New' Art", in which Nietzsche's name is used explicitly. I have already shown how decidedly Nietzschean certain passages are; now I want to look more carefully at the relation of such references to the particulars of their contexts.

First, "Whither the 'New' Art". The essay begins with a familiar attack on nineteenth century materialism, leading on to the distinction between an art true to only "outer meaning" (typified by Realism), which remains on the surface, and one true to "inner meaning" which is driven to silence, away from the surface. With this, writes Kandinsky, man was faced with a vacuum, with questions as to the meaning of life, to life's purpose. "And the surrounding silence answered: There is no aim in life." And so we have followed the "Zarathustran tones" which continue, the abyss into which art fell as it became no more than a "lackey" for the moneyed classes. Art here fulfils only half its mission, for, writes Kandinsky, art may be a "spiritual mirror", one which can awaken the "strings of the soul", which sees into the future and is a leader. And, as his examples show, the art which will fulfill these objectives is fundamentally symbolist. "The Word! Maeterlinck listened to its inner sound - beyond the outer meaning of the word. [...] the word is like a living being, which radiates its own spiritual aroma."⁷¹⁵ Later he writes

⁷¹⁵ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p100.

that "A general interest in abstraction is being reborn, both in the superficial form of the movement towards the spiritual, and in the forms of occultism, spiritualism, monism, the "new" Christianity, Theosophy, and religion in the broadest sense."⁷¹⁶ Science, too, begins to ask whether there is such a thing as matter, and thus joins this process of turning to the abstract.

The spiritual atmosphere is like the physical one and, like the physical, it is saturated with certain elements; to inhale these elements spiritually creates a spiritual flesh and blood, "attunes the soul" - all those souls that, in increasing numbers, are aspiring towards the single aim by the single path. And this, our present path, is the path of the spirit; our aim is the refinement and growth of the soul.⁷¹⁷

This single path leads, he writes, to the "'ideal'", to the "'Divine'". Yet the inverted commas our author places about "ideal" and "Divine" indicate a certain reserve. And this is not a passing, but a crucial observation. Summarising the same development in a letter of August 1912 to Arnold Schoenberg, Kandinsky writes: "Briefly stated, there is a law which is millions of kilometres distant from us, towards which we strive for thousands of years, of which we have a presentiment, which we guess, apparently see clearly, and therefore give various forms. Thus is the evolution of 'God', religion, science, art. And all these forms are 'right', since they have all been seen. Except that they are all false, since they are one-sided." Those very principles which, according to recent scholarship, would seem to underwrite Kandinsky's textual and artistic practice, are radically questioned. God himself appears in suspended disbelief, in inverted commas. In the letter to Schoenberg, true to his Nietzschean affiliations, Kandinsky questions the truth of those scientific, cultural and spiritual systems which seek to account for existence, and this on the basis that they present a reductive, "one-sided"

⁷¹⁶ *ibid*, p101.

⁷¹⁷ *ibid*.

account of things. Kandinsky insists on a multiplicity which clearly echoes Nietzsche's perspectivism.

The inverted commas Kandinsky places about the word "Divine", and the word itself, have complex, and contradictory functions. On one hand, he writes in the letter that "All these forms are 'right', since they have all been seen"; in "Whither the 'New' Art" Kandinsky presents a commitment to the mysticism and spirituality which is shared by those particular movements he names, just as he is thoroughly convinced (in this and other essays) of the immanent failure of materialism. On the other, he writes in the letter, these formulations and institutions "are all false, since they are one-sided." Hence the inverted commas.

To understand this dilemma, we must recall Nietzsche's warning that while God is dead, his shadow will continue to be cast across our world for centuries to come. Thus it was that the madman of *The Gay Science* realised he had come too soon, that man was not ready for his truths. While Kandinsky recognises the loss of principles which underwrote man's belief - all things which are one-sided being recognised as false - he continues to seek after faith in some alternative (and equally metaphysical) system. The tension is particularly clear in "Whither the 'New' Art" as Kandinsky's list of "new" religions leads directly into that passage in which the name of Nietzsche is evoked. "Consciously or unconsciously, the genius of Nietzsche began the 'transvaluation of values'": a transvaluation which, for Kandinsky, will be manifest in a rather familiar metaphysics.

Given the diverse movements and names to which the text refers, and in particular the contradictions inherent in such a list, we begin to wonder if these particulars, to include Nietzsche's name, are in any way essential to his account. For it becomes apparent in Kandinsky's texts that the only constants are art, and the spiritual function of art, its overcoming of crass materialism in the attainment of a more spiritual reality. Thus, rather than wait for any conventional "spiritual institution" to create a new

world view, art will *itself* articulate and develop what he establishes as the fundamental principles of the spirit. Seen in this light, "Whither the 'New' Art"'s "Zarathustran" tone, its Nietzschean "transvaluation of values", are no more than devices incorporated to the text to lend weight to its principal (and fundamentally un-Nietzschean) thesis.

With this in mind, we find much the same happens in that passage of *On the Spiritual* in which reference is made to the "mighty hand" of Nietzsche. As we have already seen, it is after an extended account of the errors of materialism, the impending rise of the spiritual, and the vacuum which arises at the demise of the former, that reference to the "mighty hand of Nietzsche" is made. Again, Kandinsky writes at length of fundamentally spiritual and mystical ideas which could have had no place in Nietzsche's texts. I have shown above at some length that certain fundamental principles shared by philosopher and artist are indeed important, but the direction Kandinsky chooses to move in response to those principles is decidedly un-Nietzschean. Certainly, the "mighty hand of Nietzsche" shook morality (though why Kandinsky chooses not to reference the philosopher's attacks on religion and science, specifically mentioned in the same clause, is not clear), and certainly he advocated the generation of a new table of values from within, in response to instincts rather than tradition. But Kandinsky's turning of the gaze "*away from the external toward himself*", given the particular metaphysics between the "internal" and "external" which he spends much of his time developing, seems hopelessly distant from Nietzsche's account of things. For Nietzsche, "A 'thing' is the sum of its effects".⁷¹⁸ No "inner" privileged over the "outer", no content privileged over form. We have seen what in Nietzsche's texts made it possible for Kandinsky to incorporate this "turning inward" to his own text. But Nietzsche's "internalisation" is the result of repressed affects, the concept of "soul" which results, an illusion. Reference to Nietzsche's "turning inward", to the generation of

⁷¹⁸ *The Will to Power*, p296.

new values according to the instincts, simply isn't enough to overcome the extraordinary difficulties of placing his name immediately after the passage announcing Theosophy - a fundamentally spiritual, metaphysical institution - as one of the greatest spiritual movements, one which strikes a note of salvation in the darkening spiritual climate.

Another example will serve well. The "transvaluation" of which Kandinsky speaks can be shown to be more explicitly incorporated in the 1913 essay, "Reminiscences". Writing of the concept "truth", Kandinsky articulates the error of those for whom "A new truth comes down from heaven" in absolute form,⁷¹⁹ echoing Zarathustra's claim that men invented their own good and evil, that these are not eternal truths: like Kandinsky's truth, which becomes the result of a particular temporal *perspective*, what Zarathustra recognised as the most powerful of values "did not descend as a voice from heaven."⁷²⁰ Referring repeatedly to the manner in which "Truth" develops, how what is untrue becomes, in the course of history, true, and then reverses again, Kandinsky tells how all the different realms of human experience are now seen to progress in the same direction, the direction of some future kingdom, clearly reminiscent of *On the Spiritual's* "Epoch of the Great Spirit". But here he attaches to the development a rather specific and new meaning: "Here begins the great period of the spiritual, the revelation of the spirit. Father - Son - Spirit." Calling as it does on the specific trinitarianism initiated by Joachim of Fior in the thirteenth century, Kandinsky's history becomes an explicitly (though not orthodox) Christian one. The apocalyptic imagery of his painting, and the apocalyptic tone of his texts, could now be subsumed under and derive their meaning retrospectively from this account. The apocalyptic turmoil they articulate heralds the arrival of the epoch of the Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. Art, he writes, in many senses resembles religion. Just as the old truths of Moses, the concrete truths of

⁷¹⁹ "Reminiscences", in Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p377.

⁷²⁰ *Zarathustra*, p85.

"Thou shalt", give way to the "more abstract sins of the mind", so in the transformation to the realm of the Spirit, the third Dispensation becomes more subtle, more spiritual:

Here lie the roots of that further transvaluation of values that continues uninterrupted today; these are at the same moment the roots of that internalisation which in the realm of art, too, we shall gradually attain.⁷²¹

As religion progresses to more spiritual form, so too does art: thus the importance of the development of abstract art, as accounted for in the 1913 essay. But most important for our concerns is the inclusion of that phrase "transvaluation of values". Again, we might defend Kandinsky's use of the term on the basis that he, like Nietzsche, conceived of a new morality developed in more "spiritual" form from within the creator. But clearly nothing could be much further from Nietzsche's texts than the specific use to which his words are put here. His transvaluation is precisely the destruction of those accounts which perpetuate the myths of western metaphysics. And nowhere will we find a stronger myth than in such an account of the process of mankind's salvation. Kandinsky adopts a phrase which was at the time obviously very much in vogue and, with little intellectual rigour, completely bastardises its relation to its original context.

Shortly after publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche attempted to distance himself, and in places achieved this quite thoroughly, from the philosophy of his one time mentor, Arthur Schopenhauer. In the present context, then, it is significant that certain fundamental principles articulated by the editors of the *Blue Rider*, and Kandinsky in particular, can be shown to relate directly to those of the earlier philosopher. I have shown elsewhere how Kandinsky's concept of the creative act in relation to abstract painting forms an identity with aspects of Schopenhauer's

⁷²¹ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p378.

aesthetics.⁷²² I will rehearse that account briefly, attending to Schopenhauer's metaphysics in a manner which also allows consideration of Kandinsky's more general understanding of the principles which unite various art forms, in particular those manifest in the exhibitions as well as the almanac which carried the title *Blue Rider*. This latter is what Peter Vergo has called the "Blue Rider Idea."⁷²³

For Schopenhauer, the world exists on one hand as we perceive it, through sensory perception. This is what he calls the world as representation, that is to say, as we represent it to ourselves, as an idea formed in our heads during sensory experience. Thus Schopenhauer begins the text entitled *The World as Will and Representation* with the claim: "The world is my representation." This aspect of the world, then, is subjective. But there exists another aspect of the world which he says is purely objective, and ontologically prior. This is the world as it is in itself, a world which lies behind all appearances yet is not manifest as itself in them. This aspect of the world, which he calls, after Kant, the noumenon, and later names the Will, can never be known to man. It is a unity, a singular (and rather mystical) entity which underlies all phenomena, all things which can be experienced. Such is the dual aspect of Schopenhauer's world. But of course the two are not totally separate entities. Indeed, the world of phenomena is only the outer manifestation of the noumenon, its outward appearance.

Essential to Schopenhauer's theory of the arts is the point at which the noumenon, or the "Will", becomes manifest as any particular phenomenon. To account for this moment, he calls upon the name (though scarcely the concept) of the Platonic Idea. At certain moments in experience, we may contemplate a phenomenon, say, a chair, in a manner quite different from our usual frame of mind. If we look at the chair divorce from its function, outside realms of causality and use value, and perceive it as a "pure form", we come closer to its essential nature, to the *Idea* of the chair. Not only do

⁷²² See Short (1988).

⁷²³ Vergo (1989).

we leave the world of causality and individual willing - what for Schopenhauer is a world of differentiation and suffering - for a moment, but we begin to approach the essential, inner nature of things, the noumenon. And with this negation of suffering, we approach the moment of aesthetic experience. At this moment the world as noumenon *enters* the world as a phenomenon, and, through the essential Idea of whatever object we contemplate, we gain a glimpse of the unity which in fact underlies all things. The everyday object of our lives, then, becomes visible as the most objective beauty. And it is the making manifest of this beauty which is the task of all the various arts. Thus Schopenhauer writes:

"*art* [...] repeats the eternal Ideas apprehended through pure contemplation, the essential and abiding element in all phenomena of the world. According to the material in which it repeats, it is sculpture, painting, poetry, or music. Its only source is knowledge of the Ideas; its sole aim is communication of this knowledge."⁷²⁴

It matters not to which artform we attend in that all the arts are united in their common goal of penetrating the veil of illusion, which is our every day world, to make manifest the eternal, inner nature of things.

The editors of the almanac held views which were apparently different from, yet in structure rather similar to, Schopenhauer's. In a typescript preface to the almanac, they wrote that "We are standing at the threshold of one of the greatest epochs that mankind has ever experienced, the epoch of great spirituality."⁷²⁵ The preface goes on to announce the beginnings in the late nineteenth century of the first new "elements of a spiritual atmosphere" which supplanted the crass materialism that until then had dominated, and the almanac's intention to bring together phenomena which in the field of art reflect that change. "Therefore," it goes on, "the reader will find works in our

⁷²⁴ Schopenhauer (1969), pp184-185.

⁷²⁵ Lankheit (1974), p250.

volumes that in this respect show an *inner* relationship although they may appear unrelated on the surface." For both Marc and Kandinsky, this "inner nature" is what they called the "spiritual", a content which the arts could only communicate when they no longer concerned themselves with the practical, material concerns of experience.

We can see how their account of the world corresponds with Schopenhauer's philosophical dualism, and we can see that their account of art within that dualism functions in much the same way as his. For the editors of the almanac, it is the inner nature of things that is essential, and outer form which is merely contingent. In art, the task of the various outer forms is to make the essential, inner nature of things - what the artists described as the *spiritual* - manifest. This maps onto Schopenhauer's relation of the noumenon, or the *world as will*, to phenomena, or the *world as representation*, and to the function of the arts in overcoming outer appearance in making manifest the inner nature of things. The essential point is that for the artists, as for the philosopher, all the different arts functioned to the same end. Only for Schopenhauer, that end was supposed to be a philosophical construct, and not to be in any way mystical.

Concerning the act of creation itself, we are forced to consider a more particular aspect of Schopenhauer's aesthetics: the nature of music. Schopenhauer, though he asserted that all the arts function to the same end, created a hierarchy for the arts, with architecture as the lowest, basest form, and music as the highest, and most complete manifestation of the noumenon. While the other arts concerned themselves with the material nature of things, music was not bound to phenomena as such: "The composer reveals the innermost nature of the world, and expresses the profoundest wisdom in a language that his reasoning faculty does not understand."⁷²⁶ Music is a direct manifestation of the noumenon, one which does not reflect phenomena, and is not a product of reason: it simply becomes mysteriously manifest in the composer from a

⁷²⁶ Schopenhauer (1969), p260.

source which remains unknown. The equation with Kandinsky's account of the creative act as presented above is exact.

Where, then, does this leave the relation of the editors, and Kandinsky in particular, to Nietzsche? Clearly, the account does not simplify the evaluation: it neither proves the importance of Nietzsche, nor does it negate it. Rather, it simply makes that relation rather more complex again. On one hand, we must recognise the conflict between ideas fundamental to the aims and activities of the editors which relate to Schopenhauer's text, and their appropriation of radically anti-metaphysical (and anti-Schopenhauerean) ideas from Nietzsche. On the other, we must recognise that in spite of his repeated critiques of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche's first published text *was* heavily indebted to the earlier philosopher (as its author regretfully announced in his 1886 "Attempt at a Self-Criticism"), that certain fundamental aspects of his philosophy always remained indebted to Schopenhauer, and therefore that there is, at moments, a profound identity between Nietzsche's texts and those of Schopenhauer.

The former formulation - Schopenhauer as the metaphysician, Nietzsche as the radical anti-metaphysician - will always be complicated and problematised by the latter. But while there are fundamental points of identity between the two philosophers, it is possible to differentiate between them in a way important for the present analysis. Suffice it to say that the equation of the world as "will" may be seen to correspond to Nietzsche's Dionysian, the world as "representation" to his Apollonian, and that for both philosophers the ontologically privileged member of the dualism is the origin of the other. Further, for Schopenhauer, "[musical] form can be reduced to quite definite rules expressible in numbers, from which it cannot possibly depart without entirely ceasing to be music."⁷²⁷ This demand for a quite precise, scientific structure prefigures Nietzsche's "artistic Socrates", with whom we compared, at a particular moment in his texts,

⁷²⁷ *ibid*, p256.

Kandinsky. Thus far, the accounts equate. But Schopenhauer's account demanded an art form which, as the most complete manifestation of the "will", stood alone, in no necessary relation to the world of phenomena. Nietzsche's Dionysus, manifest most fully in the world of music, stood in a *necessary* relation to the Apollonian dream image, and thus to the appearance of phenomena. While it is clear that Kandinsky's "abstract" art never released itself from the figurative representation of things, his theory sought the exclusion of the latter; his account of pure abstraction in the visual arts equates most precisely with Schopenhauer's account of music which, like Kandinsky's painting,⁷²⁸ was conceived as the equivalent to (and in no sense the representation of) the world.

While we may wish to sustain the relation between Kandinsky's account of the creative act, and his dualism, with that of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, the importance of that particular relation is radically questioned when we consider another account which fits at least as well. To articulate Nietzsche's importance for the artist it is necessary to stress the importance of those other relations, particularly the philosopher's account of nihilism, the musical principle most suited to representation of that condition, his associated apocalypticism together with the prosaic style which accompanied it, and his account of the decadence of language and the need to create language anew, for the artist. But it is essential to note that these ideas are developed by Nietzsche subsequent to *The Birth of Tragedy*: just as in Nietzsche's texts there is a continual battle between his differing accounts of things, so in those parts of Kandinsky's texts which can be compared to contradictory aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy, those very contradictions will become manifest.

⁷²⁸ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p373: "The creation of the work is the creation of the world."

Repeatedly, our attempts to attend to the important relation of Kandinsky's work to that of Nietzsche will be undermined by the fundamental inconsistencies and contradictions in the artist's texts. Attending to Kandinsky's paintings, those same tensions are further exaggerated. For example, when Kandinsky appropriates colour divorced from form, particularly the Theosophical "aura" which was the object of considerable interest about the turn of the century, from certain Theosophical illustrations, and incorporates them to his painting, in the manner described by Ringbom,⁷²⁹ the actual apocalypticism represented iconographically in the work moves further from Nietzsche's apocalyptic tones and deeper into the realm of fantasy, or spiritualism. Yet enough has already been said of how Kandinsky's mysticism drives his efforts further from those of Nietzsche: such an observation merely adds the suggestion that within the paintings themselves the same conflicts occur as those in the texts, only here in the form of a *visual* intertext.

A similar problem occurs in that passage, above, in which I draw together Kandinsky's concern with the dance and the gesture as significant constructional elements, attending in particular to the way in which the gesture is so obviously manifest in his paintings, and Nietzsche's emphasis on the dance and the body. For, while the paintings support most fully our attention to their gestural qualities, in the same way that his texts draw attention to the importance of dance, Kandinsky repeatedly distances his engagement with these Nietzschean concerns from Nietzsche's emphasis on the bodily instincts. While it is the case that in "Painting as Pure Art" Kandinsky talks of the "spiritualisation" of practical and bodily functions, and it is certainly the case that this equates with Nietzsche's sublimation or *Vergeistigung*, Kandinsky, in those same passages, presents a quite different account of what happens. For he writes that what was originally a bodily need - the dance whose origin is in "the desire for the female"⁷³⁰

⁷²⁹ See Ringbom (1970).

⁷³⁰ Lindsay and Vergo (1982), p351.

- has become a spiritual need; the consequence of the spiritualisation he describes is, at one point in the text, "the separation of the spiritual from the bodily element, and its further independent development".⁷³¹ Though it is the case that much more space is devoted in this particular passage to a Nietzschean "*Vergeistigung*", this latter assertion serves to undermine the text's proximity to those of the philosopher. The separation of the spiritual from the bodily - a theme which, as we have seen, recurs throughout the artist's texts - depends on precisely that metaphysical dualism which Nietzsche attacked as the source of modern nihilism. The *Geist* of Nietzsche's *Vergeistigung* is rather more cerebral than that of Kandinsky's which, again, moves in the direction of the mystical.

Kandinsky's quest for an abstract form of representation, for a new language with which to represent the spiritual nature of things, would surely, from Nietzsche's perspective, have seemed a naïve attempt at "transvaluation." While Nietzsche may have proposed, in his self-criticism of 1886, that the voice of *The Birth of Tragedy* should have sung, not spoken, the voice with which he performed the critique itself did not sing. Of course, certain texts contained passages and poems which clearly did sing, and *Zarathustra* is surely an artwork as much as a philosophical tract. But we must note that if there is a constant within Nietzsche's multifarious styles, it turns about the discursive nature of language. Though "sense" is frequently challenged, the words he uses don't break completely from conventional meanings. When meaning is subverted it is usually in the form of a reversal, or a displacement. Though he wrote of the possibility, Nietzsche never tried to create a new language. What Nietzsche has in mind is an ongoing deconstruction of language, a laying bare of its metaphysics and its prejudices, and through a process of negations and subversions a revaluation of language. Such a process does not happen overnight, and only an excited utopian

⁷³¹ *ibid.*

would think it could. In the work of an artist such as Kandinsky, we encounter a Modernist response to a radical critique of the "philosophy of modernity",⁷³² but one which never quite escapes the fundamental misconceptions of that which is criticised: Kandinsky's quest for a new language is the attempt to articulate that realm which for Nietzsche never existed in the first place. When he attempts to create this new language of abstraction, Kandinsky draws, once more, on a tradition - now an essentially artistic rather than philosophical one - quite divorced from Nietzsche.

Die Brücke

In an attempt to question the relation of Nietzsche to the activities of members of *die Brücke*, we might begin with a consideration of Kirchner's hieroglyphs, and their relation to the art which Nietzsche described. Like Kandinsky's abstract forms and colours, they were conceived of as an alternative to conventional, decadent forms of language. Through their vitality, a new value would be articulated, as art both became revitalised and itself revitalised life. The form his hieroglyphs took was quite distant from that used in conventional representation of things, indeed, from the form things normally present in visual perception. Given Nietzsche's great diatribes against Wagner's music on the ground that it was fundamentally decadent and sick, that its "atomism" was essentially a decomposition of musical structure and form, how does Kirchner's much more radical assault on visual form equate with the philosopher's accounts of art?

We have seen above, in Section I, that Nietzsche's account of artistic form is contradictory. On one hand, that which exceeds and destroys form as actually perceived and known, as initiated in his "Enlightenment" phase in *Human, all too Human*; on the

⁷³² For a quite precise and considered account of this concept, see Vattimo (1988).

other, the "grand style" which approximates to "the classical", to rigid order and control. These two accounts of artistic form are at certain moments compatible, as Nietzsche articulates the essentially ecstatic, frenzied nature of all art, yet the artistic forms they suggest are clearly radically different. Nietzsche's account of artistic form, then, could be seen to be appropriate to works as diverse as Raphael's *Transfiguration* on one hand⁷³³ and Kirchner's lithograph of a Chinese person juggling (see above) on the other. The former would surely conform more to the notion of the grand style, the latter to art as a process of deconstructing.

Above, I quoted that often cited passage from *The Will to Power* in which Nietzsche refers to "semen in the blood", "sexuality communicated to the brain", and so on, in relation to the creative act. Later in my text, as in others, this is given as philosophical support for the artists' ongoing concern with sexuality. Thus the comparison with, say, Kirchner's *Lovers* series (see fig.35). In such works, Kirchner gives himself over entirely to the sexual excitement of the moment, not only in terms of *what* is represented but in the *manner* of representation: his are frantic, excited movements which the traces on the paper record, movements which record with a minimum of attention to formal anatomical correctness. Kirchner's work certainly corresponds to the account of art as excess, and departs radically from anything Nietzsche would have described as being in the grand style. But we have already seen above, in Section I, that this passage refers - albeit ambiguously - to the process of sublimation in which the beautiful is a result of rechanneling sexual drives, a redistribution of procreative into creative energy. And essential to that process is control and order. The attention the passage pays to sexuality per se justifies its use in my text, yet we must at the same time accept that not to question the relation of images such as the *Lovers* series to this text is careless. For Nietzsche, the most excessive, frenzied

⁷³³ See *Birth of Tragedy*, Section 4.

conditions can give rise to the most refined and beautiful moments of existence: such refinement and beauty aren't to be found in Kirchner's erotic works. The artist's concern here is with what Vattimo identified in Nietzsche's texts as the "destructuring" function of art, the destabilising of form in order to imbue it with emotional force.

Yet, accepting that aspects of Kirchner's work do not conform in any real sense to the grand style, we must ask to what degree it really conforms to Nietzsche's account of art as a destructuring force. By reference to the group's atavistic aims, it is apparent that *die Brücke* emphasise that recessive, even childlike aspect of art which Vattimo uncovered in Nietzsche's account of art as developed in *Human, all too Human*. But, in Nietzsche's account of things, is there a limit, a point beyond which this destructuring becomes, from his perspective, a mere carelessness, a naïve and groundless rendering which does not equate with his account? Or does anything which destroys form equate with that account?

We must recall a few points made earlier in the thesis. For Nietzsche, literary decadence was marked by the collapse of life in the whole as words leapt from sentences, sentences from the page. Language became radically destructured. Particularly in reference to the "anarchy of atoms" which Wagner's music had become, the philosopher's tone is thoroughly pejorative. Yet, as we have seen, Nietzsche is at least two-faced: he is both anti-decadent, and decadent at the same time. As he tears apart the old tables of value, he creates anew. Undermining the conventional prosaic form of the philosophy of system through the use of aphorisms, he introduces to philosophical discourse a new set of styles derived from outside that discourse, and in the process creates for philosophy a different way of articulating itself, one which is grounded in the principle of multiple perspectives and the possibility of contradiction as much as in conventional order. In short, there is nothing naïve or careless in Nietzsche's process of destructuring. Having proposed, in Section 1, above, that we join Vattimo at his moment of confusion, in that moment at which he saw in Nietzsche's texts both art

as the grand style and art as a destructuring principle as independent and contradictory accounts, I now propose that it is not possible to isolate completely one from the other, that even if they have a certain independence, we are bound to recognise Nietzsche's attempts to bring the two together. Thus, I suggest that at certain moments works produced by members of *die Brücke* exceed even the excess accounted for in Nietzsche's texts. To return to Kirchner's hieroglyphs, while they are constructed on a quite sophisticated principle where his images were to come to work in the same way as language, that principle is also quite fantastic: without rigorous order and control, his images could not be repeated, and so gain the conventional meaning that is essential to any language.

However, in that part of Section III, above, which deals with control in various phases of Kirchner's work, I outlined the technical and conceptual processes through which certain works pass. Although the artist's quest for exact "rules" for the creation of works was apparently unsuccessful, we uncovered not only the control which bodily aspects of the creative process (in the form of the dance) would afford the works, but Kirchner was at pains to stress the more cerebral aspects of works in media other than pencil (in which the hieroglyphs were normally - though not always - executed). Thus in his prints he sought to "define clearly and conclusively the singularly loose forms of drawing", thereby engaging powers not involved in what he calls the much more easily managed techniques of painting and drawing. Likewise, the woodcut required "great skill and concentration"; etching is a "refined technique", often being worked over repeatedly so that a plate is "highly finished". The emphasis he placed on the complex process through which works in various media were produced, together with the practice of reworking images, and the refusal to produce multiple, exact copies of prints in favour of constant adaptation and adjustment to render each piece individual, draws Kirchner's practice ever closer to the refinement and control which Nietzsche's account of art demanded.

I would summarise thus far by asserting that rapidly executed works such as Kirchner's hieroglyphs, and the *Lovers* series, works which were not considered by their author to be mere sketches to be later developed and refined, could only be compared to Nietzsche's art as destructuring force if that account were allowed to become totally divorced from his insistence that art generate its own precise form. When the artist draws "to the point of frenzy", and that state is then developed into the extended process of artistic refinement, the work which results may be compared favourably with that form of art which is grounded in Nietzsche's principle of *Rausch*.

That which in some works became so excessive as to render problematic Kirchner's relation to Nietzsche - the quest for the vital in the work of art - is what led to *die Brücke's* interest in "primitive" cultures. And here, again, we must question the nature of the importance of Nietzsche. For while there is clearly an attempt to appropriate from the primitive, to learn from it in a way that enhances life in the early twentieth century, there is at certain moments a decidedly un-Nietzschean "return to nature", a "going primitive" which is far from the critical relation Nietzsche has in mind in those passages in which he talks about "primitive" cultures, and in particular the pre-Socratic Greeks. While Nietzsche wrote in *The Birth of Tragedy* of his much praised satyr that he was the "offspring of a longing for the primitive and natural",⁷³⁴ he opposed most radically what he identified as a Rousseau inspired "flight to nature".

Not "return to nature" - for there has never yet been a natural humanity [...] man reaches nature only after a long struggle - he never "returns" - Nature: i.e., daring to be immoral like nature.⁷³⁵

⁷³⁴ *The Birth of Tragedy*, p61.

⁷³⁵ *The Will to Power*, 120.

This "daring to be like" is the clue to Nietzsche's relation: it is not a repetition of something we used to be that he has in mind, rather, an enactment of the power relations he sees at play in nature, relations that are properly part of our lives; to be precise, relations unconstrained by human convention. And for Nietzsche, this is a process of cultivation, of transfiguration: a move "upward" to that point at which natural relations come to play, rather than "back" to an uncultured state of being. Nietzsche seems to subscribe wholly to that account of Rousseau which attends to a "cult of passion",⁷³⁶ which sees his "nature" as man's origin to which man should return.⁷³⁷ When the artists set off on their expeditions to the lakes, when they went to Fehmarn and other "primitive" sites, they immersed themselves in what they thought to be a natural state, assuming a more "natural" way of life, an assumption to which Nietzsche was, at particular moments, radically opposed. Only later, when what they learned in such environments became manifest in the studios and, particularly, in the city, is it possible to talk seriously about the relation of the primitive to the modern, and thus uncover anything of a critical relation to "nature".

In relation to this last, the possibility of a critical relation, Nietzsche's rejection of the idea of a "return" to man's primitive state and to nature throws into question the evolutionary scale to which he (occasionally) and the artists (consistently) adhered. He writes: "Man as a species does not represent any progress compared with any other animal. The whole animal and vegetable kingdom does not evolve from the lower to the higher".⁷³⁸ With this formulation, the philosopher tears apart that linear and hierarchical history of man which, in its Social Darwinist guise, the artists had merely inverted. For

⁷³⁶ *ibid*, 1021.

⁷³⁷ Of course, Rousseau's assertion that "Human nature does not turn back. Man can never return to the time of innocence and equality once he has left it" (*Dialogues: Rousseau Judge de Jean-Jaques*, quoted in Mason (1979), p7), that reason as well as instinct must always form part of human experience, undermines the distance Nietzsche attempts to create between himself and the romantic.

⁷³⁸ *The Will to Power*, quoted in Lloyd (1991), p115.

Nietzsche, hierarchy remains, but that hierarchy is not the result of historical or geographical determinism: it is a product of the individual's struggle for power.

The artists' Rousseauesque relation to nature is accompanied by one derived principally from the pages of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*, a text Kirchner described as his "best friend" during the Dresden years,⁷³⁹ and whose author was described shortly after his death by Johannes Schlaf as Nietzsche's "New Man".⁷⁴⁰ In the poem called "Song of Myself", Whitman writes:

I will go to the bank by the wood and become undisguised and naked,
I am mad for it to be in contact with me.
The smoke of my own breath,
Echoes, ripples, buzz'd whispers, love-root, silk thread, crotch and vine,
My respiration and inspiration, the beating of my heart, the passing of blood and
air through my lungs,
The sniff of green leaves and dry leaves, and of the shore and dark-color'd sea-
rocks, and of hay in the barn,
The sound of the belch'd words of my voice loos'd to the eddies of the wind,
A few light kisses, a few embraces, a reaching around of arms,
The play of shine and shade on the trees as the supple boughs wag,
The delight alone or in the rush of the streets, or along the fields and hill-sides,
The feeling of health, the full-noon trill, the song of me rising from bed and
meeting the sun.
[...]
Urge and urge and urge,
Always the procreant urge of the world.
Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase,
always sex,
Always a knit of identity, always distinction, always a breed of life.⁷⁴¹

Much of the material we covered concerning *Lebensreform*, above, is manifest in poetic form in these lines. *Freibad* is de-institutionalised, or naturalised, as the author strips away the "disguise" of civilisation as nature comes in contact with him. As the "sniff of

⁷³⁹ Selz (1957), p70, referenced in Gordon (1987), p29.

⁷⁴⁰ Gordon (1987), p29.

⁷⁴¹ Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass*, "Song of Myself", 2 and 3.

green leaves" enter his body, through the lungs to his own flowing blood, man enters a more complete union with nature than theoretical texts on *Lebensreform* would come to describe. In the light of the sun a feeling of health returns to the body; and in this "new" space man's vital instincts can return to the surface. "Urge and urge and urge", the procreative drive is not just man's, it is the world's: giving himself over to that greater order, an order which he breathes and which breathes him, it is sex that determines the life of man. And to make this truth manifest is the poet's task:

Through me forbidden voices,
Voices of sexes and lusts, voices veil'd and I remove the veil,
Voices indecent by me clarified and transfigur'd.
I do not press my fingers across my mouth,
I keep as delicate around the bowels as around the head and heart,
Copulation is no more rank to me than death is.⁷⁴²

Nature, as Whitman describes it, gives rise to an account of humanity which led in the 1890s to comparison with Przybyszewski's "Individual",⁷⁴³ and which certainly provided an account of sexuality close to both that of Przybyszewski and Jaeger. In the American poet's text, however, it is the particularly natural environment in which these sexual relations become possible that is important. When considered in relation to the *Brücke* works produced at the lakes or the sea, the poet's importance for the artists is clear. In the present context, though, it is important to note on one hand the similarity to Nietzsche's account, the escape from traditional bourgeois mores governing sexuality, and yet on the other the radical difference from Nietzsche in the manner in which man gives himself over to nature and is somehow "at one" with nature. Nietzsche was concerned not with a return to nature, but a move "up" to nature, an embracing of natural power structures, but not a giving up of what differentiated man from the beasts.

⁷⁴² *ibid*, 24.

⁷⁴³ Schlaff, 1899, referenced in Gordon (1987), p44.

Having attempted to stress throughout the last section of the present thesis the importance of Nietzsche for the specific iconographic and stylistic concerns of *die Brücke*, it is clear that much of those concerns were formulated long before Nietzsche even began to write, and this by a figure who was himself to have the most profound influence on certain of the Expressionists. Of course, Nietzsche was a product of his time, and of those names which preceded his. The important point to note here is that Nietzsche's name must, once again, be placed among a list of those whose influence on Expressionism has been noted. Here, in particular, the names of Rousseau and Whitman as well as Nietzsche are seen to be of crucial importance. And these names are associated with *die Brücke* only in terms of fundamental (as opposed to more particular) intellectual sources: the series of particular iconographic and stylistic influences, the diverse ways in which they are manifest in the artists' works, is what has constituted traditional art historical accounts of the group's work.

It becomes apparent that Kirchner's art as formulated practically and theoretically exists somewhere on the fringes of Nietzsche's account of art as a destructuring force, at one moment moving beyond what could possibly sit comfortably within even that definition of *Rausch*, only to be recovered by the existence of a far more rigorous, refined process which brings the work closer to Heidegger's Nietzsche. That of both Kandinsky and Marc, on the other hand, though initially far more destructive of conventional artistic form, sets itself from the outset the task (both theoretical and practical) of construction according to quite precise principles and order. Particularly in Marc that order is in a very real sense achieved, as his moment of ecstasy and rapture finds almost geometric resolution. Both Kandinsky and Marc approximate much more thoroughly to that definition of the grand style which demanded that art "become master of the chaos one is [...] become logical [...] mathematics, law."

The Context for Readings and Misreadings

It is possible to show that the sometimes quite different relations of the work of Kandinsky and Marc (during the *Blue Rider* period) on one hand, and of *die Brücke* on the other, to Nietzsche, relate to similar differences presented by the various case studies I have chosen to represent the Nietzsche cult. Further, it is possible to show that certain problematic aspects of the artists' relation to Nietzsche relate to a combination of different Nietzsches presented in one or more of those case studies. Thus, I draw attention to the following key points with the view of establishing that those sources provide not only "legitimate" accounts of Nietzsche which might have furthered the artists' understanding of the philosopher's ideas, but that their misrepresentations of the philosopher are also manifest in the artists' writings and practice.

As we have seen, both Kandinsky and Marc devoted much time to the critique of modern, positivist science and what they saw as the consequent denial of more spiritual aspects of life. Much the same emphasis was uncovered in Steiner's account of Nietzsche, where the philosopher's poetic, artistic response to science is praised. Equally important was the emphasis on the instincts, opposed to logic and the intellect. Steiner stresses Nietzsche's quest for the "whole individual", the combination of instinct and reason which Kandinsky himself repeatedly wrote of in his own publications. Through articulation of such concerns, Steiner introduced that opposition where Apollo was the bearer of messages from "beyond", opposed to the Dionysian truth of "this world", and thereby introduced a mystical element to the account. We have seen how

Brandes initiated such talk with his reference to Zarathustra as a "warlike mystic" and "mystical immoralist"; how George associated Nietzsche with both Christ and St John, and how in his circle we found the attempt to combine mysticism and science, the spiritual and the empirical; and how Simmel drew extended comparisons to show the similarity between Nietzsche's account of things and that of Christianity. Again, it is precisely this concern with the spiritual, mystical aspects of life which underwrite the project articulated by the editors of the *Blue Rider*. In their texts, Nietzsche's ideas are treated in much the same manner as in these key examples from the Nietzsche cult: the combination and confusion of Nietzsche's ideas with precisely those metaphysical and spiritual ones which the philosopher sought to attack; of the predominantly anti-metaphysical concerns of the philosopher with the metaphysical and spiritual concerns of a combination of other sources.

This confusion is one which is more or less absent from the work of *die Brücke*. As we have already seen, the group subscribed to a Nietzschean account of things which is to be found in, if not derived from, those same sources. As is clear from the foregoing, both *die Brücke* and the editors of the *Blue Rider* recognised in both society and culture a radical decline, a loss of "authenticity" or "spirituality". As Gordon (1987) has shown quite convincingly, the "intellectual milieu" at the end of the nineteenth century reflected a sense of radical social and cultural decline which led to, and was fuelled by, an interest in Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, referred to about the turn of the century as the "philosopher of decadence",⁷⁴⁴ the artists to whom the present study has attended sought to diagnose while overcoming the nihilism and decadence of their age; to each, this relation to Nietzsche is fundamental. This relation recalls Steiner's account of Nietzsche's aesthetic, as counterpart to philosophical, nihilism; George's wheel which

⁷⁴⁴ Ernst, Paul, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Seine historische Stellung. Seine Philosophie*, 1890, referred to in Krummel (1974), Vol 1, p104. Nietzsche is also described in Ernst's text as the "philosopher of brutality".

hurtles toward a chasm; and Simmel's more sophisticated account of Nietzsche's active nihilism. In their efforts to overcome this nihilism, both groups have been shown to subscribe to Nietzsche's elitism as first articulated and extolled in Brandes' "Aristocratic Radicalism", and as perpetuated in Steiner's "human *Übermensch*" and "Sovereign individuum" who lives according to nature, and in George's "Zarathustran fighter for freedom", and in his Maximin.

But to different aspects of these same sources the *Brücke* group corresponds more fully than the *Blue Rider*. Steiner asserts the importance of Nietzsche's recognition of the life-denying effect of a "real world" in relation to an "apparent" one, and the need to remain true to "this world". Precisely in this relation, writes Steiner, is the possibility of a reaffirmation of life enhancing forces. Likewise, Steiner's description of Nietzsche's account of morality, in particular, the need to overcome bourgeois mores, should be compared to the *Brücke* artists' intentions. For Brandes, this need, as articulated by Nietzsche, was the need to create a new morality which centres around the self, around the individual: only in this way could the artist overcome what Simmel presented as Nietzsche's account of the "levelling" effect of "herd mentality". In their attempt to respond to the Walden circle's demand that the arts "pluck out meaningless customs", the *Brücke* group addressed itself to the manner in which people lived their everyday lives, an approach more or less absent from the concerns of the editors of the *Blue Rider* almanac.⁷⁴⁵

Equally important to *die Brücke* is the emphasis these sources placed on the body. Thus Steiner wrote of the importance to Nietzsche of the concept of body as self, and of the unity of body and soul. From here, it is a short move to consideration of the dance in Nietzsche, initially articulated by members of the circle which collected about

⁷⁴⁵ Given the greater involvement between certain artists associated with the Blue Rider and Walden, die Brücke's engagement with and the Blue Riders' failure to engage Walden's demand is perhaps paradoxical.

George. And this brings us to what I consider a most important influence on the group's understanding of Nietzsche, the literary circles which they encountered through their contacts in Berlin and Munich. Hoddiss' "End of the World" set the tone for the Neue Club's nihilism, a theme expanded in more overtly Nietzschean form in Loewenson's and Hiller's essays. Particularly in Hiller's *Weisheit der Langenweile* and Loewenson's reading from *The Will to Power* (Aphorism 820), affirmation of the pain and joy of this world, and this in opposition to the metaphysical illusions and comforts of a "real" world, are articulated. Again, it is to the body, and in particular the sexual act, that the artists' attention was drawn. Through Dehmel, Przybyszewski's Nietzschean account of the sexual act became pertinent. But more fundamental were general concerns relating to bodily movement and expression as accounted for by Klages, and this in relation to the dance in Wolfskehl. More immediate interest in the dance is found in Nolde's acquaintance with Wigman, and the drawings Kirchner was later to make at her studio. These figures - Steiner, Loewenson, Hiller, Przybyszewski, Wigman, Klages, Wolfskehl - treat Nietzsche in quite different ways, yet in the present context aspects of their accounts of (or relations to) the philosopher seem to fall into a single discourse leading from rejection of otherworldliness and the demand for emphasis on "this earth" (and in this context theories of *Bodenreform* are also important), through a reassertion of the body, to the dance, and thus to the creative (here, "expressive") act. This discourse is surely related in a most fundamental way to Nietzsche's "physiology of art." But, as I have suggested, that moment of *Rausch* which Nietzsche described as the precondition, as well as the containment of, this art, was not always fully engaged by the artists. Thus, at certain moments, the work of art is generated according to a fundamentally frenzied, destructive (at the expense of the concomitant constructive) principle. Again, it is possible to find a precedent for this.

From George's account of Nietzsche as found in the two poems analysed in Section II, we can see an early instance of insistence on Nietzsche's style as hyperbole,

in particular what George called the "scream." This takes most forceful form in Loewenson's call for an intensification, indeed an *Intensitätenrausch*, of life and art through the concept of pathos, an excitement of the passions which Zweig associated with affirmation of "joy, force and will to produce ecstasy." Precisely here "Pathos", "Ekstase" and "Schrei" which have been presented as the fundamentals of Expressionism gained most forceful articulation.

Overemphasis of particular moments of Nietzsche's texts, particularly those which articulate intensification and force, and the consequent underemphasis of others, particularly the necessity of sublimation and control, is to fail to correspond to Nietzsche's account of things. Of course, Loewenson asserted that his concept of pathos be more than an excitement of the passions, that it also incorporate the intellect. In the context of literary Expressionism, grammatical construction usually demanded that a certain order remain. But as I presented "pathos" and intensification in the context of literary Expressionism in Section II, above, the concepts all but escaped the order of the intellect. For, given that it was an excess of order and reason that the writers were reacting against, they emphasised that which would undermine the authority of reason, of conventional structure. At those moments at which it becomes little other than a destructuring force, it seems the art of *die Brücke* corresponds to precisely this reactionary emphasis on pure excess.

While aspects of the concepts just covered are of equal importance to Kandinsky and Marc - particularly Steiner's emphasis on the unity of body and soul, Wolfskehl's emphasis on the dance in uniting body and soul, and Klages' attention to the bodily gesture as an outer manifestation of the soul - those which were developed in the context of Berlin literary Expressionism were not. In spite of the many figures within the Nietzsche cult which were of importance to both groups, we begin to see a crucial difference in their respective relations to that cult. Essentially, this can be summarised

as the Munich group's commitment to those parts of accounts of Nietzsche which are rooted in nineteenth century thought, and thus committed to the metaphysics which Nietzsche sought to overcome, and the Dresden/Berlin group's relation to accounts derived from thoughts articulated among literary groups in and around their contemporary environment. The Nietzschean sources to which the writings of Kandinsky and Marc, during the *Blue Rider* period, relate, then, will be those developed in the more systematic accounts with which Section II began: specifically, those of Brandes, Steiner, George (and the activities of his Munich circle) and Simmel. Conveniently, certain of these are names which have been, in art historical texts, repeatedly associated with Kandinsky. The artists of *die Brücke*, on the other hand, while developing ideas which relate in important ways to those same authors, are more closely allied to interpretations of Nietzsche presented in periodicals and the literary circles of Berlin. It becomes quite clear, then, that this distinction corresponds directly to that "vertical axis" which cut through the various summaries of the case studies with which Section II ended.

But there is, beyond this, more to be said of certain of the artists' means of knowing Nietzsche's ideas. As is evident from the artists' own statements, the latter group's early (that is, the first years after 1905) contact with Nietzsche seems not to derive from any such secondary sources: rather, they read immediately from Nietzsche's published writings. While this may seem a little obvious, I believe it underwrites a fundamental difference in certain artists' relation to Nietzsche. For, as is implicit above, in Section II, it was not actually necessary to read Nietzsche to have some idea of what Nietzsche was about.⁷⁴⁶ Indeed, if an artist didn't read directly from Nietzsche, it would be all the more easy for him to misrepresent, in accordance with received wisdom, the philosopher's ideas. Whether or not this is what happened in

⁷⁴⁶ In 1906 Raoul Richter wrote in his "Friedrich Nietzsche und die Kultur unserer Zeit" how Nietzsche's ideas were determining a whole mode of life without people even being aware of their source. See Ascheim (1992) p31.

Kandinsky's case is not clear. But, given his radically eclectic method, it would make sense to suggest that those of the philosopher's phrases manifest in the artist's texts were indeed appropriated without serious consideration for their original context, and were re-presented in a context created by precisely that received wisdom. This is not to imply that Nietzsche's importance for the artist existed only at this thoroughly superficial level; I would still suggest that correspondence between the two thinkers exists at a number of important levels. Rather, it would seem this superficial "borrowing" from Nietzsche must act as a counter to the suggestion that Kandinsky is thoroughly "indebted" to Nietzsche; as a reminder that the philosopher's name and ideas are contingent rather than necessary in the artist's oeuvre.

While Marc's relation to Nietzsche in the pre-war years is strikingly similar to that of Kandinsky, elsewhere his texts demonstrate a quite different relation. We know that Marc studied philosophy at the end of the nineteenth century, and that in the first years of the twentieth century this led to a particular concern with Nietzsche's writing.⁷⁴⁷ Most obviously in the short period of the war for which he wrote, Marc read and integrated to his own texts those of the philosopher; particularly the latter's *Human, all too Human*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. Yet, as we have seen, above, despite the close reading of certain texts which became apparent in his own, Marc didn't lose sight of the fundamentally spiritual and metaphysical account of things he had articulated along with Kandinsky a few years before. More important than their proximity to Nietzsche's texts, is the acutely contradictory and unstable nature of the artist's writings.

⁷⁴⁷ See Levine (1979).

Conclusion

We know now that the text is not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message of an Author-God”), but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture.

Roland Barthes, *The Death of the Author*.

The processes through which philosophical texts produced toward the end of the nineteenth century become manifest in the writing and art produced by a range of persons in the early twentieth century is surely complex. This is particularly the case when the body of texts which we might characterise as the “origin” are in important ways at odds with themselves, in that they fail to agree with themselves, and when those practices in which aspects of those texts are manifest are also in important ways at odds with themselves. When we acknowledge that Nietzsche’s ideas are not necessarily manifest *as such* in the artists’ work, that those ideas pass through a historical process of interpretation and recreation, that process becomes still more complex.

As suggested in the introduction, rather than make certain ill-founded assumptions about Nietzsche’s work, the present thesis has presented an extended account of those parts of Nietzsche’s philosophy of most significance to the artists concerned. Equally, the move from philosophical text to art practice is only possible through careful and sustained attention to the artists’ work. In the foregoing, the artists’ texts became the context for consideration of their various and fundamental aims, as well as of individual works, allowing us to draw together parts of the philosopher’s writings and the artists’ work in a non-arbitrary manner. Attention to artists’ writings

made it possible for us to decide which aspects of the former could be of importance for the latter.

But beyond an a-historical recognition of “influence” and “correspondence”, the present thesis has placed such relations within the historical context of certain cultural and social practices. Nietzsche will frequently have already been mediated, and that is to say interpreted and reconstructed, before he is manifest in the artists’ work. Thus, the thesis shows the various ways in which those key figures and practices discussed in the second section either presented an interpretation of and appropriation from, or related in crucial ways to, Nietzsche’s philosophy. Essential to this was the recognition that elsewhere, scholars have demonstrated at length the importance of certain of the key figures discussed for the Expressionists to whom this thesis later attended. Against this background, consideration of the significance of Nietzsche for Expressionism becomes much stronger, and again less arbitrary; yet it is a context which has remained, until now, more or less absent from those studies which have sought to bridge the gap between Nietzsche and Expressionist art. In particular, this approach made it possible to move beyond recognition of influence from and correspondence to aspects of Nietzsche’s thought, to clear statement of the particular traditions of interpretation which contextualise that relation to Nietzsche: thus, we noted the prewar Munich artists’ commitment to (largely metaphysical) ideas which the later Nietzsche would radically oppose, and which were developed (frequently in religious or mystical form) in the systematic accounts of Nietzsche with which Section II began; and the Dresden/Berlin group’s more thorough alliance to the Nietzschean ideas and practices, more immanent than metaphysical, presented in the periodicals and literary circles of Berlin, and manifest in the broader cultural forum as accounted for at the end of Section II.

From the analysis, it is clear that to the work of certain Expressionists Nietzsche is variously present; this presence varies from the mere mention of his name, to a

profound correspondence between philosopher's and artists' accounts of society, culture and the process of creation. Between that name and such world-views lie the wealth of "influences" and "relations" the thesis has drawn to the surface; whether these are conscious appropriations or the sediments of texts picked up by language only to be deposited in the artists' writings and practice a couple of decades later will, in certain instances, remain unresolved. What is more, it is clear that once we have established the presence of such Nietzschean forms within the artists' work, that presence is immediately challenged by the presence of other, decidedly un-Nietzschean forms.

Aspects of Nietzsche are woven into an unsteady alliance with aspects of other thinkers whose ideas are in many ways quite incompatible with his. But it is clear that the artists' writings never could correspond fully to those of Nietzsche; to do so, they would have merely to repeat his texts. As soon as forms derived from Nietzsche are manifest in a context different from their source, they will be altered and subverted to a greater or lesser degree. When we follow those Nietzschean concerns through to the work of art, that tendency will be at least as great. Nietzsche's texts as much as the works produced by the artists to whom we have attended are, in Barthes' terms, like any such product, a "multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." Such is the nature of Nietzsche in the context of Expressionism.

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