NIETZSCHE, AESTHETICS AND MODERNITY

MATTHEW RAMPLEY

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Nietzsche, Aesthetics and Modernity analyzes Nietzsche's response to the aesthetic tradition, tracing in particular the complex relationship between the work and thought of Nietzsche, Kant and Hegel. Focusing on the critical role of negation and sublimity in Nietzsche's account of art, it explores his confrontation with modernity and his attempt to posit a revitalized artistic practice as the counter-movement to modern nihilism. Drawing on the full range of his published and unpublished writings, together with his comments on figures as diverse as Wagner, Zola, Delacroix and Laurence Sterne, it highlights the extent to which Nietzsche counters the culture of his own time with a dialectical notion of aesthetic interpretation and practice. As such, Nietzsche the dialectician articulates a position that proves to be intimately connected to the negative dialects of Theodor Adorno.

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For Helen

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Abbreviations

Works by Nietzsche

A	*The Antichrist*
BGE	*Beyond Good and Evil*
BT	*The Birth of Tragedy*
CW	*The Case of Wagner*
D	*Daybreak*
EH	*Ecce Homo*
GS	*The Gay Science*
HAH	*Human All Too Human*
KSA	*Werke, Kritische Studienausgabe*
NCW	*Nietzsche contra Wagner*
OGM	*On the Genealogy of Morals*
TI	*Twilight of the Idols*
UM	*Untimely Meditations*
	II 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life'
	IV 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth'
WP	*The Will to Power*
WS	*The Wanderer and His Shadow*
Z	*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

Other Frequently Cited Works

AT	Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*
ISW	Theodor Adorno, *In Search of Wagner*
PMM	Theodor Adorno, *Philosophy of Modern Music*
WWR	Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*

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Introduction

> "Beauty" is for the artist something outside all orders of rank, because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites.
>
> (*WP* §803)

This book is concerned with the place of art in the thought of Nietzsche and with the place of Nietzsche's philosophy of art in the aesthetic tradition. It is not the first such study; as early as 1900 Julius Zeitler devoted a monograph entirely to Nietzsche's aesthetics, and there have been several other studies since.[1] However, it differs from those studies in that it discusses Nietzsche's writing on art within the context of the problem of modern culture. It therefore draws out the relation between Nietzsche's own interpretation of art and modernity, and the aesthetic inflection of the debate concerning the meaning of modernity both in Nietzsche's predecessors such as Hegel, the Schlegel brothers or August Schelling and in his successors, in particular, Theodor Adorno. There is a tension in the work of Nietzsche, one with which he is constantly occupied and that, it might be argued, is a lasting legacy of his work. It emerges from his general critique of metaphysics and could be characterised as the problem of reconciling radical epistemological scepticism with continued belief in the possibility of normative discourse. In short, Nietzsche is concerned with the question of how the radical sceptic can avoid becoming a nihilist, and how the radical sceptic might combine acknowledgement of the contingency of all values with a continuing commitment to their necessity. Thus a recurring issue for Nietzsche is that of living with contradiction, and it surfaces in vari-

ous ways, such as the combining of belief with irony, a sense of history with amnesia, affirmation with negation, Apollonian order with Dionysian chaos.

Nietzsche's work confronts an issue central to the larger question of modernity itself. As Jürgen Habermas has stated, modernity 'can and will not borrow the criteria by which it takes its orientation from the model supplied by another epoch, *it has to create its normativity out of itself.*'[2] For Nietzsche modernity represents a decisive moment in the history of western culture, when its values are revealed to be hollow illusions and thereby lose all legitimacy. The consequent crisis is constantly threatened with a lapse into a decadent nihilism, a state of absolute passive unbelief, in which no values are legitimate, least of all those of the discredited western tradition. In this respect Nietzsche was only one amongst a large number of nineteenth-century commentators who believed they were witnessing a decisive phase in the development of European culture. Yet whereas writers such as Karl Marx, Georg Simmel, Max Weber or Charles Baudelaire located this process in changes in the material conditions of contemporary urban society, Nietzsche consistently held to the view that the crisis of modernity was largely one of values, one moreover generated by the internal logic of western cultural values, in particular its persistent belief in metaphysical certitude. Much of his thought is consequently devoted to the question of establishing a grounding for cultural values in an age in which the notion of any certitude seems highly problematic. This problem, I argue, is crucial to an understanding of Nietzsche's aesthetic thinking; it is only through the adoption of a certain aesthetic practice that the problem of modernity finds some form of resolution.

Before developing this point further it is important to forestall criticisms that might be made of this initial position. It is widely accepted that alongside Adorno, who was himself profoundly influenced by the earlier thinker, Nietzsche is the quintessential philosopher of non-identity. In keeping with this reading it might be argued that the idea of a *resolution* of the contradictions of modernity is completely alien to Nietzsche. This appears doubly so given the numerous criticisms Nietzsche made of the system building of Hegel, in which all contradictions were resolved in the consummation of Absolute Knowledge. Since the

seminal interpretation of his thought by Gilles Deleuze in 1962 it has become widely accepted that the work of Nietzsche represents the supreme moment in counter-Hegelian thought, in which difference, non-identity and contradiction become central.[3] In the light of such considerations, it is necessary to introduce a conceptual distinction between 'contradiction' and 'inconsistency.'

The notions of contradiction and difference figure prominently in Nietzsche's writing and function as axes around which much of his thought is organised. This last word is crucial, though, for while it eschews the relentless system building of Hegel, Nietzsche's thought is nevertheless *organised,* and this organisation, for all the variations in its texture, displays a certain consistency. It is this assumption of consistency that allows the commentator, even Deleuze, to write a coherent account of Nietzsche's text. In one sense I am partially endorsing the interpretation of Nietzsche by Karl Jaspers, in which 'contradiction' becomes a master concept.[4] Thus attention to the question of art enables Nietzsche to hold to both a radical counter-metaphysics and an insistence on the positing of post-metaphysical normative values, without lapsing into incoherence. Besides, the construction of even the most rigorous anti-foundationalism relies on the lack of foundations as a founding value.[5]

Nietzsche's discourse thereby raises the familiar problem of reflexivity and, rather than skirting around it, confronts it through examination of the question of art. While Jaspers offers an elegant solution to a pressing concern in Nietzsche, his reading also requires a degree of qualification. Nietzsche is not Adorno, for whom dialectical contradiction most definitely was a master concept. The limited scope of my study also needs to be recognised; it is intended to explore the range of Nietzsche's writings on art and to outline the role of Nietzschean aesthetics in his wider oeuvre. Hence contradiction becomes an organising principle in a determinate area of Nietzsche's thought, and I shall be arguing that his formulation of the question of art is linked with his attempt to think through the problem of contradiction consistently.

Most current commentators on Nietzsche, broadly following Deleuze's reading, see him as the essential thinker of difference. This interpretation explicitly opposes the totalising tendency of the dialectic,

which will always seek to negate, to reduce the other, and in which the process of *Aufhebung* or sublation only preserves the other by simultaneously cancelling it out.[6] In the hands of Deleuze, even will to power becomes a means to the affirmation of difference, of plurality, despite the many passages where Nietzsche writes of will to power as a process of overcoming or negation. In addition to Nietzsche's explicit expressions of mistrust with regard to the system building of Hegel, subsequent commentators have understood the anti-Hegelianism of Nietzsche's thought to inhabit his writing at a more fundamental level. Tracy Strong, for example, sees Nietzsche's use of genealogy as being specifically shaped to undermine the structure of dialectic. Rather than gathering up, genealogy seeks to take apart, to lay bare the working of signs and their history, in order to dismantle the cultural constructs of contemporary society.[7]

Notwithstanding the importance of such interpretations, I shall suggest that Nietzsche's relation to Hegel is considerably more complex than one of mere negation or overcoming. The tension between Hegel and Nietzsche, and that between contradiction and its opposite, are inscribed everywhere within the corpus of Nietzsche's work, and I shall work through these tensions as they appear with the aim of analysing the manner in which art becomes the means to release them, to effect a provisional reconciliation. I add the word 'provisional' to articulate the difference between what I read as occurring in the text of Nietzsche and what I perceive to be the specific operation of Hegel's dialectic, where each successive *Aufhebung* points towards that final moment of absolute determination. A central question is the meaning of the term 'dialectics.' For Nietzsche the term was intimately linked with Hegel and Plato, both of whom stood as exemplars of the supreme moment of metaphysical thinking, in which systematic dialectical thinking leads to absolute knowledge. As critical as he was of metaphysics, Nietzsche did not abandon dialectical thinking *tout court*. A central part of my argument is centred around the idea that Nietzsche retains dialectical thinking as an essential part of his post-metaphysical project. This strand in Nietzsche's thinking was taken up by Georges Bataille, who, in the tradition of Alexandre Kojève, emphasises the elements of disruption and

violence in the Hegelian dialectic, and then works through those same elements in Nietzsche himself.[8]

To speak of a Nietzschean dialectic is of course provocative. It is quite removed from Hegel's notion of an immanent and *systematic* unfolding of consciousness. However, Nietzsche shares with Hegel recognition of the mediated and partial nature of cognitive claims and, most importantly, of the productive function of the negative. Curiously, it is through a process of historical deferral that the proximity of Nietzsche and Hegel can be followed, for the mediating point was only provided subsequently in the form of Adorno. In spite of his difference of temperament, Adorno comes closest to the path Nietzsche begins moving along. More significantly, while drawing its thrust from Hegel, Adorno's dialectic refuses the final moment of consummation, remaining instead entangled within the web of contradiction. Adorno notes that 'dialectics is no longer reconcilable with Hegel. Its motion does not tend to the identity in the difference between each object and its concept; instead it is suspicious of all identity. Its logic is one of disintegration.'[9] Like Nietzsche, Adorno is concerned with articulating and thinking through the contradiction between the necessity of retaining discursive logic while denying its metaphysical foundation. In Adorno the moment of absolute knowledge is infinitely deferred: 'The non-identical is not to be obtained directly, as something positive on its part, nor is it obtainable by a negation of the negative. This negation is not an affirmation itself, as it is to Hegel.'[10] The significance of the negative in Adorno's conception of the dialectic derives from his stress on the constitutive gap between concept and experience, coupled with the recognition of the impossibility of overcoming that difference. This is the tragedy of philosophy, for Adorno: 'in philosophy we literally seek to immerse ourselves in things that are heterogeneous to it,'[11] an immersion that must be perpetually deferred, since the immanence of the dialectic can only be overcome by means of the dialectic itself. A crucial distinction between Nietzsche and Adorno remains, of course, for while Adorno cannot and will not see beyond the infinitely negative dialectic, Nietzsche is always looking for what might come after. This constitutes the dialectical nature of his own transvaluation of all values, in which

'knowledge' and the 'human' subject are negated and transformed into 'interpretation' and the 'Übermensch.'

Nietzsche's thought represents in many senses the first deconstruction of the philosophical tradition. By this I mean that his work contains both a sceptical de-struction of metaphysics and a post-metaphysical con-structive moment. The sceptical moment is familiar to his readers, and it is his polemics against contemporary society, his relentless tirades against Christianity and Plato, and his ridicule of Kant, the 'great Chinaman of Königsberg,' which constitute his identity in the eyes of most. I am arguing, however, that this scepticism is itself a strategic moment of negation that is posited in order to be superseded once more. Nietzsche's construction of a post-metaphysical thinking is not executed by a complete departure from the tradition, but is rather undertaken by pushing through to their limits the implications in the thought of Kant, Descartes, Hegel and others. At this point one can see an affinity between Nietzsche, Hegel and Jacques Derrida, whose term 'deconstruction' best describes Nietzsche's stance towards metaphysics. The notion of *Aufhebung* or 'sublation' possesses a double sense; it denotes processes of both preserving and negating. In the *Science of Logic* Hegel offers perhaps his most succinct definition of the concept, when he writes that 'what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has lost only its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated.'[12] Dialectical negation is not simply the cancelling out of a position; it is rather a process of mediation in a detour through the other. Derrida has admitted the profound similarity between Hegel and his own deconstructive practice,[13] and this relation can be triangulated to include Nietzsche. This is nowhere more apparent than in the reception by Derrida and Nietzsche of the history of metaphysics. Just as for Derrida, metaphysics cannot simply be negated, so too Nietzsche displays a profoundly ambivalent attitude towards Kant, Hegel and, more significantly, Socrates. For all his censure of Socrates, Nietzsche's project overlaps in many ways with that of the Athenian 'gadfly.'[14]

Because of its simultaneous negation and appropriation of metaphysics Nietzsche's thinking is often characterised as an ironic discourse: not in the sense of a wilful playing with forms, though this may be what he aims to accomplish in many cases, but rather in the sense of

maintaining a pathos of distance. Distance towards one's own values and those of one's culture, knowing them to be purely interpretative stances towards the world, lacking resilience when put under scrutiny, while simultaneously adhering to them as if they had something more than a purely contingent worth. I shall examine this pathos of distance in Nietzsche in my opening chapters.

The concept of an interpretative dialectic forms the basic framework in my exposition of Nietzsche, and as such it constitutes the main core of my first two chapters. In Chapter 1 I offer an articulation of the above problem as it relates to Nietzsche's critique of 'knowledge' and 'truth,' and to his awareness of the significance of metaphor and interpretation for any process of constructive thinking. In particular I shall outline the relation between the dialectic and the notion of interpretation, to which Nietzsche turns in order to resist the metaphysical connotations of the concept 'knowledge.' Central to Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics is its implied assumption of the possibility of transcendence, whether it can be regarded as the Absolute Knowledge of Hegel, the revelation of the form of the good for Plato, or Descartes's grounding of knowledge in the self-certainty of the cogito. For all three, recurrent targets of Nietzsche's deconstruction of metaphysics, immanence within the system of thought is broken. Thus while in Hegel's dialectic the unfolding of thought occurs through its own internal dynamic, its *telos* still stands at the moment of stasis of the system, in which the dialectic has completed its course. In contrast, through the notion of an interpretative negative dialectic, Nietzsche conceives of a practice that refuses the lure of transcendence, whose interpretative criteria are immanent to its practice. As in Hegel, negation acts as a spur to the reformulation of an existing value, but in contrast there is no final moment when it is recouped in the positivity of final or absolute knowledge. Nietzsche thereby attempts to preserve the contradiction between his critique of the metaphysical search for foundational certitude and the continuing place of some (non-metaphysical) interpretative grounding.

In the second chapter I discuss the negative dialectic in relation to Nietzsche's critique of subjectivity. I argue in like manner to Chapter 1 that Nietzsche is concerned not with the mere destruction of a key metaphysical concept, namely the subject, but rather its transformation

in order to twist it free from the limited metaphysical understanding of selfhood. Decentering is not dissolution. The claim is crucial inasmuch as I shall assert that Nietzsche's writings on art are incomprehensible if we see him as proclaiming the death of the subject *tout court,* most particularly because of his emphasis on the artist as the key to overcoming metaphysical culture and its attendant nihilism.

Having laid out the basic parameters of my discussion of Nietzsche, I turn to the specific theme of art, and in particular to the manner in which the dialectical tension in Nietzsche's work between a radical scepticism and his search for a post-metaphysical normative discourse is fully worked out and resolved by the model of the artist and the artistic creation of meaning. Writing a full-length study of Nietzsche's philosophy of art is a highly problematic task. Nietzsche does not have a unified philosophy of art or aesthetic theory in the way one might take to be the case for, say, Hegel, Schiller or Schopenhauer. Instead, his oeuvre presents scattered writings frequently lacking any apparent unifying theme. Moreover we come up against the fact that his only substantial treatment of the subject belongs to his early years, after which Nietzsche's thought underwent considerable changes as he left the shadow of Schopenhauer, changes which lend it a frequently fragmentary and disjointed character. I have nevertheless attempted to overcome this problem by discerning themes in his writing on art which recur, which are both closely connected and serve to provide some means of releasing the wider tension which I have outlined above. In Chapter 3 I begin by exploring his first major text, *The Birth of Tragedy.* I attempt to understand that work, and most particularly the much analysed function of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, by analysing its dialectical structure and its considerable indebtedness to theories of the sublime. Just as the experience of the sublime both negates the subject and restores it, so tragedy presents the annihilation of the stable symbolic order and replaces it with an interpretative schema of radical contingency. As such the dialectic of Dionysus and Apollo prefigures the key motifs already discussed. Not merely a therapeutic device to 'hide' the nausea of becoming, as one recent commentator has suggested,[15] tragedy becomes, in my reading, a site in which is dramatised the collapse of metaphysical certitude and its sublation into an immanentist interpretationalism.

Nietzsche's philosophy of art has been described as pursuing an 'auto-aesthetic' practice that embodies the same logic of immanence underpinning his wider epistemological concerns.[16] In Chapters 4–7 I examine the ways in which this auto-aesthetic is recast in the light of the developments Nietzsche's thought undergoes from the mid-1870s onwards. I am arguing that although one can discern a very real transformation in Nietzsche's thinking, the idea of a rupture in his writing underplays important continuities. In particular, *The Birth of Tragedy,* although labouring under the influence of romanticism and idealism, presents ideas which persist, albeit in altered form, throughout Nietzsche's career. In many respects one could read Nietzsche as engaged in the uncompleted project of constantly recasting the ideas at work in *The Birth of Tragedy* in the light of his more general development.

In Chapter 4 I discuss why Nietzsche comes to reject the Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian context that gave rise to *The Birth of Tragedy.* More specifically I shall look at his critique of the notion of transcendence, which plays a large part in the thought of Wagner and Schopenhauer, a notion which always threatens to govern the argument of *The Birth of Tragedy.* Having outlined Nietzsche's rejection of the metaphysical inclinations of his early mentors I shall go on to a wider discussion of his rejection of the notion of transcendence, a notion bound to the dualistic thinking of metaphysics. In keeping with his critique of the metaphysical yearning for the beyond, I shall argue that Nietzsche employs a number of themes in order to establish a counter-philosophy of 'immanence,' themes which ultimately centre around art.

In Chapter 5 I look at the question of time and history in Nietzsche's thought. Here I shall discuss not only the most obscure aspect of his thinking, namely the notion of Eternal Recurrence, but also his early work on the problem of history in the second of the *Untimely Meditations.* It has been claimed that the second of the *Untimely Meditations* differs from Nietzsche's later thought on the question of time inasmuch as it sees history as a problem to be overcome, in contrast to the later writings which represent an affirmation of the temporal flux of becoming to the detriment of any stable, and petrified, regime of pure being.[17] My own interpretation instead views the two periods as united by a common concern to think through the problem of the relation of per-

manence and historicity in a manner parallel to Nietzsche's wider concern with the relation between scepticism and belief. There is also a further dimension to the question of time in Nietzsche's work, namely, the problem of modernity. If, as already noted, one common definition of modernity attends to the evaporation of inherited values, norms and social practices, so too the sense of the modern is characterised by a transformed perception of time and history. In particular, from the mid–nineteenth century onwards the understanding of time came to be dominated by the 'new,' which, coupled with the Enlightenment belief in progress, redefined the present as essentially historical, a point of constant transition between an obsolete, irretrievable past and an indeterminate future full of the promise of perfection.[18]

Nietzsche's concern with time thus registers the larger issue of the understanding of time in modern culture, and it confronts aesthetic debates about the relation between the present and the past. From the *Querelle des anciens et des modernes* of the late seventeenth century onwards, the function of history in aesthetic practice has been a recurrent subject of debate. The rejection of the classical past as a model for artistic imitation mirrors the wider question of the immanent normativity of modern culture, and modernity's orientation towards the new found its most forceful expression in aesthetic innovation and the emergence of the avant-garde. Although the notion of an artistic avant-garde was in its infancy, and certainly makes no appearance in Nietzsche's writing, his adoption of 'Dionysian classicism' as an aesthetic norm undoubtedly counts as a response to the aesthetic inflections of the question of modernity and history. Dionysian classicism serves for Nietzsche as the mark of an 'authentic' artistic praxis, in which history is no longer something either to be transcended or to be mourned for as irretrievably lost. In this regard Nietzsche's stress on the negation of meaning in the work of art plays an important part, inasmuch as it embodies a specific temporal structure, namely one of selective repetition, which underpins Nietzsche's general idea of an interpretative dialectic and which is explored more speculatively in the metaphor of eternal recurrence.

In Chapter 6 I examine the function of his use of physiological metaphors as a second strategic device in his critique of (metaphysical) notions of transcendence, and his turn towards immanence. I shall be

claiming that his use of biological vocabulary does not signify a brief interest in the 'positivist' sciences, but rather constitutes part of this reaction to some of the dangers in his earlier work, a reaction which remains a central part of his thinking into his final work. The body in Nietzsche serves as a bridge between his critique of metaphysics, for which embodiment exceeds the confines of rational discourse, and the aesthetic turn in his own thinking. In this chapter I also discuss Nietzsche's application of physiology to the question of art and in particular shall examine his claim that 'all art is applied physiology.' I examine the role this vocabulary plays in his mature writing on art, including analysing the way in which Nietzsche uses the physiology of art as a means of distancing his later writings on art from the Idealist connotations of *The Birth of Tragedy* and also as a tool for undertaking a critique of the formalist aesthetics of *l'art pour l'art,* a way of thinking which can be traced back to a partial reading of Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and in particular of his remarks concerning disinterestedness.

In Chapter 7 I continue my exploration of Nietzsche's critical stance towards the aesthetic tradition from Kant onwards by looking at his critique of two related notions which, like the formalism of *l'art pour l'art,* stem from one-sided readings of Kant. The first is the idea, first fully developed by the romantics and subsequently perpetuated by Hegel and Schopenhauer, amongst others, that art constitutes a sensuous representation of the truth. The second notion is the idea that the key to aesthetic theory lies in the analysis of the experience of the spectator. I shall be showing how Nietzsche strives both to set art apart from truth and also to stress the importance of the aesthetics of the artist. Both these themes serve to direct the discussion of art away from the metaphysical fixation with truth and towards the notion of art as interpretation, through linking artistic creativity to interpretative will to power. This last exploration is crucial, since for Nietzsche it is the artistic transformative interpretative praxis which is to serve as the model for a more general interpretative practice.

In the final chapter I gather up the arguments of the previous chapters in order to provide a more general articulation of the problems with which this study has been concerned. The unifying theme is the claim that Nietzsche uses the discussion of art and artists as the basis for

a counter-metaphysical, and hence anti-modern, set of normative values. Using tragedy in particular as an aesthetic model, Nietzsche sees art and the tragic sublime as the means to the loss of metaphysical certainty without falling into the abyss of reactive nihilism. Art and artistic interpretation serve as the model for this post-metaphysical culture inasmuch as they combine both the negation of meaning and the affirmation of *meaningfulness*. Nietzsche's ideal also relies on the assumption that only a certain type of praxis deserves the appellation of art. I shall consequently be examining further the criteria of 'authentic' art, as Nietzsche understands it, contrasting it with those art forms which the later Nietzsche held to be unaesthetic, such as popular theatre, Wagner, realism and so forth. As such, Nietzsche returns constantly to the nascent modernism of his own time as an exemplar of passive nihilism. Its disruption of meaning, its destruction of aesthetic tradition is a one-sided reaction to the crisis of modernity. It is in this sense that one can think of Nietzsche as the secret dialectician. It is his contention that in the confrontation with the crisis of metaphysics, the culture of modernity was becoming evacuated of its affirmative content. The labour of the negative is thus always mediated by the affirmative spirit. Nietzsche's affirmation of the seminal role of negation and affirmation in the critique of metaphysics inevitably invites further comparison with Adorno. Adorno was terrified of pure affirmativity, which he saw as bound to the tyrannising logic of the culture industry. Nietzsche, in contrast, was hostile to pure negativity. And yet common to both was the conviction that the culture of modernity was caught in a dead end. Nietzsche already foresaw this in the music of Wagner, while even Adorno admits that the music of Schoenberg, the hero of avant-garde composition, is likewise caught in a series of aporias. However, Nietzsche attempted to imagine how this dead end might be overcome, whereas for Adorno it was the *telos* of modern art, whose inevitability accounted for the sense of modern culture as essentially tragic. To elaborate further, however, would at this point pre-empt the argument of the book, and hence I make way for the main text.

I

Truth, Interpretation and the Dialectic of Nihilism

Negation and annihilation are conditions of affirmation

(*EH* 'Why I Am a Destiny' §4)

Nietzsche's writing consists of a radical scepticism towards all forms of philosophical thought. However, it differs from that of, say, David Hume, often seen as an exemplar of philosophical scepticism. This does not simply imply that they were different writers, focused on differing issues, united only by a common mistrust of the limitations of human knowledge and science. I am not concerned with the divergences between the details of their projects as much as with the fundamentally different bases from which they launch their sceptical attacks on knowledge. Hume, despite his sceptical regard towards the rational, remains firmly within the circumscribed boundaries of metaphysical discourse. His mistrust of the notion of causality, for example, stems from the suspicion that it constitutes a misrepresentation of what really is the case. Bound to the Empirical tradition from Bacon onwards, his contention is that since our knowledge of the world is derived from the mere succession of sense stimuli from without, all attempts to organise those stimuli into a meaningful whole are synthetic acts, revealing little or nothing about the reality underlying those stimuli, unable even to predict whether those stimuli will be the same tomorrow. For example, his claim in *A Treatise of Human Nature* that 'all our reasonings concerning causes and effects are deriv'd from nothing but custom'[1] draws its force from the sense of distance between the picture of the world based on habit, and what might really be true of it. Nietzsche's scepticism is of a different order, less overturning the discourse of metaphysics than dis-

placing it, bringing into question the kind of activity philosophy is. His critique of metaphysics is not motivated by the conviction of an other truth. What fuels his critique is the approach to philosophy which views it as a discursive practice and his conviction that its status as such has been misrecognised. Although his writings concern themselves with philosophy, the history of philosophy and the philosophy of science, it is as a philologist that he interprets the work of philosophers, and as a cultural critic that he judges their worth.

I shall develop this point further, but for the moment it is necessary to follow through the significance of this claim. If it is assumed that Nietzsche is 'writing philosophy' when he discusses Kant, Plato, Schopenhauer and others, disappointment will inevitably follow, judged against the canonical standards of philosophical argument. His so-called revaluation of all values will look like a tired repetition of overly familiar Humean and Kantian themes. The suspicion that Nietzsche may well be doing little else than repeating, or stating more baldly, conclusions implicit in Kant and Hume is aggravated by the fact that Nietzsche himself, most especially in his unpublished notebooks, often displays a somewhat vulgarised understanding of Kant, and more generally of the history of metaphysics, giving the frequent impression that he is attacking a straw man.

An example or two will illustrate the point in hand. In a note from 1885–6, Nietzsche formulates the following criticism of Kant: 'A "thing-in-itself" just as absurd as a "sense-in-itself," a "meaning-in-itself." There is no "state-of-affairs-in-itself," but rather a sense must first be added, so that there can be a state-of-affairs' (*KSA* 12:2 [14]). Most revealing and interesting about this fragment, and there are numerous others which argue in a like fashion, is Nietzsche's implicit assumption that Kant, the obvious target, unequivocally maintained the existence of 'things'-in-themselves, 'meanings'-in-themselves and so forth. Now, although Kant may well have personally been reluctant to admit as much, a merely cursory reading of the *Critique of Pure Reason* will establish that his critical project must implicitly be in agreement with Nietzsche on precisely this issue dealt with in the latter's note.[2] The core of Kant's critical project consists in an overturning of the Empiricist understanding of knowledge, replacing it instead with the model of knowledge as a

constructive process. The knowing subject is an active world maker in Kant, determining a priori what can be considered *as* an external stimulus, a thing, a meaning and so forth. Although Kant can be criticised for a reluctance to pursue the problem through to its logical conclusions, his 'Copernican revolution' necessarily problematises talk of pre-existing 'things' waiting to have qualities predicated of them, or pre-existent 'meanings' waiting to be determined. Alongside his critique of Kant, Nietzsche's acquaintance with Hegel seems equally cursory. Even Georges Bataille recognised that Nietzsche's knowledge of Hegel was more or less based on a routine popularized version of his thought, and his criticisms are often targeted at a crude caricatured image of Hegel.[3] Furthermore it has been pointed out that there is a remarkable absence in Nietzsche's personal library of any works by Descartes, Kant, Hegel, Spinoza or Leibniz, all of whom are central to the metaphysical tradition he persistently attacks.[4]

Judged by orthodox philosophical criteria, Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics is hardly compelling when subjected to careful scrutiny. However, to interpret him in this manner is to display a lack of sensitivity to two central factors, one biographical and the other textual. Regarding the former it is important to remember that Nietzsche's chosen profession, albeit short, was as a classical philologist. Although he inveigled against the ponderous, myopic practices of the '*Altertumswissenschaft*' or classical scholarship of the late nineteenth century, Nietzsche's training to understand literary texts in a certain way was one which dominated his understanding of texts in general, and more specifically those of philosophy. The second factor is that his early work is most often concerned with culture and language, whether it is the problem of language in his essay of 1873 'On Truth and Falsehood in their Extra-moral Sense,' the relation of language and music in tragedy and Wagnerian opera in *The Birth of Tragedy* or the cultural meanings of historiography in 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life' in the second volume of the *Untimely Meditations*. As such, Nietzsche's philological training and his concern with culture and language provide the basis for the greater part of his subsequent working over of the problems of metaphysics. These points have been made before; his thematisation of philosophical language became a pivot organising many Nietzsche interpretations of the

1970s, particularly those of Sarah Kofman, Bernard Pautrat and Jacques Derrida, which, in differing ways, examine the functional role of metaphor in his 'deconstruction' of metaphysics.[5] However, despite the undoubted importance of such an emphasis in the interpretation of Nietzsche's work, it can be argued that his concern with language is strategic; the critique of language constitutes a weapon in the battle to bring the cultural values of metaphysics into question by undermining its discourse. It is to this process that I now turn.

Metaphors and Truth

Nietzsche's concern with philosophy can be traced back to his essay 'On Truth and Lie,' which unravels the intertwining of truth and language, metaphor and concept. Countering the correspondence theory of truth, Nietzsche makes three claims, of which the first serves as the basis for the other two. The first is that truth is a function of language. The notion that language is a more or less adequate expression of the truth has a venerable history, whether it be the Platonic notion of rational dialogue as a prolegomenon to the revealed truth of the Forms, or the tradition, from Aristotle to Locke, that sees words as the medium for the communication of subjective ideas, themselves non-linguistic mental events. Paradoxically, the same idea still pervades the work of the grandfather of post-structuralism, Ferdinand de Saussure, who in his *Cours de Linguistique Générale* speaks of the conversion of pre-linguistic mental ideas into language.[6]

Nietzsche turns this relation about, imagining a primal scene whereby a form of social contract was enacted to enable the survival of the human species. In this originary social contract there occurred 'something which looks like the first steps towards the accomplishment of that enigmatic drive for truth. Namely, the fixing of what is to count as "truth," i.e. a universally valid and binding designation for things is invented, and this legislation of language produces the first laws of truth, too: for there arises for the first time the contrast between truth and lie: the liar uses the valid designations, words, in order to make the unreal seem real . . . he misuses the firm conventions through the wilful confusion or even inversion of names' (*OTL* §1).

Although Nietzsche's description of language as a process of naming comes close to an Augustinian picture of language which has long been discredited,[7] his argument that truth is a matter of linguistic convention anticipates a fundamental tenet of twentieth-century philosophy. His claim is that to judge the truth content of even the most simple proposition requires an understanding of the *meaning* of the proposition, and hence truth becomes a function of semantics. The question of the relation between language and truth presents the fundamental difference between realist and anti-realist epistemologies, inasmuch as the realist, and Nietzsche labels the entire history of Western 'metaphysical' philosophy as realist in this sense, regards the truth of a statement as dependent on an antecedent state of affairs. In contrast the anti-realist, including Nietzsche himself, takes the state of affairs itself to be intelligible only in language itself. Moreover, as I shall explore later, Nietzsche's contention is that the state of affairs or object is formed *in* language. As Josef Simon has noted, for Nietzsche a sentence 'must first have been constructed as a *meaningful* sentence according to the rules of a language . . . the sentence which is possibly true is a specific type of meaningful sentence of a specific language of a particular life context.'[8] While this argument is most often associated with Nietzsche, parallel views can be found across the field of philosophical enquiry.[9]

Following Nietzsche's argument we can conclude that the true proposition is merely a particular kind of meaningful sentence: truth is always already preceded by meaning and by grammar. It is a conviction which forms a central weapon, some might contend *the* central weapon, in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, and it is one which he keeps throughout his thinking. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* for example, he poses the rhetorical question 'Might not the philosopher be able to raise himself above the belief in grammar?' (*BGE* §34), having already claimed earlier that 'The miraculous family resemblance of all Indian, Greek and German philosophising can be explained easily enough. Precisely where there is a relatedness of language it is unavoidable that . . . from the beginning everything lies ready for an identical development and succession of philosophical systems, just the path appears closed off to certain other possibilities of world-interpretation' (*BGE* §20). As is well known, according to Nietzsche one of the consequences of this

grammatical determination of truth is the philosophical belief in the human subject, and it finds a parallel in the grammatically determined belief in God. As Nietzsche exclaims in *Twilight of the Idols,* 'I fear we shall never be rid of God, because we still believe in grammar' (*TI* '"Reason" in Philosophy' §5).

Nietzsche's claim that language precedes truth, and ultimately that language precedes thought, is not startlingly original in itself. The linguistic turn in philosophy can be traced back to pre-romantic thinkers such as Hamann and von Humboldt, together with romantics such as Schleiermacher. The latter in particular has been recognised as the first to move away from the notion of the subject as a transcendent thinking being, supplanting this with the idea of language as the ground of thought. He notes, for example, that 'There are no thoughts without speech,' adding that 'one cannot think without words.'[10] However, Nietzsche differs from these earlier thinkers in his other claims which follow on from his initial premise about the mediating function of language. I am referring, of course, to his claims regarding the radical metaphoricity of language. If we return to his essay of 1873, Nietzsche asserts that language is radically metaphorical in two distinct ways. The first is that language and its referent are fundamentally heterogeneous. Nietzsche asks, 'What is a word? The representation of a neural stimulus by sound,' then later adds, 'A neural stimulus first translated into an image! first metaphor. The image then transformed again into a sound! Second metaphor. And each time a complete leap from one sphere to another completely different and new.' Explicitly countering the Aristotelian notion of words as an expression of mental events, he writes, 'there is no causality, no correctness, no expression, at most rather an aesthetic relation, I mean a suggestive carrying over, a stuttering translation into a completely foreign language' (*OTL* §1).

Nietzsche's reference to stimuli could be construed as an Empiricist lapse, for he was not necessarily unsympathetic to Hume.[11] But this superficial similarity, if given too much weight, misses the nature of his claim, most especially since Hume, despite his scepticism towards causality, can still be seen as holding fast to the notion at a different level; his thought is grounded in the notion that sense impressions are the

cause of all knowledge, and that 'simple ideas' are the *effect* of 'simple' sense impressions.[12] In contrast, however, Nietzsche is implicitly criticising this Empiricist view in his claim that the relation of sense perception and its 'object' is one of a fundamental difference in kind, in which Hume's notion of a correspondence between the two has no place. Nietzsche employs a striking image to give force to the heterogeneity of the two: 'A painter whose hands are missing and who wanted to express the image hovering before him by singing, will always betray more through this exchange of spheres, than the empirical world will ever betray of the essence of things' (ibid.). In one sense, therefore, Nietzsche is maintaining the Humean view of the radical alterity of the world and experience of it, but is following this through to its proper conclusion, in which even the notion of the world as being the cause of sense 'effects' has to be put into question.

In one sense Nietzsche's view also seems close to Kant, as I have already suggested, though there are important differences. Nietzsche has no time for Kant's 'categories' of understanding, and he has doubled the sense of alienation from the 'world' not only by including a realm of empirical experience which enacts an aesthetic mediation of the world, but also by taking into account the constitutive role of language in informing the empirical world. With this we come to the second process of mediation, namely, Nietzsche's emphasis on the metaphorical basis of language and truth. The second process of metaphorization occurs when language leads to the construction of concepts. Nietzsche writes, 'Let us think of the formation of concepts: every word immediately becomes a concept by virtue of the fact that it is to serve as a reminder not only of the unique, completely individualised primal experience, to which it owes its origin, but rather simultaneously has to fit for countless, more or less similar ones (i.e. strictly speaking never identical), hence for totally dissimilar ones. Every concept originates in the identification of the non-identical' (ibid.). Offering a concrete example of this process, Nietzsche describes the genesis of the concept of the leaf, which is meant to serve as a denotation for a large variety of leaves, all of them dissimilar, a dissimilarity which is neglected because of the levelling process of using the same word to refer to all. Generalising from

this particular example, he concludes that 'The overlooking of the individual and the actual gives us the concept . . . against which nature knows no forms or concepts, hence no types, but rather just an indefinable X, inaccessible to us.' Against the dynamic nature of the world, 'the great construction of concepts displays the stark regularity of a Roman columbarium, and in logic exhales the discipline and frigidity which is proper to mathematics' (ibid.). As Sarah Kofman has pointed out, Nietzsche uses a wide variety of architectural metaphors to suggest the very process of petrifaction which occurs when logic appropriates the world and makes it into a system of reiterated and iterable units.[13] As already noted, he refers to the construction of concepts as similar to the production of a columbarium, with its associations of death, or uses the pyramid, that archetypal symbol of death in life, of mummification, to describe the 'order of castes and ranks' (ibid.) built up by such a regime of truth.[14]

Nietzsche sees language as introducing a false universality into the world of experience, which, strictly speaking, he regards as utterly contingent. Again, though his Augustinian picture of language is questionable, a much more serious point is being made, focusing on the repetitive basis of signification, which transforms the contingent world of pre-conceptual experience into one of regular and consistent discursive meaning. This view, that iterability is the basis of any system of signification, has become the bedrock of twentieth-century philosophy of language, adopted by the heirs of de Saussure but, curiously enough, also by Anglo-American philosophy of language, in particular by speech-act theory.[15] By virtue of its extension from its original situation to other, non-identical cases, the concept operates metaphorically, and truth itself, through its process of identification of the non-identical, becomes an aesthetic relation between dissimilar experiences and between the subject and the object, producing a synthetic unity between the disunified. On the basis of this conclusion he makes the now familiar assertion that truth is a 'mobile army of metaphors' (ibid., p. 880).

Following Nietzsche's argument in this early essay, we can identify language, and more particularly language's mediating function in the constitution of truth, thought and meaning, as providing a foundation for his attack on metaphysics. Criticising the notion of truth as a process

of uncovering, and the belief in concepts as describing something in the world, he places language at the foundation of truth, as determining what is permitted to count as true, where the concepts employed by any particular idea of truth and the world to which they refer are fundamentally heterogeneous. Propositions concerning the world are translations, and moreover translations which cannot but mis-translate, inasmuch as they always introduce a false universalization into the world.

The essay on truth and language stands only at the beginning, both chronologically and thematically, of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics. For his concern is not so much with language per se, as with the wider cultural problems which accompany the misunderstanding of the constitutive role of signs in understanding. His argument focuses on a common misunderstanding of the function of language, but the overarching concern of his work is with the catastrophic consequences of that error, in particular, the onset of nihilism, which Nietzsche sees as threatening to engulf modern culture. Nietzsche repeatedly writes of modernity as the epoch when the 'highest values devalue themselves,' in other words, the moment when the necessary illusions of truth and language are revealed as such, and modern culture is faced with a lapse into absolute unbelief, or nihilism. Nietzsche's critique of truth and language is thus always conducted in the light of their cultural function, but I shall delay a more specific discussion of nihilism and modernity until later.[16]

Amnesia, Metaphysics

In 'On Truth and Falsehood in Their Extra-moral Sense' Nietzsche offers an explanation as to why this metaphorical relation to the world has been transformed into the realist thinking of metaphysics, in which words are held to correspond to 'things' in the world. Nietzsche's answer is amnesia. Due to an over-familiarity with the signs of our system of meaning, we have forgotten that they are mere metaphors, that they bear a purely arbitrary relation to 'the world,' itself a notion reified through the process of signification. Nietzsche anticipates his argument early on in the essay when he notes that 'It is only through forgetfulness

that a person could ever come to imagine they were in possession of a truth,' a claim he fleshes out a few pages later, asserting that the individual 'thus forgets the original intuitive metaphors as metaphors and takes them for things themselves' (*OTL* §1). It is a theme one finds explored in his other unpublished notes from the same period, which confront the relation between recollection, cognition and repetition.

In a fragment from 1872 Nietzsche writes, 'The similar recalls the similar and identifies itself with it: that is cognition, the swift subsumption of the identical. Only the similar perceives the similar: a physiological process. The very same thing which is memory is also perception of the new' (*KSA* 7:19 [180]). Repeating the argument for the levelling effect of concepts, Nietzsche introduces the theme of recollection, as that which mediates between different experiences and facilitates the universalising effect of language to occur. The process of recollection transforms the similar into the identical, and then the subsumptive activity of 'knowing' occurs; memory permits the metaphorising effect of language to take place, without which we would be subject to a random succession of meaningless sense impressions. It is an argument Nietzsche repeats in *The Gay Science,* noting that in the process of cognition, 'something unknown is to be led back to something familiar' (*GS* §355).

In a further note from the same notebook of 1872 Nietzsche sees the reducing effect of memory as a consequence of a mimetic urge and contrasts this with the metaphysical idea of knowledge. He writes, 'Imitation is the opposite of knowledge inasmuch as knowledge does not grant validity to translation, but will rather keep a firm grip on the impression without metaphor . . . To this end it becomes petrified, the impression is ensnared and delimited by concepts, then killed off, skinned and mummified and preserved as a concept. Now there are no "authentic" expressions, no true knowledge without metaphors. . . . The most familiar metaphors, the usual ones, now count as truths and as the measure for the more infrequent ones. . . . Knowledge is merely a working with the favourite metaphors, thus a process of imitation no longer felt as imitation' (*KSA* 7:19 [228]).

This connection between memory, metaphor and knowing persists throughout Nietzsche's writing. Even in his later works his basic argu-

ment still stands, namely, that the un-covering of knowledge of the world or ourselves – and here he becomes especially critical of the natural sciences – actually consists of little more than a recovery of what has already been projected into the world. The new is always assimilated to the old, perception of the new and recollection of the old are the same. He writes in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'when we introduce and mix the world of signs into things as if it were their "in-itself" we proceed once more as we have always proceeded, namely mythologically' (*BGE* §21). Attacking the delusions of physics, he writes in a note from 1887 that 'They have forgotten to take the power of constructing perspectives into their account of true being . . . in the language of the scholastics, their being-as-subject' (*WP* §636).

The amnesia at the root of metaphysics subscribes to the view that the world can be known, and that the knowing subject has no constitutive function in the determination of its character. Against this stands Nietzsche's contention that 'Philosophising is a kind of atavism of the highest order' in which philosophers' thinking is 'less a discovering than a re-cognising, recollecting, a return and home-coming' (*BGE* §20). Yet paradoxically, while the forgetfulness of metaphysics is the object of criticism, Nietzsche also recognises the necessity of forgetfulness and the dangers of a surfeit of memory. This theme was first formulated in his essay 'On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,' in which he argues that 'it is altogether impossible to live at all without forgetting . . . there is a degree of sleeplessness, of rumination, of the historical sense, which is harmful and ultimately fatal to the living thing.' The individual incapable of forgetting would be living in a world of perpetual becoming, unable to suspend his memory long enough even to 'believe in his own being' (*UM* II §I). Furthermore, while modern culture is profoundly marked by a belief in the illusions of metaphysics, it also suffers from a far greater sense of history than any other culture. Nietzsche refers to the 'historical sense to which we Europeans lay claim as our speciality' (*BGE* §224) and later refers to it as 'a disease, as a typical symptom of decay' (*EH* 'The Untimely Ones' §1). Modern culture is thus held in tension between an amnesiac subscription to metaphysics and a hypertrophic sensitivity to the history. I shall explore this issue in due course, but it is notable from this that what appears as an account

of the origins of an epistemological illusion highlights the role of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics as an element in a broader project of cultural criticism.

From this discussion the nature of the difference between Nietzsche and Hume is also becoming a little clearer. Hume's scepticism is born out of a desire for certainty.[17] In contrast Nietzsche has no such goal, given his recognition of the radical metaphoricity of all discursive knowledge. Scepticism carried out in the name of true knowledge, which attempts to exclude everything that is extrinsic to the bedrock of absolute certainty, is a self-defeating project. A particular object of criticism in this regard is Descartes. For Nietzsche, Descartes fails to adhere to his own programme of stripping away all possible sources of doubt in order to reach the bedrock of certainty, not only in his dogged faith in the certainty of the cogito, but also by virtue of the fact that his reduction is executed in the name of truth. To be consistent, scepticism has to be a fully anti-foundational discourse. Thus, for Nietzsche, philosophy is not a matter of verisimilitude, indeed, no discourse can be. Instead it is primarily a discourse, an interpretative practice which is shaped by various extrinsic criteria. As I have already suggested, Nietzsche does not aim to correct erroneous conceptions, but rather to explore their motivation, bringing it into question. The primary aim of all belief systems should consequently be their usefulness rather than their truth value, and in this sense all philosophical positions can be considered as pragmatic ideologies: 'Knowledge can allow as motives only pleasure and pain, utility and injury' (*HAH* I §34). His interest is thus in the consequences of certain of those ideological positions, and in particular with the consequence of the ideology of metaphysics. As a cultural critic, he is concerned with changing the philosophical régime that has governed Judaeo-Christian culture. To understand this more fully we must delve further into the discourse of metaphysics.

Nietzsche likens the process of concept formation to that of constructing a tomb, an act of petrifaction, inasmuch as the very nature of the concept as an iterable sign promotes a demand for universality and identity. In one sense it is inevitable, given that truth is a function of grammar, that the genesis of concepts, of truth values, will be forgotten, since conceptuality per se excludes thought of becoming, of the

non-identical, in short of the contingency of the world. In his later writing on interpretation, Nietzsche also sees the reduction of difference and of Becoming as a function of the human form of life, claiming that 'Behind all logic and its apparent sovereignty of movement there stand evaluations, put more clearly, physiological demands for the preservation of a certain form of life' (*BGE* §3). The connection made here between truth and the human form of life, where the nature of truth is purely contingent upon the requirements of the human life form, points towards Nietzsche's perspectivism, a theme I shall deal with later. For the moment, however, it is necessary to discuss further the question of language, metaphysics and nihilism.

Nihilism

Although it is an early work, Nietzsche's essay 'On Truth and Language' represents his most complete single discussion of the linguistic mediations of knowledge. Yet the theme of language and metaphysics, and of the complicity of the two, remains a constant throughout his writing. The origins of that complicity lie in Socrates' search for definitions. This can be regarded as the first philosophical project whose possibility is founded on forgetting both the origin of concepts and also their metaphorical nature. Socrates' persistent questioning of definitions, whether in the field of ethics, epistemology or politics, only appears purposeful given the assumption that the object of enquiry is self-identical and unchanging with time, that correctly predicated properties are valid at all times, and that there is a determinable essence to such objects. Yet as Nietzsche notes, this basic law of identity 'which is here termed "originary," has evolved' (*HAH* I §18). In other words, it is the product of a particular history. Crucial philosophical terms such as 'a priori,' 'a posteriori,' 'origin,' 'logical,' 'cause,' 'condition' and 'necessary' can function only in this climate of forgetting, on condition of not revealing their utterly contingent status as regulative ideas that have come into being. As such, they have to be an object of faith, and Nietzsche sees metaphysics and religion as closely related, indicated by his frequent equation of Christianity and Platonism. He notes, 'Some have the need for metaphysics; but that impetuous longing for certainty,

which is released in large quantities scientifically and positivistically, the longing to have something stable . . . that too is the longing for security, support, in short, that *instinct of weakness* which admittedly does not create religions, metaphysics, convictions of all kinds – but conserves them' (*GS* §347). One notes here, too, the continuation of the distinction between the process which constructed these systems of beliefs – the human ability to create metaphors in the early language essay – and the process whereby those systems are sustained. In the early essay it is forgetfulness, now it is regarded as due to the instinct of weakness.

Metaphysics is characterised as a repression of history and of contingency, one sustained by a 'faith in the truth as something found' (*HAH* I §11), rather than recognising its truths as governed by discourse inhabiting a world of signs (*BGE* §21). It is an ideology which has provided the foundations for modern science and mathematics; as Nietzsche notes, mathematics 'would never have come into being if it had been known right from the start that there is no perfectly straight line in nature, no real circle, no absolute system of measurement' (*HAH* I §11). Instead it is the task of thinking to 'depict the human as a limit' (*KSA* 11:25 [393]), to lay bare the construction of truth, for 'It is we alone who have devised cause, sequence, reciprocity, relativity, constraint, number, law, freedom, motive and purpose' (*BGE* §21). It is this 'naturalisation' of knowledge, in which signs are no longer taken as such but as revealed truths, which lays the ground for the arrival of nihilism. In this regard Nietzsche's equation of science with nihilism is of crucial significance, and a concern with the problem can be seen as accompanying some of his earliest writings. A fragment from late 1872 asserts that 'Our natural science is bent on destruction in the pursuit of knowledge' (*KSA* 7:19[198]), and by 'destruction' Nietzsche means cultural collapse, a conclusion implicit in a second fragment from the same period: 'When I speak of the fearful possibility that knowledge is driving onto destruction, it is my least intent to complement the current generation: it has nothing of such tendencies. However when one looks at the course of science since the 15th century this very power and possibility becomes apparent' (*KSA* 7:19 [206]).[18]

Nietzsche is not the first to have realised the dangers of the misrecognition of the nature of truth, for it is a concern apparent in the

work of Kant, too. For example, in the preface to the second edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant writes,

> A light flashed in the mind of he who first demonstrated the isosceles triangle (call him Thales or anything else you want); for he found that he mustn't look into what he saw in the figure or in the bare concept of it, and then, as it were, read off its properties from this, but rather bring out what he himself, following certain concepts, has a priori put into the figure and represented (by means of construction), and that in order to know something for certain a priori, he must ascribe nothing to the item except that which follows necessarily from what he has introduced into it in accordance with his concept.[19]

The origin of geometry is consequently to be found in the realisation of the *constructed* nature of the geometrical figure. The truth of geometry lies not in its uncovering of an always present objective truth, or in the correspondence of a judgement with its geometrical object, but instead in the exposition of figures whose character has already been determined by the expositor a priori. The key notion at play here is that of construction; the world of geometry which has always-already been constructed. The truths of geometry have already been pre-determined by the human impulse towards schematisation and typification. It is a model which Kant extends to all the natural sciences and subsequently to knowing in the most general employment of the term such that philosophy in general becomes an enterprise in semiotics. In the celebrated passage from the preface outlining the history of physics, Kant concludes that physics must seek to learn from nature 'in accordance with that which Reason introduces into Nature' (B xiii–xiv) and adds later that 'we can know a priori of things only what we ourselves put into them' (B xviii). Foreshadowing Nietzsche's assertion that in natural science 'man finds in things nothing but what he himself has imported into them' (*WP* §606), Kant claims that 'in a priori knowledge nothing can be ascribed to objects except what the thinking subject derives from itself' (B xxiii).

There is a case for arguing, then, a shared stance towards what Kant terms 'dogmatic metaphysics' and Nietzsche simply 'metaphysics,' the character of which I have outlined earlier. Moreover both share a common awareness of the dangers involved, despite the fact that Nietzsche

sees Kant as deeply implicated in metaphysical thinking. For Kant's Copernican turn is carried out as part of a strategy in response to the scepticism of Hume, 'which many years ago first interrupted my dogmatic slumber,'[20] while Nietzsche's linguistic critique of metaphysics forms part of his strategy to overcome nihilism. Kant is aware of the consequences of taking the forms of representation to be the actual form of the Real when he notes that 'if we ascribe objective reality to those forms of representation, we cannot prevent *everything* from being changed into mere appearance' (B 70), a scepticism that would refuse to grant any privilege to acts which synthesise the inchoate mass of sensation. Kant is here alluding to a problem he later develops at greater length in his discussion of the 'Antinomies of Pure Reason,' which show how such a misunderstanding of the nature of representation can lead to pure scepticism. If space and time, for example, are regarded as real, rather than as ideal forms, a series of insoluble paradoxes are created, most striking of which is the possibility of demonstrating both the finitude and the infinity of space and time.[21] If such aporias are left as such, their lack of resolution will tempt one to dismiss all forms of representation as mere illusion, a position which will foster a paralysis of the mind. This, as least, is Kant's diagnosis of the psychology of such misrepresentation.

Nietzsche's concern is less with the specifically philosophical problems of such a position as with the wider cultural impact of such an ideology of the given.[22] Guided by the structure of its language, metaphysics, as the philosophical expression of such an ideology, has rejected as unreal all that does not display the characteristics of its conceptual foundations, relegating it to the mere realm of illusion. Once again the origin can be located in Plato, who is the first to introduce the ontological dualism which has sustained metaphysics ever since. In the metaphors of the cave and the divided line introduced in *Republic* one finds the most graphic expressions of dualistic thinking, where the 'unreliable' and 'deceiving' impressions of the senses are denigrated, in contrast with the eternal verities of the super-sensible world of the conceptual forms. Consequently, Nietzsche notes, 'As long as there are philosophers on earth . . . there unquestionably exists a peculiar philosophers' irritation at and rancour against sensuality' (*OGM* III §7).

It is a problem he elaborates further in *Twilight of the Idols,* in an aphorism that merits quoting at length:

> Everything with which philosophers have worked for thousands of years consisted of conceptual mummies, nothing real left their hands alive. Whenever they pray, these gentleman servants of conceptual idols kill, they stuff – they endanger the life of everything when they pray. Death, change, old age just as much as procreation and growth are objections for them – even refutations. What is, does not become, what becomes, is not . . . Now they all believe, with desperation even, in the thing. Yet since they do not possess it, they search for reasons why they are denied it. "It must be an illusory appearance, a deception that we cannot perceive the thing: where is the deceiver hiding?" – "we've got him" they cry out happily, "it's sensoriousness ! These senses . . . they deceive us over the true world . . . The moral: Say no to everything which lends credence to the senses."
>
> (*TI* '"Reason" in Philosophy' §1)

Rather than question the basis of what is taken to be true, such as the law of identity, or the mutual exclusivity of being and becoming, the failure of sensory perception to meet the demands placed upon it by metaphysics leads to its denigration. Nietzsche explains the metaphysical denial of the sensory world as resulting from a conflict between two incompatible modes of appropriation of the world. Nietzsche is not thereby claiming that the 'true' world is that of the senses, since truth is a function of language. He is merely claiming that the senses do not lie, which is a different sort of claim. In the following section he notes, '"Reason" is the cause of our falsification of the testament of the senses. Insofar as the senses show becoming, decay, change, they do not lie' (ibid.). Metaphysics refuses to concede such a point, for its system cannot see truth as a function of something else and cannot admit the possibility of anything existing outside the limits of truth and falsehood, or that the criteria of truthfulness and falsehood are historically dynamic. Condemning change and non-identity as signs of untruth, the path is clear for the construction of a super-sensuous, supra-linguistic realm of true being, which in religious practice takes on the character of some redemptive paradise and in its secularised form becomes the structure underlying the world, as in the case of the noumenal realm of Kant's

system, or, to return to the paradigm of the natural sciences, the sub-atomic micro-structures of matter and energy posited by physics. All of these cultural phenomena sustain the same hope for redemption from the untruth of the apparent, despite the superficial conflict between religion and science.[23] Against this Nietzsche claims that 'The "apparent" world is the only one: the "true world" has been mendaciously added on' (ibid.). One notes his refusal to associate the world of appearance with notions of truth: it is neither true nor false. Modern science and philosophy have thus provided a secularised Christianity, in Nietzsche's eyes, where knowledge has taken over the redemptive function of divine forgiveness. In *Daybreak* he observes the fact that 'it was always presumed that human salvation must depend on insight into the origin of things' (*D* §44), making this internal connection between theology and metaphysics explicit when he writes that '"Wherever the tree of knowledge stands is always paradise": so say the oldest and the youngest serpents' (*BGE* §152). Knowledge promises redemption in a secular world, and it is this promise made on behalf of knowledge, and such a demand placed on knowledge, which create the conditions conducive to nihilism.

The term 'nihilism' was first coined by the romantic philosopher Friedrich Jacobi, who employed it to denote those who had simply rejected the Christian faith. For Nietzsche, however, the term denotes something rather more complex than simple rejection, a phenomenon for which the above discussion serves as a genealogy. Going further than the mere identification of nihilism with atheism, Nietzsche sees the roots of that rejection *in* Christianity (and hence in metaphysics too) itself. It is a reading which is expressed most dramatically in the thesis of the death of God, as presented in the parable of the madman in the third book of *The Gay Science*. In this famous parable, the madman, no doubt considered mad because his wisdom is excluded as proper 'knowledge' by the culture of scientific reason, not only proclaims the death of God, that is, the loss in legitimacy of any transcendent values, but also locates responsibility for this death firmly in the hands of those who believed most firmly in God: 'We have killed him – you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing

when we unchained this earth from its sun? Where is it moving now? Where are we moving? . . . Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty nothing?' (*GS* §125).

Nihilism emerges when the false promises held out by metaphysics reveal themselves to be empty and unsustainable. It is the moment when, to quote Nietzsche's well-known diagnosis, 'the highest values devalue themselves' (*WP* §2). In a further note from early 1888 Nietzsche writes that 'Nihilism as a psychological state is reached . . . when one has posited a totality, a systematisation, even an organisation in and beneath all events, such that the soul which thirsts after admiration and reverence wallows in the idea of some highest form of domination and administration' (*WP* §12). And the reason why this positing is an attainment of nihilism is explained some years earlier in the aphorism from *Daybreak* quoted above. Nietzsche continues, 'The meaninglessness of the origin grows with our insight into the origin: while the nearest, that which is around us and in us gradually begins to show colours and beauties and enigmas and riches of meaning' (*D* §44). The further we probe into the putative essence of things, the less we actually find. Metaphysics is thus a self-undermining project, resulting in the conclusion that 'if some single standard is not good for everyone and for all time, then no standard is good for anyone at any time.'[24]

Although nihilism has strongly divergent meanings in Nietzsche and Jacobi, the fact that the term first appeared at the end of the eighteenth century coincides with Nietzsche's contention that nihilism is a specifically modern phenomenon, and that its emergence signifies the essential crisis of modernity. The sense of the contemporaneity of the question of nihilism is apparent in Nietzsche's bold proclamation that 'The time has come when we have to pay for having been Christians for two thousand years: we are losing the centre of gravity by virtue of which we have lived' (*WP* §30). Here 'Christians' serves as a shorthand for the cluster of values associated with Christianity, including the metaphysical values of Platonism. The particular nature of the crisis stems from the contradiction between the loss of the 'centre of gravity' and the continued hankering for one, and Nietzsche interprets a number of contemporary phenomena as symptoms of this: 'the vehemence with which our most intelligent contemporaries lose themselves in wretched nooks and cran-

nies, for example, into patriotism . . . or into petty aesthetic creeds after the manner of French *naturalisme* . . . or into nihilism à la Petersburg . . . always manifests above all the *need* for faith, a support, backbone, something to fall back on' (*GS* §347).

At the heart of Nietzsche's account of nihilism is also a theory of modernity. His description of the loss in modernity of a centre of gravity invites obvious comparison with other contemporary writers, most obviously, perhaps, Karl Marx's observation of nineteenth-century bourgeois society, in which, famously, 'All fixed fast-frozen relations . . . are swept away. . . . All that is solid melts into air.'[25] Nietzsche's characterisation of modernity, in which 'restlessness, haste and hustling grow continually' (*WP* §33), is strongly reminiscent of Marx's account of the experience of modern culture. However, there is an important and crucial difference; Marx views the root of modernity in specific changes in the economic material conditions of life. For Nietzsche, in contrast, the crisis of modernity, nihilism, is a crisis of values in which 'The "meaninglessness of all that occurs": the belief therein is the consequence of an insight into the falsity of interpretations hitherto, a generalisation of despondency and weakness – no necessary belief' (*WP* §599). Moreover he specifically rules out the idea of a material cause of nihilism, noting that 'it is an error to consider "social distress" or "physiological degeneration" or worse, corruption, as the cause of nihilism' (*WP* §1). What are often read as causes of the loss of fixity of values are consequently interpreted by Nietzsche as *symptoms.* For example, in one note devoted to the subject of 'modernity through the metaphors of nourishment and digestion' Nietzsche observes that

> Sensibility immensely more irritable . . . the abundance of disparate impressions greater than ever: *cosmopolitanism* in foods, literatures, newspapers, forms, tastes, even landscapes etc. The tempo of this influx prestissimo; the impressions erase each other; one instinctively resists taking in anything, taking anything too *deeply,* "digesting" anything. . . . A kind of adaptation to this flood of impressions takes place: men unlearn spontaneous action, they merely react to stimuli from outside.
>
> (*WP* §1)

This passage can be read in two ways. One interpretation would be

that it constitutes a list of the material conditions which have caused the disorientation of modern culture, including a marked increase in human passivity. However, given that for Nietzsche it is the crisis in values that is the cause of nihilism, the passage can also be seen as indicating the symptoms of a nihilistic modernity. Cosmopolitan taste is therefore the sign of a collapse in values, and it is passivity that tolerates cosmoplitanism. Elsewhere he writes of 'the modern spirit's lack of discipline,' which becomes manifest in tolerance and freedom, which he views as a 'profuse chaos of symbols' (*WP* §79). In his later writings Nietzsche comes to use the term 'decadence' to describe the condition of modernity, a term used partly under the influence of Paul Bourget's *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine.*[26] In the foreword to *The Case of Wagner,* for example, he notes that 'What occupied me most profoundly is in fact the problem of decadence,' which he characterises as 'impoverished life . . . great exhaustion.' He also admits that he is himself a decadent, but that 'the philosopher in me defended itself against this' (*CW* foreword).

For Nietzsche such phenomena in modern culture are marks of weakness, borne of a resigned pessimism: 'The philosophical nihilist is of the conviction that everything that occurs is meaningless and in vain; and that Being ought not be meaningless and in vain. But whence this: ought not?' (*WP* §36). Hence plurality of values stems from indifference towards any values. This form of nihilism, which Nietzsche variously terms passive or reactive, results from a residual attachment to metaphysics, as becomes clear, for example, in his interpretation of Schopenhauer: 'Schopenhauer was still so much under the dominance of Christian values that once the thing in itself was no longer God for him, it had to be bad, stupid, absolutely reprehensible. He did not understand that there are infinite ways of being-other, even of being-God. Curse of that narrow-minded dualism: good and evil' (*WP* §1005).

This is the cultural crisis Nietzsche is attempting to overcome; his project is not primarily a critique of metaphysics through an analysis of the semiotic nature of truth. Metaphysics will undermine itself and so save him the job. His project is rather to push through, past the passive nihilism of engulfing modernity, on to an active nihilism which cuts its remaining ties to metaphysics and fully absorbs the notion of knowl-

edge as a fiction. The task is to establish how to become an active, or 'accomplished,' nihilist.[27]

Interpretation

Nietzsche's account of nihilism is organised around a dialectical structure, inasmuch as its meaning is the consequence of a historical dialectic that remains in its infancy. The reactive or passive nihilism of modernity must be negated by its other, namely, active nihilism; the former is 'only a transitional phase' (*WP* §7). Moreover a dialectical structure organises the content of Nietzsche's discourse on nihilism. For passive nihilism represents a pure negativity, in terms of a feeling of complete meaninglessness accompanied by a state of inertia, of inactivity. Although passive nihilism represents a particularly modern crisis, Nietzsche regards Buddhism as its first historical expression, and its themes of asceticism, of contemplative withdrawal from life, are repeated in Christianity and metaphysics, most notably, of course, in Schopenhauer's ideal of the ascetic life. In contrast, however, Nietzsche views active nihilism as a *determinate* negativity, one which overcomes knowledge and metaphysics with the right means. He attributes the continued presence of reactive nihilism to the fact that 'the productive powers are not yet strong enough or that décadence is still hesitating and has not yet invented its remedies' (*WP* §13). Overcoming metaphysical culture and its belief in knowledge cannot be accomplished by pure negation, which amounts to mere passivity; active nihilism must also consist in the positing of *new* values, not only the negation of the existing ones, and it is the notion of interpretation that functions as the medium for the accomplishment of the 're-valuation of values.'

Until now I have deliberately skirted around the question of interpretation, but at this point it is appropriate to explore the notion, for Nietzsche's idea of interpretation unites the reactive and active components of nihilism. I have so far concentrated on Nietzsche's *critique* of metaphysics, concentrating in particular on his recognition of the derivative nature of truth. Bound up with this critique is his replacing of the ideas of knowledge and truth with that of interpretation. In addition interpretation also serves as a model for the establishment of the anti-

foundational norms necessary to the completion of the nihilist project. In other words interpretation provides for the possibility of a non-metaphysical normativity, for the establishment of an anti-metaphysical discourse that creates a space for some form of normative framework.

Nietzsche's contention that all cognitive acts are merely interpretations is well known and has become the subject of a number of studies.[28] The primary interest here is in how interpretation can serve as the model for some form of post-metaphysical normativity. To understand more fully how it can do this, two central questions have to be asked. First, what is being interpreted? In other words, if Nietzsche is going to abandon the correspondence theory of truth, how will he describe the relation between the interpreter and their object? What is the status of this object? Second, we must ask what criteria there might be for judging any interpretation. With the abandoning of the (metaphysical) idea of truth, the critical observer may well conclude there is nothing to prevent a lapse into absolute relativism, granting equal value to all interpretations. Clearly Nietzsche is not a relativist in this sense; his substitution of questions of value for being is clearly implicated in a hierarchy of preferences and explains the vigour with which he prosecutes his critique of metaphysics. Conversely, assuming Nietzsche's writings possess some consistency, to regard him as replacing the notion of knowledge with that of interpretation, while still adhering to a belief in a reality waiting to be interpreted, as if the metaphysical relation of subject and object remained undisturbed, would be highly problematic. Admittedly, it would not be impossible to maintain a realist metaphysics while also keeping to an anti-realist epistemology, as Michael Dummett has convincingly argued,[29] but although Nietzsche frequently privileges becoming and life over being,[30] this does not entitle us to conclude that becoming is the essence of existence, in the foundational sense of romantic philosophers such as Friedrich Schlegel, for example.[31] It is a feature of his writing which has tempted many interpreters to read his work in this way. Most notably Heidegger placed Nietzsche at the culmination of metaphysics, understanding both will to power and Eternal Recurrence as expressions of a commitment to a particular ontology. More recently Johann Figl, too, has regarded the use of becoming over being as one of mere substitution.[32]

Plainly, such readings clash with the Nietzsche of this study, for whom 'becoming' is just as much a sign as is 'being.' Nietzsche's recurrent use of these terms, plus his use of others including 'falsehood', 'instinct', 'appearance,' to mention a few, should rather be read as signs of his attempt to establish a normative interpretative framework by using a certain vocabulary that might facilitate avoiding the descent into reactive nihilism we have already witnessed. Were Nietzsche's writing so earnest in its efforts to elude the delusions of metaphysics that it brought about a figural collapse of meaning, as some have thought,[33] it would be difficult to explain his repeated employment of the same terms.

It has been suggested that it actually makes no sense to ask what is interpreted. As Alan Schrift has argued, the process of interpretation 'is not grounded in either the subject or the object; it exists in the *between,* in the space which separates them.'[34] In other words, the interpreting process is a web of relations, as Nietzsche himself says: 'If I remove all the relationships, all the properties, all the activities of a thing, the thing does not remain over; because thingness has only been invented by us' (*WP* §558). However, this metaphor does not express forcibly enough the constitutive role of interpretation. Not only does the web of relationships not exist in the space between subject and object, it also *creates* that space, and creates the subject and object between which the space exists. In *Beyond Good and Evil,* for example, Nietzsche asks, 'Why might not the world which concerns us be a fiction? And whoever then asks "but does an author belong to a fiction?" – might he not be answered back with: Why? Does not this "belong" belong to the fiction?' (*BGE* §34). Hence the interpretative fiction which constitutes the world also constitutes the subject of interpretation, and it is in this sense that Nietzsche asserts that 'One cannot ask "who is interpreting then?"' The interpreter, just as much as the object of interpretation, is produced by a subjectless process. He continues, 'interpretation itself, as a form of will to power, has existence (not as a "being," however, but as a process, a becoming) as an affect' (*KSA* 12:2 [151]). Interpretation is thus a fictive process, and in formulating the problem thus, Nietzsche is pushing to an extreme the constructivist epistemology of Kant, stripping it of its residual metaphysical attachments, such as the transcendence of the

representing subject and all the accompanying humanist trappings of Kant's moral theory.

One can see this view apparent in a note written just before that just quoted, where Nietzsche writes, 'A thing would be described once all beings had asked "what is that?" and had their questions answered. Supposing one single creature, with its own relationships and perspectives for all things, were missing, then the thing would not yet be "defined"' (*KSA* 12:2 [149]). I take Nietzsche to be asserting here, too, that the character of a thing is determined by the character of the beings interpreting, that its existence is dependent upon the interpreting beings and the uses they have for it. Yet this description does not amount to a 'definition' of the thing, and Nietzsche's use of quotation marks indicate the distance he wishes to retain towards this most Socratic of concerns. For the thing will always take on new characteristics according to the possibility of its being interpreted anew, hence there never can be some final, exhaustive definition. This is not to suggest merely that the complexity of the world is such as never to be exhausted by interpretative theories. Rather, it is that new interpretations can always be produced.[35]

Mention of the plurality of interpretations introduces Nietzsche's perspectivism and with it also touches the second question which I claimed requires asking. Namely, if interpretation constitutes the object, is it possible to speak meaningfully of better or worse interpretations? What are the criteria for judging competing or conflicting interpretations? In answering this question I shall make my boldest claims as to the proximity of Hegel to Nietzsche. Above all, Nietzsche's grounding of the interpretative process in will to power imbues it with a Hegelian character; far from being a thinker of plurality, the affirmative thinker par excellence, Nietzsche's theory of interpretation affirms a dialectical image of the process.

Nietzsche's mature theory of interpretation, inasmuch as it can be considered a full-blown *theory,* represents a widening and a deepening of the early, linguistic critique of knowledge carried out in 'On Truth and Falsehood.' Nietzsche has not abandoned the notion of grammar-functional truth conditions so much as supplemented it with the notion of perspectivism.[36] Truth is now no longer a function merely of lan-

guage so much as of the human perspective in general; in other words, it is a function of all those aspects, be they linguistic, psychological or even physiological, which distinguish the human form of life from other forms. In *Daybreak,* for example, he writes, 'My eyes, as strong or weak as they may be, can see only a certain distance, and it is within the space encompassed by this distance that I live and move, the line of this horizon constitutes my immediate fate,' adding later, 'we spiders sit in our web, and whatever we catch in it, we catch nothing at all unless it allows itself to be caught precisely in *our* web' (*D* §117). This idea had already been stated much more baldly in *Human All Too Human* some years earlier in the claim that 'It is true that there might be a metaphysical world; we can hardly dispute its absolute possibility. We see all things through the human head and cannot cut this head off; though the question remains what would there still be of the world, if we did cut it off' (*HAH* I §9). What initially seems an acceptance of the possible existence of an autonomous object of knowledge is then contradicted by the suggestion of the mutual dependence of world and human perspective. This position is maintained, indeed fortified, throughout his career, resulting in bold assertions such as the following from 1887 that 'We belong to the character of the world, there is no doubt' (*KSA* 12:1 [89]). As noted above, one of the important innovations in Nietzsche's thought is to deprive the subject of its transcendent role in the process of interpretation. As a subjectless process, interpretation is also a function of instinct, of the body. 'Behind your thoughts and feelings stands . . . an unknown sage – he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body,' proclaims Zarathustra, adding that 'There is more reason in your body than in your greatest wisdom' (Z I 'Of the Despises of the Body'). In this Nietzsche is, first, challenging the privilege accorded to the conscious intellect in the metaphysical tradition from Plato onwards. Second, he is allowing for the possibility of intentional activity taking place in spheres where it has traditionally been denied. We see this taking place early in Nietzsche's work, in *Human All Too Human,* where he writes, 'For the plant all things are usually still, eternal, every thing is identical to itself. From the period of lower organisms humans have inherited the belief that there exist identical things.' Later in the same aphorism he adds that 'the belief in unconditional substances and

in identical things is a similarly primary, similarly ancient mistake of all that is organic' (*HAH* I §18), an argument that recalls his later notion of philosophy as a form of atavism. Elsewhere he even suggests rethinking the relation between the organic and the inorganic, noting that 'The connection between the inorganic and the organic must lie in the repelling force exercised by every atom of force' (*WP* §642). Rather than espousing a vitalist philosophy, Nietzsche is grounding intentional activity in a non-intentional process of the maximising of force, which looks forward to the notion of will to power. Here he is rethinking the notion of intentional or purposeful activity, such that it need not necessarily be guided by a rational intellect: 'We shall be on our guard against explaining purposiveness in terms of intellect: there is no ground whatever for ascribing to the intellect the properties of organisation and systematisation' (*WP* §526).

Nietzsche's attribution of intentional activity to all forms of organic life and to inorganic matter also raises the notion of interpretation as will to power as a coherent thesis explaining the motivation of interpretative activity. His view of interpretation as a subjectless process parallels his notion of will to power as a goal-driven activity, yet one which need not be tied to a specific subjective intention. Yet although will to power is one of Nietzsche's best known ideas, it also remains one of the most problematic. It has been interpreted in a number of different ways, ranging from Heidegger's idea of will to power as an ontological doctrine to Kaufmann's idea that it is a doctrine of psychological motivation.[37] The difficulty of interpretation is rendered all the more acute by the fact that there are only two references to will to power in Nietzsche's published works, while his unpublished notes that refer to it seem more speculative in character than anything else. Yet its importance is indicated by the numerous plans drawn up for a book on will to power, even though they remained at a very embryonic stage. In his notebooks from 1887 and 1888 there are numerous 'plans' for the 'Will to Power,' most of which singularly fail to concur with each other. Hence it is difficult to treat the will to power as a fully articulated doctrine. Rather, it has the character of a large number of often contradictory and uncoordinated ideas and jottings which lurk in the background to much of his work, both published and unpublished, without being

fully worked out. A good example of the difficulty in discussing the 'doctrine' of the will to power can be seen in a passage from the spring of 1888 where Nietzsche writes of 'The will to the accumulation of power as peculiar to the phenomenon of life . . . could we not accept this will as the motivating force in Chemistry too? and in the cosmic order?' (*WP* §689). By the end of the passage the reader is quite unsure how to interpret the will to power. Is it a feature of organic life, as Nietzsche seems to be at first suggesting, or is it a more basic ontological constitutive feature of all matter? Nietzsche leaves the matter unresolved, ending instead with a number of unanswered questions. I would like to suggest that although it often sounds a fundamental, quasi-metaphysical doctrine, it is in fact a less ambitious theory of the function of knowledge and interpretation.

An important first step is to recognise that only rarely is will to power referred to as *the* will to power.[38] Admittedly, he speaks of *the* will in the early works written under the influence of Schopenhauer. However, this precedes by some years the development of his speculative ideas on will to power. The grounds for the above assertion are several. The first derives from Nietzsche's own statement that all notions of unity as the irreducible essence of beings are illusory, in the sense that numbers are themselves useful fictions. It is important to recall Nietzsche's comment that 'the unity of the word is no guarantee of the unity of the thing' (*HAH* I §14). Significantly, while will to power represents a striving to increase the quantum of power, Nietzsche tends to prefer quality to quantity as a determining factor in his interpretative strategy. This inclination forms one of the main reasons for his critique of mechanistic world views. For example, in 1886 he writes, 'mechanistic conception: desires nothing but quantities: but power lies in quality: mechanism can only describe processes, not explain them' (*WP* §660), while later that year he comments that 'we cannot help experiencing quantitative differences as something fundamentally different from quantity, namely as qualities' (*WP* §565).

The second ground for dismissing ideas of *the* will to power is that Nietzsche rarely speaks of it in those terms. He writes of will to power, wills to power, but seldom of *the* will to power. From this one concludes that will to power appears to be a motivation directing dynamic

processes, both organic and inorganic, although this is not to claim that it is a metaphysical essence, or that it is governed by a specific set of intentions. On a dramatic scale Nietzsche links will to power with a cosmic vision of the world as 'a monster of energy, without beginning, without end,' a 'Dionysian world of eternal self-creation, eternal self-destruction' (*WP* §1067), in which the force motivating destruction and creation is will to power. However, it is important to note that Nietzsche prefaces this description with the comment that this is how 'the world' appears reflected in his mirror. It is simply an image, and therefore Nietzsche is not putting forward a metaphysical theory but rather the possibility of thinking of the world in alternative terms to the metaphysical obsession with being. The purpose of this counter-image is clear: in conceiving of the world itself as a perpetually shifting series of force relations, the way is prepared for rethinking the question of knowledge. For interpretation is now no longer governed by the concern for 'truth' but by the strategic effort to establish a certain position within a field of dynamic energies, and the means to maintain that position is through the attainment of power. As Nietzsche points out, 'In truth, interpretation is itself a means of becoming master of something' (*WP* §643). Interpretation is thus presented as a dynamic process, and this is reflected in the idea that it is always possible to produce new interpretations: 'The same text permits countless interpretations: there is no "correct" interpretation' (*KSA* 12:1 [120]).

For Nietzsche interpretative knowledge is power. The significance of this equation can be interpreted in various ways. Michel Foucault has followed through one reading in particular, outlining the implication of the one in the other to such an extent that the notion of power, or knowledge-power, itself becomes highly abstracted and almost drained of meaning. The extreme formulation of this notion is Foucault's claim that 'there is no power without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time relations of power,'[39] and Foucault privileges the 'popular knowledge' which disturbs institutionalised discourses and their link with power. Quite clearly, Foucault is drawing on an important element in Nietzsche's thinking. At the heart of his equation of 'knowledge' and power is an instrumental notion of interpretation. This is ap-

parent, for example, in Nietzsche's emphasis on the perspectival basis of interpretation, in which 'knowledge' is constructed according to the interests and capabilities of a specific being. One example would be the 'knowledge' of physics. Although extrinsic ideological interests have frequently determined the direction of much research in physics, the history of physical science can be characterised as an increasing degree of technical mastery. This feature has been the object of many critiques of the logic of the physical sciences, and one might cite here Heidegger's dismay at the conflation of science and technological mastery.[40] Nietzsche himself acknowledges that science is driven by technological power; he refers to it as 'the transformation of nature into concepts for the purpose of mastering nature' (*WP* §610), while in another note he derives the construction of concepts from 'a power in us to order, simplify, falsify' (*WP* §517). This notion finds numerous parallels throughout Nietzsche's writing.

There is a further aspect to the equation of will to power and interpretation, and this relates to the question of modernity and decadence. A recurrent motif in Nietzsche's description of will to power is the notion of simplification, organisation and negation. For example, 'there is a will to power in the organic process by virtue of which dominant shaping commanding forces continually extend the sphere of their power and within this always simplify' (*WP* §644). Elsewhere he declares, 'one should value more than truth the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents' (*WP* §602). This notion is supplemented in the claim that 'The degree of resistance and the degree of superior power – that is the question in every event' (*WP* §634). A fuller exposition of these ideas and their connection is provided in a note from 1887 in which Nietzsche asserts that 'will to power can manifest itself against resistances, therefore it seeks that which resists it. . . . Appropriation and assimilation are above all a desire to overwhelm, a forming, shaping and reshaping. . . . If this incorporation is not successful then the form probably falls into pieces' (*WP* §656).

Nietzsche's reference to simplification, and to its opposite, disintegration in the case of failure, recalls his characterisation of passive nihilism, which is marked both by 'weariness,' that is, a loss of power, and

by a loss of gravity. His interpretation of cosmopolitanism was as a symptom of a weary indifference. This now needs to be reformulated, for Nietzsche's critique is aimed specifically at the lack of appropriation, of will to power, that underpins cosmopolitan taste: 'Our Europe of today, being the arena of an absurdly sudden attempt at a radical mixture of classes and hence races . . . is merely dressed-up scepticism and paralysis of the will: for this diagnosis of the European sickness I vouch' (*BGE* §208). The passive nihilism of modernity, its decadence, is the sign of an exhausted will, and here the nature of the configuration of will, modernity, knowledge and interpretation becomes a little more apparent. Nietzsche's original diagnosis of modern nihilism was based on the notion of the highest values devaluing themselves. In particular, the promise of truth was seen as hollow. The notion of will to power adds to this diagnosis the dimension of power, for 'knowledge,' in the sense of the metaphysical search for certitude, contradicts the motivation of will to power. Whereas will to power seeks resistance, metaphysics seeks stability, 'That which comes to a standstill . . . is laziness' (*WP* §575). This stands in contrast with Nietzsche's declaration 'against peaceableness and the desire for reconciliation' (*WP* §601).

The obvious question which this reading has to answer is what Nietzsche is referring to with the notion of resistance. When he talks about a protoplasm overcoming its neighbour, for example, it is quite clear, but less so when will to power is abstracted into a functional explanation of interpretation. A way in to this issue is provided by returning to the question of the plurality of interpretations. It was noted earlier that Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics involves a recognition of the constant possibility of constructing new perspectives, new forms of 'knowledge.' It is this, I would argue, that offers the resistance that will to power seeks, for the world, in this conception of interpretation, remains an enigma that will always elude the attempt to grasp it conceptually. In a planned continuation of *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche argues that 'There are no facts, everything is in flux, incomprehensible, elusive' (*WP* §604). The crucial issue, then, is how to respond to this resistance. A most succinct formulation of the matter is offered in a note from 1886, where he writes, 'No limit to the ways in which the world

can be interpreted; every interpretation a symptom of growth or decline . . . plurality of interpretations a sign of strength. Not to desire to deprive the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character' (*WP* §600). Nietzsche is thus setting up an opposition between a passivity that remains caught within a specific interpretation and an active pursuit of new perspectives. Significantly, failure to seek new perspectives is not regarded simply as the preservation of a status quo but as a process of decay. In contrast, the active nihilist must always seek *new* interpretations, which indicates the structural parallelism of interpretation and will to power. Against this, Nietzsche notes in his essay on asceticism that much European culture consists of 'a grand struggle against the feeling of displeasure,' a goal which is achieved 'by means that reduce the feeling of life in general to its lowest point. If possible, will and desire are abolished altogether' (*OGM* III §17).

The link between will to power and interpretation is thus perhaps less of a literal theory about the instrumental function of knowledge than a strategic device for critiquing what Nietzsche perceived to be the decadence of a culture approaching the crisis of a limited, self-negating set of values. Asceticism offers the most potent embodiment of this process, for the ascetic ideal, manifest in the philosophical distrust of the senses, or in the Christian denigration of mundane transience, 'springs from the protective instinct of a degenerating life . . . a partial physiological obstruction and exhaustion' (*OGM* III §13). And yet while asceticism denies the search for resistance that is essential to active nihilism and, ultimately, that underlies the logic of will to power, the ascetic ideal, like all forms of knowledge, is also driven by will to power, except that here the negation that drives it is no longer the inadequacy of individual perspectives, but rather the pessimistic *self*-denial resulting from the failure of the highest metaphysical ideals. As Nietzsche surmises, 'To renounce belief in one's ego, to deny one's own "reality" – what a triumph, not merely over the senses, over appearance, but a much higher kind of triumph, a violation and cruelty against *reason* . . . when the ascetic self-contempt and self-mockery of reason declares: "there is a realm of truth and being, but reason is *excluded* from it!"' (*OGM* III §12).

Dialectics

Nietzsche's embrace of a plurality of perspectives has to be set against another central theme in his thought, namely, the possibility of discrimination between better and worse perspectives. As was apparent earlier, tolerance of plurality per se is a symptom of pessimistic indifference, specifically through the absence of resistance. Resistance, or negation, thus figures as a crucial element in Nietzsche's thinking, and it permits one to speak of a Nietzschean dialectic of interpretation which permits the application of judgements of value to individual interpretations. It also prevents pluralism from lapsing into relativism. Specifically, the equation of power and interpretation offers interpretation-immanent criteria for judging interpretations. If the notion of will to power (as will to *more* power) is translated into the language of interpretation and perspectivism, the character of interpretation is always one of wanting to interpret more, in a constant expansion of perspectives. Nietzsche's model is a hermeneutic practice of overcoming, in which specific interpretations are posited and simultaneously negated, supplemented with other perspectives. Unlike Hegel, however, the negation of interpretations is not carried out along the path to absolute knowledge, but in recognition of the provisional and incomplete nature of interpretations. Nietzsche's thinking is thus to emphasise the productive function of negation, but in a dialectic whose completion is infinitely deferred, yet posited as a regulative ideal. It is this paradoxical model that can address the scepticism of active nihilism but without lapsing into the crisis of pessimism of modernity.[41]

In his essay on asceticism Nietzsche writes, 'Precisely because we seek knowledge, let us not be ungrateful to such resolute reversals of customary perspectives and values . . . to see differently . . . to want to see differently is no small cultivation and preparation of the intellect for its "objectivity" – the latter not to be understood as disinterested contemplation . . . but rather as the ability to control and dispose of one's Pro's and Con's, such that one can employ a variety of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge' (*OGM* III §12). His aim is thus to establish an 'objective' knowledge, no matter

how provisional that objectivity may be, and with the sense that there can be no clearly defined goal for knowledge. In order to express this conception Nietzsche uses a number of metaphors which overturn the traditional images used to describe philosophical activity. For example, the philosopher is a voyager at sea, uncertain of his or her destination, in contrast with Kant's notion of the philosopher as the surveyor of the clearly demarcated territory of human cognition.[42] Similarly, Nietzsche exhibits a sympathy for Don Quixote, wandering apparently aimlessly across the Iberian landscape. Such metaphors, however, do not entitle us to claim that Nietzsche abandons all pretensions to knowing. Instead they indicate the provisional nature of any such interpreting, inasmuch as any stage in the activity of interpreting bears within it the imprint of the negation of previous perspectives. Certainly there are moments when Nietzsche is aware of the paradoxical status of his own claims concerning the 'truth' of knowledge. However, these self-mocking remarks do not detract from the far more serious project which gives his work its driving force. Nietzsche's own thought cannot pretend, under the terms of his own argument, to be the 'truth.' Yet it can pretend to offer a more complete (pluralistic) and therefore *better* interpretation of reality than the 'metaphysical' one. 'The power of knowledge lies not in its degree of truth, but in . . . its character as a condition of life' (*GS* §110), and the more resistance a specific interpretation stage seeks and overcomes, the more life-enhancing it is.

By casting Nietzsche's theory of interpretation in this light I am deliberately emphasising the similarities between the expansion of perspectives and dialectical thought. This stands in paradoxical contrast to Nietzsche's many criticisms of Socrates, Plato, Hegel and dialectics in general. Admittedly, Hegel's dialectic constitutes a logically inevitable unfolding of consciousness on the path towards Absolute Knowledge, but it is the parallel in the productive function of negation in Hegel and in Nietzsche which is of greater importance.[43] Negation, in Hegel, is the means to overcome one-sidedness, just as in Nietzsche the project of interpretation is to overcome the narrowness of prior perspectives. Nietzsche ridicules the metaphysical ideal of a perspectiveless knowledge, and likewise Hegel claims that 'Being, pure being, without any further determination . . . is in fact nothing, and neither more nor less

than nothing.'[44] For Nietzsche, although the perspective functions as a negativity, that is, as a limitation which renders obsolete the metaphysical ideal of pure knowledge, it is also that which facilitates interpretation. With perspectivism there can be no knowledge; without perspectives there can be no interpretations. It is a position fully permeated by the spirit of Hegel, where negation is that which rescues being from pure nothingness. 'If,' as Hegel says, 'on the other hand, reality is taken in its determinateness, then since it essentially contains the moment of the negative, the sum-total of all realities becomes just as much a sum-total of all negations, the sum-total of all contradictions.'[45] The proximity of their positions can also be seen in Nietzsche's well-known assertion in *On the Genealogy of Morals* that 'There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective knowing' (*KSA* 5, p. 365). Taken out of context, the passage might seem to demonstrate just the contrary, namely, that the cumulative workings of the dialectic are quite alien to Nietzsche's thinking. However, the remainder of the passage in question runs: 'There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective knowing, and the more affects we allow to speak about an object, the more eyes, different eyes we know to employ for the same thing, the more complete will our "concept" of this thing, our "objectivity" be.' One sees here an endorsement of some form of objective understanding, some form of normativity by which judgements can be made. Yet it is not one which appeals to some order of things antecedent and exterior to the discourse of interpretation, but rather grounds the interpretative criteria in the demands of the particular form of life interpreting. Of course, while my stress on the dialectical structure of interpretation leads to obvious connections with Hegel, it is important not to assimilate the one to the other. Hegel's dialectic constitutes the framework of a systematic metaphysical structure which is completely alien to the thinking of Nietzsche. Instead, the notion of a dialectical interpretative history has to be seen in terms of micrological events, which, while always moving beyond themselves towards a 'more,' lack wider legitimacy.

An instructive parallel can be made with Theodor Adorno, whose negative dialectics, reworking Hegel, lay an equal stress on the lack of final closure proper to the concept of the dialectic. Indeed, Adorno's 'negative dialectic' arguably offers the link mediating the thought of

Nietzsche and Hegel, so often viewed as complete antitheses. Critical of Hegel's placing of a final positive state as the culmination of the dialectical movement, Adorno argues that 'To proceed dialectically means to think in contradictions,'[46] and consequently 'positivity must be denied.'[47] Hegel's error, for Adorno, was to assume that while the dynamic of the movement of thought is the unfolding of contradiction, the activity of the whole can be gathered together in a totalising moment. As such, Hegel, paradoxically, was only a partial dialectician: 'To use identity as a palliative for dialectical contradiction, for the expression of the insolubly non-identical, is to ignore what the contradiction means . . . The thesis that the negation of a negation is something positive can only be upheld by one who presupposes positivity – as all-conceptuality – from the beginning.'[48] And yet while Adorno consistently critiques the notion of a positivity that would bring the movement of the dialectic to a close, his thinking is profoundly imbued with the sense of its necessity as a regulative ideal.

By foregrounding the dialectical structure of interpretation, the nature of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and the ascetic ideal becomes clearer still, for they are devoted to an exclusion of the body and all sensuous existence. As Nietzsche says in the preface to *The Gay Science,* all philosophy hitherto has been a misunderstanding of the body. Yet this is not merely an interpretative error, based on a one-sided, perspectival view of life. It is an act of self-annihilation. The greater part of interpretation is guided and motivated by physiological demands, while asceticism seeks to deny its own origins. Nietzsche writes, 'The unconscious masking of physiological needs under the cloak of the objective, the ideal, the purely-spiritual extends to shocking proportions' (*GS* preface §2). It represents a turning of the forces of life against themselves. This is the paradox of asceticism: the ascetic 'priest,' motivated by his own will to power, his own will to promote his particular form of existence, turns will to power against itself: 'For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here there rules a ressentiment without equal, that of an insatiable instinct and will to power, which would like to become master not over something in life, but over life itself, over its deepest, most potent and basic conditions; here the attempt is made to use force in order to block up the well-springs of force' (*OGM* III §11). While Nietz-

sche might, at places, admire the strength and discipline of the ascetic, and his ambivalent attitude towards both Socrates and Christ as the ascetic types par excellence is indicative of this, he regards the ascetic type as dangerous per se, regardless of his effect on others, merely by virtue of the fact that all his energies have been turned inward upon themselves. The drive to impose a stable meaning on the world, denying its own affective physiological bases, is self-undermining and life-denying. Life interpreting life against itself. It necessarily leads to nihilism, by devaluing life and offering a transparently mendacious 'ideal' alternative, whether that alternative is true knowledge or paradisiacal redemption. When these alternatives are shown to be empty, there is nothing left to which to turn.

2

Nietzsche's Subject

Retrieving the Repressed

> We think that hardness, forcefulness, slavery, danger in the alley and the heart, life in hiding, stoicism, the art of experiment and devilry of every kind, that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical in man, everything in him that is akin to beasts of prey and serpents, serves the enhancement of the species "man" as much as its opposite does.
>
> (*BGE* §44)

In the previous chapter I argued against overplaying the purely sceptical moment in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics at the expense of his reconstructive theory of interpretation. Critics of a variety of persuasions have tended to dichotomise the issues at stake within his work, as if it merely revolves around an opposition between rationality and irrationality. Nietzsche's embrace of the other of metaphysical reason, seen in such terms has made him the object of some considerable censure. For example, Habermas, using the case of *The Birth of Tragedy,* sees Nietzsche as striving for regression to a mythic primal origin, a goal that prepares the way both for Nazism and also for the thought of a figure such as Martin Heidegger. Discussing Heidegger, Habermas writes, 'It is only after this turn that fascism, like Nietzsche's philosophy, belongs to the objectively ambiguous phase of the overcoming of metaphysics.'[1] Though he stops short of labelling Nietzsche's work as fascist, in the manner of Lukács's crude assault, its problematic and ambiguous status lends easily to association with fascist thinking.[2] In contrast, thinkers such as Bataille, Deleuze, Sarah Kofman and Jacques Derrida have received Nietzsche with a sense of exhilaration, as providing a mechanism

of release from the tyranny of logic and rationality, opening up language to the play of metaphor. As I have already indicated, Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysics, combined with an emphasis on the perspectival nature of cognition and the aesthetic *aspects* of the human relation to the world, does not necessarily force the abandoning of normativity. While Karl-Otto Apel may be right in his assertion that 'the tenets of the radical critique of reason launched by postmodernism are by and large inspired by Nietzsche,'[3] my own reading of Nietzsche draws back from the *mise en abyme* that Nietzsche edges towards in the hands of many better known interpreters. That Nietzsche's thought has been productive in critiques of reason is evident from its prominence in various forms of anti-rationalist revolt, beginning with the anarchism of Dada.[4] Yet this should not detract from the conservative strand in his interpretation of modernity; of note is his criticism of cosmopolitan liberalism, which, as we have seen, he viewed as a symptom of decadence and weakness.[5]

A central element in Nietzsche's deconstruction of metaphysics is his critique of the subject, and it forms the systemic counterpart to his assault on the notion of epistemic objectivity. As I argued earlier, the process of interpretation constructs the network of relations within which the subject-object relation is located. In addition to its role in the critique of metaphysics, Nietzsche's reformulation of the question of subjectivity forms an integral part of his thinking about art in two ways. First, the aesthetic tradition from Kant onwards saw as its main issue the subjective basis of the experience of aesthetic objects and works of art, in contrast to the Platonic tradition, for which the truth content of artworks was a far higher concern. In this respect Nietzsche is very much an heir to the Kantian tradition. Second, Nietzsche's treatment of the question of art gives equal attention to the artist as a specific manifestation of the free spirit or Übermensch. The Übermensch, as the successor to the metaphysical subject, is often characterised by an aesthetic of the self which is mirrored in an aesthetic attitude towards the question of knowledge. This parallels the practice of the artist who, for Nietzsche, maintains a crucial aesthetic relation to the world and towards his own mode of interpretative activity. Indeed, it is this distinctive relation which defines the artist *qua* artist and art *qua* art.

Critique

Nietzsche's critique of the subject is fuelled by a number of concerns, the most significant of which is perhaps his emphasis on the primacy of language. Thought is determined by language, a notion which Nietzsche often interprets in anthropological terms. As he notes in *The Gay Science,* 'the development of language and the development of consciousness . . . go hand in hand' (*GS* §354).[6] Moreover, the belief in subjectivity per se is, Nietzsche argues, a function of the grammatical structure and syntax peculiar to the Indo-European languages. He notes that 'It is highly probable that philosophers within the domain of the Ural-Altaic languages (where the concept of the subject is least developed) look otherwise "into the world"' (*BGE* §20). He also suggests that there may be physiological determinants of the grammatical structure of language, though without exploring the possibility in any depth.

Nietzsche's view of language as a determinant of thought, and of belief in the subject as belief in a grammatical function, has become perhaps the single most influential aspect of his thinking, but its meaning is open to interpretation. One specific reading emerging within post-structuralist thought has been to stress to an extreme the function of consciousness as a sign. Hence, for Derrida, 'the subject becomes a *speaking* subject only in its commerce with the system of linguistic differences. . . . But can one not conceive of a presence . . . of the subject before speech or signs? . . . Such a question supposes that prior to the sign and outside it . . . something like consciousness is possible.'[7] In *Speech and Phenomena,* his study of Husserl, Derrida concludes that all acts of self-consciousness are always-already mediated by the (linguistic) sign, which he sees as constituting subjectivity itself. The subject is no longer the author of meaning, but rather inserted into the order of language, to such an extent that the individual has nothing to contribute to the general play of semiotic difference. Moreover the prejudices bequeathed by language, the assumptions implicit in metaphysical concepts, cannot be negated *tout court.* Paralleling Nietzsche's dismissal of the idea of a meta-language, Derrida claims that 'There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake meta-

physics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest.'[8] The priority of language means that criticism necessarily occurs from within the system of metaphysics, as a form of displacement, rather than simple negation.

Nietzsche's influence on Derrida is paralleled in Michel Foucault, where the presence of Nietzsche is inscribed in multiple ways. Nietzsche's *general* analysis of the constitutive role of language is mirrored in Foucault's claim for the need to 'substitute for the enigmatic treasure of "things" anterior to discourse the regular formation of objects that emerge only in discourse.'[9] Foucault's 'archaeology' of knowledge is modelled closely on Nietzsche's genealogical method, and the relation between the two appears closest in terms of their respective histories of subjectivity. Just as Nietzsche traces, in *The Genealogy of Morals,* the emergence of the moral subject of metaphysical culture, so Foucault develops a history of the 'subject,' mapping out the various historical interpretations of subjectivity. In this history 'man' is a somewhat recent phenomenon in European culture, emerging as the product of a specific constellation of discursive practices.[10] Echoing Nietzsche's view of the 'human' as a transitional phenomenon, he also foresees the time when 'man' will himself be dissolved. Subjectivity is thus the product of specific historical discursive formations and, recalling Foucault's intertwining of knowledge and power, fulfils certain limiting and controlling functions.[11] His later work on the history of sexuality focuses solely on the problem of the subject, its constitution through a reflexive self-relation or 'rapport-à-soi.'[12] The history of subjecthood that he traces from ancient Greece to early Christianity presents a series of fictive creations and recreations. Accordingly, the subject is first defined by its function within a larger community; this priority of group identity gradually yields ground to the formation of the domain of inward, private experience. In aesthetic terms this is reflected in the shift from a preference in antiquity for epic narrative, to an increasing emphasis on a literature of introspection. This later paradigm of subjective identity has become the dominant form in western culture, shaping behavioural

habits, such as the urge to confess, which, for Foucault, is characteristic of modern culture. Crucial to this development of the subject is the nature of the *rapport-à-soi,* which also forms the axiom of any ethical code. Ethics are not founded on axiological moral codes per se, for these are themselves dependent on a particular concept of moral agency. Here the parallel with Nietzsche is instructive, in particular his assertion in *Twilight of the Idols* that the modern autonomous subject functions as a correlate to Christian morality, with its notions of free will, sin and guilt.

Foucault's and Derrida's critiques of the subject draw on one particular interpretation of Nietzsche, specifically his contention that the subject is merely a grammatical function. Yet, while he frequently argues that the self is a linguistic fiction or is produced by the demands of Christian morality, he also turns repeatedly to the role of the individual. His understanding of history, for example, is prosopographic, in which a recurrent lexicon of figures play key roles on the historical stage; Socrates, Plato, Euripides, Alcibiades, Buddha, Julius Caesar, Christ, Napoleon and Goethe, to name but a few, all play a central part in the unfolding history of metaphysical culture. Quite apart from his recurrent reference to the 'free spirit' and the 'Übermensch,' it is notable, too, that his thinking on art is marked by the operation of two personalised metaphors, namely, the Apollonian and the Dionysian. Hence it seems clear that Nietzsche's critique does not consist in an assault on the concept of the subject per se; rather, it is directed at a specific, oppressive conception of selfhood, the nature of which I shall explore shortly. There are clear parallels with his general critique of metaphysics. In the same way that Nietzsche's scepticism does not lead to a simple 'negation' of knowledge, but instead a substitution with the notion of interpretation, so too the demolition of the metaphysical subject is succeeded by a reinterpretation of the self. In terms of the parallel between the two, it can be argued that Nietzsche's critique in particular of the mind/body dualism so central to the metaphysical subject constitutes a specific application of his wider critique of the ontological dualism characteristic of metaphysics in general.

As a first step it is important to explore what Nietzsche is critiquing. Strictly speaking, 'the' metaphysical subject has never existed. The

metaphysical tradition, from Socrates to Schopenhauer, has never sustained a single notion of the subject. Within metaphysics there has always been a plurality of subjects according to the function they serve. The concept of the 'subject' of metaphysics is itself an interpretative fiction; it is based on the synthesis of the various subjects – political, legal, ethical, cognitive and so forth – all of which have delimited spheres of applicability. That there is no single metaphysical subject is already evident at the origins of metaphysics, in the work of Plato. In an early dialogue such as *Phaedo* Plato asserts that 'soul is most similar to what is divine, immortal, intelligible, uniform, indissoluble, unvarying and constant in relation to itself'[13] in contrast to the body, which is mortal, chaotic and multiform. The soul thus corresponds to a notion that Nietzsche consistently critiques, and Plato spends some considerable time rebutting the view that the soul might be a form of attunement of various different bodily impulses and therefore have multiple origins. However, later works such as *Phaedrus* or *Republic* view the self as a *composite* of elements frequently in conflict. In the latter dialogue a distinction is made between the rational, appetitive and moral elements of the soul, all of which have to be controlled in a hierarchy of the self.[14] It is this notion of a multiple self that forms the basis of Plato's notion of a society of the soul, in which the organisation of the soul is a microcosm of the wider class politics of the ideal state.[15]

Against these general considerations it is apparent that the specific object of Nietzsche's critique is primarily a Cartesian notion of the self, together with its cousin, the ethical subject of Judaeo-Christian theology. Descartes's theory of cognition relies on a minimalist notion of the self as nothing but a *res cogitans;* in the second of his *Meditations on First Philosophy* he concludes that 'I am, then, in the strict sense only a thing that thinks; that is, I am a mind or intelligence . . . a thinking thing.'[16] In the sixth *Meditation,* devoted to demonstrating the 'real distinction between mind and body,' he makes the even bolder assertion that 'there is a great difference between the mind and the body, inasmuch as the body is by its nature always divisible, while the mind is utterly indivisible. . . . I am merely a thinking thing . . . something quite single and complete.'[17] The apotheosis of this idea is to be found later in the moral

theory of Kant. Specifically, morality stems, for Kant, from the freedom of the autonomous subject, which, by following the dictates of the inner moral law, remains unaffected by external constraints.[18]

This therefore constitutes the object of Nietzsche's critique. There is an affinity with the Plato of the *Phaedo,* and it is a notion which has recurred in the history of metaphysics, but its lineage can also be linked to the asceticism of the Church Fathers and Saint Augustine in particular. Thus alongside his criticism of Descartes (and Kant), Nietzsche highlights the intertwining of the moral agent of Christianity and the philosophical subject. Christian morality is predicated on the assumption of a responsible agent, one whose moral disposition will be purely rational, unclouded by the physiological demands of human embodied existence. Consequently, the early Church invested sexual abstinence and the renunciation of the body with great moral significance; in contrast, contemporary pagan norms restricted sexual activity for what were perceived to be purely practical reasons only, such as the belief that expenditure of semen was an expenditure of the self.[19] The inherent connection between morality and subjectivity can also be seen through comparison with other cultural value systems. Such sets of moral values, or 'interpretative modalities,'[20] display, alongside the absence of a 'metaphysical' subject, a striking lack of notions of guilt, free will or responsibility. For example, in ancient Greece, a recurrent model of cultural practice for Nietzsche, the notion of deviant behaviour is described as *hamartia,* or error, and in place of the sense of guilt there is the notion of shame. The tragic figure of Oedipus is not cast out of Thebes as punishment for his sin but in order to restore the social equilibrium; the fact that the murder of his father and the incest with his mother were committed in ignorance makes no difference to the pollution he brings to the city. In contrast, the Christian-metaphysical modality has made conscious intention central to its moral order, and Nietzsche attempts to undermine this ethical ideal and its accompanying concept of agency. As he notes, 'Humans were conceived of as "free" so they could be judged and punished – so they could become guilty: consequently every action had to be conceived of as intended, the origin of every action had to be thought of as residing in consciousness' (*TI* 'Four Great Errors' §7). Nietzsche is targeting in particular the au-

tonomous subject of Christian morality and its parallel in the pure *res cogitans* of Descartes, the concept of which relies on two axiomatic principles. The first is the axiom that the basis of the self is the rational intellect, which is distinct from the physiological basis of the human organism, which, in contrast, is the seat of affectivity and desire. The second axiom follows from the first, claiming that the subject is consequently capable of passing cognitive judgements and undertaking moral actions which are independent of any affective dispositions.

At the root of Nietzsche's critique of this conception of subjectivity lie two fundamental issues, specifically, the origin of consciousness and the nature of human agency. This concern can be seen to preoccupy his thinking as early as *The Birth of Tragedy,* in which the basis of aesthetic experience consists of the tension between the Apollonian impulse to preserve subjective autonomy and the Dionysian instinct towards ecstatic self-negation. This early recognition of the precariousness of the conscious, rational, intellect is pursued and deepened throughout his subsequent works. In *Daybreak,* for example, Nietzsche devotes a long section to the problem of the indeterminacy at the heart of the subject: 'The unknown world of the "subject." What is so difficult for people to grasp is their lack of knowledge of themselves. . . . Is this not precisely the dreadful truth: that what one can ever know of an action will never suffice to cross the bridge which leads from a cognition to the action? . . . Moral actions are always something other' (*D* §116). Here one sees a parallel with the emphasis, in his essay 'On Truth and Lie in Their Extra-Moral Sense,' on the metaphoric leaps that take place between physiological perceptions, their registering in consciousness and their expression in language. Here a further gap is indicated, namely, that between cognition and moral agency. The phenomenal inner world turns out to be a manifold of different affects of various orders; the relation of cognition to volition is highly mediated and obscure. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche mocks those who would see the intellect as the essence of humanity, commenting that 'Consciousness is the most recent and latest development of organic being and hence also the most unready and feeble' (*GS* §11). Zarathustra puts the case equally forcefully when he declares to his audience that 'You have taken the path from the worm to the human being, and much of you is still worm. You

were once apes, and the human is even now more of an ape than some apes' (*Z* I preface §3).

Nietzsche's particular scorn is reserved for the idea of free will, derived from the ascetic ideal. Free will must be an a priori possibility of the ethical subject, yet as Nietzsche demonstrates, volition is not necessarily primary, but rather a secondary quality which arises from the interpretation of a specific situation: 'so that volition can arise one must have a representation of desire and repulsion . . . that a powerful stimulus can be felt as a desire or repulsion, that is a matter of the interpreting intellect, which works for the most part unbeknownst to us' (*GS* §127). The intellect, as a secondary function of organic life, is inextricably linked to those organic functions of the body; in this light, the mind–body dualism of metaphysics appears to be hopelessly naive. This is not to reduce the mind to the status of an organ; such a crude reductive materialism would be just as culpable as the ascetic severing of the intellect from the various affective impulses shaping it. However, Nietzsche is concerned with reassess the relationship between mind and body, in a manner which perhaps suspends the traditional opposition itself. Even in his earliest notes he stresses the impossibility of neatly delineating between mental and bodily functions. In an unpublished note from 1871 Nietzsche writes, 'What we call feelings are . . . already permeated and saturated with conscious and unconscious ideas' (*KSA* 7:12 [1]). Mental acts cannot be reduced to mere neuro-physiological activity, to the cathexis of so much energy; the mind cannot be seen simply as a collection of neural pathways. For just as mental functions can be seen to originate in physiological impulses, so too neural stimuli have to be interpreted by an intellect in order to be recognised *as such*. It is only the interpretative act that can give these stimuli the *quality* of mental processes. The stress on 'qualia,' or the specific qualities of experiences, has most often been used in critiques of a materialist theory of mind. Thus the fact that a description of the physiology of perception does not extend to the phenomenological qualities of experience purportedly demonstrates the heterogeneity of the brain as the material basis of cognition and the mind as the seat of consciousness.[21] Nietzsche's point is rather different; he is pointing toward the difficulty of making any distinction between the physiological and the phenomenological, as if an

autonomous inner self could 'choose' to interpret external stimuli in a certain way. The falseness of this dichotomy is proclaimed by Zarathustra: 'Behind your thoughts and feelings stands . . . an unknown sage – he is called Self. He lives in your body, he is your body.' He later adds, 'There is more reason in your body than in your greatest wisdom' (*Z* I 'On the Despisers of the Body').

The body itself has a form of intentionality, and hence Nietzsche is reluctant to ascribe all intentional behaviour to a single rational intellect. This can be compared with Nietzsche's more general comments on intentionality in his discussion of will to power. To recall, Nietzsche had even suggested that the boundary between chemical and organic processes might be problematised, in that in both spheres there occurred something that might be interpreted as intentional. It is on this account that he refers to will to power as a process operative in both animate and inanimate events. Of course, in one sense the description of physical events in terms of intentional actions is simply a case of metaphorical transfer, in which terms are borrowed from one sphere to analyse phenomena in another. At the root of Nietzsche's thinking, however, is the possibility that this can also open up to scrutiny the function of the terms in their original context.

In addition to questioning of the autonomy of conscious willing and cognising, Nietzsche indicates that the ideal of autonomy is further undermined by the facticity of the human condition. No individual has control over the environment in which they find themselves; indeed, they find a world which is always-already there, which has shaped the way they are, to such an extent that the notions of guilt and responsibility so central to Christian ethics seem irrelevant and misplaced. 'Nobody is responsible for the fact that they are even there,' he states (*TI* 'Four Great Errors' §8), adding that the peculiar characteristics of one's existence owe more to happenstance than to any necessary order, denoting the absence of any external foundation to give purpose to individual human existence.[22]

This brief summary of Nietzsche's writing on human agency and cognition indicates that the target of his criticism is not belief in the subject as such, but the transcendent cognitive subject recurring throughout the metaphysical tradition. The rational, autonomous and,

ultimately, guilty subject of metaphysics is replaced by the notion of the self as an enigma. As Nietzsche asks in *Daybreak,* 'Is this not the "terrible" truth, that whatever one knows of an action never suffices to perform it, that no-one has yet built a bridge from the cognition to the act in even one single case? Actions are never what they seem' (*D* §116). Moreover, just as Nietzsche's general attack on epistemology is motivated by anticipation of the impending crisis of nihilism, so too his concern with the subject is driven by the sense that the subject of modernity is trapped within a self-negating logic.

Origins

Despite Nietzsche's varied criticisms of subjectivity, the self is nevertheless more than simply a discursive fiction. This will seem a somewhat startling claim, given my previous emphasis on Nietzsche's critique of the 'ideology' of the given. However, a distinction has to be made between Nietzsche's emphasis on the historicity of consciousness and his recognition of the subject as a problematic 'existent' in modernity. Further, while Nietzsche's attack on the misconceptions of the Cartesian notion of the subject is partly aimed at the deluded belief in the grammar of subjective agency, it also sets the metaphysical notion against an expanded definition of the self in which, for example, the body plays as important part in informing cognitive and ethical activity. In keeping with his general interpretative stance, Nietzsche clearly does not regard conscious subjectivity as an anterior entity that was 'discovered' at some time in the history of western culture. The key text in this regard is the second essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* on '"Guilt," "Bad Conscience" and the Like.' It presents Nietzsche's only extended account of the genesis of the modern subject. His critique therefore takes issue with the notion of the subject as an ahistorical entity. In contrast, his outline of its origins emphasises both that the subject is an emergent phenomenon and that the subject bears the traces of the various historical practices that produced it.[23]

At the root of Nietzsche's account is a theory of the economic origins of the subject. Economic rights are 'older even than the beginnings of any kind of social forms of organisation and alliances: it was rather

out of the most rudimentary form of personal legal rights that the budding sense of exchange, contract, guilt, right, obligation, settlement, first transferred itself to the coarsest and most elementary social complexes' (*OGM* II §8). Specifically, the origin of the metaphysical subject as a self-conscious moral agent lies in the relation of debtor and creditor; transgression of the rights of the individual, of social norms, puts the transgressor into the position of debtor, for the economic relation served as the model for moral values, indeed becomes transformed into a moral relation. In addition, Nietzsche traces the emergence of the self-conscious subject back to an inhibition of the discharge of outwardly directed energies. In a now famous passage, he argues that 'The whole inner world, originally thin as if stretched between two membranes, extended and expanded, acquired depth, breadth and height in the same measure as outward discharge was inhibited' (*OGM* II §22). This set of external constraints, originally legal and economic in nature, becomes moralised, giving rise to the taboos constituting, in particular, Christian ethics. The external order thus becomes internalised, and this internalisation produces the inner depth characteristic of the metaphysical subject. Moreover, self-consciousness becomes, in this account, synonymous with the feeling of guilt and indebtedness, even in the absence of an actual creditor. If one is missing, a creditor is invented, and Nietzsche interprets the practice of ancestor worship in this context, most notably, in the fact that ancestors become, in addition to figures of fear, also objects of gratitude. This logic of indebtedness lies ultimately at the root of the ideology of metaphysics, for as a constitutive lack of the subject it gives rise to the need for redemption, of which the search for certitude is one example. Nietzsche states that 'from now on the bad conscience is firmly rooted, eating into him, and spreading within him, polyp-like, until finally the irredeemable debt gives rise to the conception of irredeemable penance, the idea that it cannot be discharged (eternal punishment).' At the same time as the metaphysical drive for totality, Nietzsche sees the constitutive lack of the subject as also leading to nihilism. Not only is life itself deemed as beyond redemption, the primal debt is transferred to the creditor, 'whether we think of the *causa prima* of the human, of the beginning of the human race, of its ancestor, who is now burdened with a curse ("Adam,""Orig-

inal Sin," "Lack of Freedom of the Will") or of nature, from whose womb humanity came into being and into which the principle of evil is now projected' (ibid.).

Nietzsche's outline of the constitutive function of indebtedness offers a further perspective on the crisis of nihilism. In particular, the pessimism produced by the bankruptcy of inherited values finds its correlate in the process of self-denigration of the metaphysical subject. Where his general account of modernity indicates the way in which passive nihilism becomes manifest as an 'objective' pessimism about values, so the guilty subject of modernity becomes prone to a 'subjective' pessimism in which the highest ideal is self-annihilation. Thus Nietzsche writes of the 'inexorable, fundamental, and deepest suspicion about ourselves that is more and more gaining control of us Europeans' (*GS* §346), a phenomenon that will see its aesthetic inflections in the operas of Richard Wagner. Moreover, the founding values of the subject, its perpetual indebtedness, are self-defeating in the same way as the values of metaphysics. The path to crisis is in some sense inevitable.

Elsewhere Nietzsche offers an alternative interpretation of the origins of the subject. In *The Gay Science,* for example, consciousness is produced as a consequence of the demands of socialisation, in particular the need for inter-subjective relations; 'consciousness in general only developed out of the pressure of the need to communicate – from the outset it was only necessary, only of any use, between individuals (especially between those giving orders and those receiving them) and only developed in proportion to the level of its utility. Consciousness is actually only a network for connecting individuals to one another' (*GS* §354). Here Nietzsche is offering a rather different theory, although it is important to note that for both consciousness emerges because of the demands of the process of socialisation. Yet even though these accounts are not identical, this need not be overly problematic. In keeping with the notion of the complexity of the subject, Nietzsche is exploring its various origins and functions. In this regard it is important to take note of the purpose of his genealogy of the subject. For an essential aspect of his genealogical method is the exploration of the shifting meanings that have been attached to a particular concept or cultural praxis. In contrast to the Platonic order of unchanging ideal meanings and changing

mundane phenomena, for Nietzsche it is more often the meanings that alter while the substance of the praxis remains the same. This is the case too with the self; its original function and identity have been subjected to successive demands and transformations. Its multifarious origins have thus given it a complexity that has subsequently expanded its range of possibilities. Moreover, while the metaphysical subject has emerged and adapted to the demands of the social order, the Übermensch, in its struggle for 'heroic individualism,' as one study has termed it, aims to carve out an individual identity which is non-relational.[24] Nietzsche's conception of the metaphysical subject as a temporary phenomenon has to be read in the light of his thoughts on the Übermensch; the latter consists of the cultivation of a post-metaphysical self which can only be conceived as possible on the basis of some a priori capacity for a certain kind of self-relation.

Nietzsche's account is therefore less one of the emergence of consciousness per se than of the birth of modern self-consciousness out of a more primitive form of consciousness, the latter having already been constituted by a variety of organic and communicative needs. In this regard one can build on Nietzsche's account of the genealogy of the guilty conscience to construct three stages in the development of subjectivity. In the first stage, the subject acts purely on instinct; its energies are directed wholly outwardly towards its engagement with the world. In the second stage, the imposition of external constraint, in particular the subject's enmeshing within a legal economy, creates an inner depth in which, for the first time, the subject becomes *self*-conscious. In the third stage, this legal economy is moralised, and the subject internalises this process, giving rise to the moral subject of modernity.

The sense of a conflict between the subject of modernity and a pre-modern self is already apparent in the second of the *Untimely Meditations,* where Nietzsche offers a diagnosis of modern man as alienated in a realm of reified historical knowledge. Knowledge has become disconnected from life, and in this process 'there is betrayed the most characteristic quality of modern man: the remarkable antithesis between an interior which fails to correspond to any exterior, and an exterior which fails to correspond to any interior – an antithesis unknown to the peoples of earlier times' (*UM* II §4). Nietzsche's comments on the de-

velopment of an inner self anticipate his more sustained examination of the development of the guilty conscience in *On the Genealogy of Morals,* and they also look forward to his exposition of the meaning of asceticism. For while one cause of the inhibited modern self is the internalisation of social taboo, a further origin is the ascetic ideal. The 'ascetic priest' who, Nietzsche emphasises, 'appears in almost every age' embodies the same self-denial demanded by the morality of Christianity. In the case of Christianity, the priest or hermit, as a specific instance of asceticism, is driven by a sense of 'life as a wrong road on which one must finally walk back to the point where it begins, or as a mistake that is put right by deeds' (*OGM* III §11). This ascetic self-denial is of course an augury of the nihilism of modernity. Asceticism underlies the metaphysical denigration of the senses – the philosopher is a specific instance of the ascetic priest – and its self-denial results in the same pessimistic passivity as the onset of nihilism. 'If possible, will and desire are abolished altogether; all that produces affects and "blood" is avoided. . . . The result, expressed in moral-psychological terms, is "selflessness," "sanctification"; in physiological terms: hypnotisation . . . the minimum metabolism at which life will still subsist without really entering consciousness' (*OGM* III §17).

A crucial element in Nietzsche's tracing of the imposition of modern consciousness is therefore recognition of a more primitive self. In the *Gay Science* he notes that while the development of consciousness is determined by language, there is also a more primordial layer of mental activity which precedes linguistic articulation: 'To say it once more: the human being, like every thinking creature, is always thinking, but doesn't know it; thinking of which one becomes conscious is only the slightest part of it, let us say: the most superficial, the worst part: – for only this conscious thinking occurs in words, that is to say, in communicative signs, whereby the origin of consciousness covers itself up' (*GS* §355). As he notes rather more elusively elsewhere, 'Countless dark bodies are to be inferred beside the sun' (*BGE* §196); hence the modern subject has been achieved through the suppression of numerous invisible and unconscious factors. It is this notion of the other of the modern subject that underpins Nietzsche's assertion that 'Between us,

it is not at all necessary to be rid of the "soul" itself and to do without one the oldest and most respectable hypotheses. . . . However the road to new concepts and refinements of the hypothesis of the soul remains open: and notions such as "mortal soul" and "soul as plurality of subjects" and "soul as social structure of drives and affects" want to have their rights within science' (*BGE* § 1 2). The self is thus composed of a variety of drives and affects, a notion which according to Nietzsche's own criteria of judgement is superior to that of metaphysics both in that it embraces a wider set of perspectives and in that it promotes the idea of the self as an *enigma.*

At this point one might object that Nietzsche is just repeating a theory of the soul which has seen wide currency in earlier thinkers. As I noted earlier, even in Plato there is an oscillation between a concept of the soul as a simple unity and one of the soul as a manifold of drives. It is for this very reason that in *Republic* Plato recommends a strict education and training for the philosopher-kings precisely so that the rational element of their soul might gain mastery over the others, or to use his striking metaphor from the *Phaedrus,* so that it might become the charioteer of the soul.[25] Similarly, although Descartes holds to the notion of an unchanging pure thinking *cogito,* the unity of consciousness is in Kant a provisional one, brought about by a synthesising act of cognition. However, while there are certain similarities, it is important to not overstate them. For example, while Plato offers a clearly compartmentalised and neatly structured subject, the self in Nietzsche is much more haphazard and chaotic. Nietzsche's self is a collection of cognitive and physiological elements, to which the notion of unity is alien. Likewise, in contrast to Plato, Nietzsche rejects the ideal of reason governing the soul; indeed, the Platonic ideal is one more example of the ascetic drive, in which the energies of the self are directed against themselves. In any case, the carefully ordered structure of the Platonic subject is achieved at the price of denying the fluid and dynamic nature of the self, whose elements are arranging themselves in ever varying configurations. The self is not a permanent entity, not even a plural substance, but should be regarded instead as a dynamic *system,* the elements of which are brought together into various configurations, which themselves are

subject to constant change. In this respect Nietzsche's criticism of the metaphysical subject focuses on the way in which a particular configuration, centred around the suppression of affectivity, has become congealed, rather like the mummifying effect of philosophical logic.

Suggestive comparisons have been made between Nietzsche's approach to the question of the self and Wittgenstein's critique of notions of the 'essential' self or the 'substantial' self in his later writings.[26] Thinking, for Wittgenstein, is not a mental state which can somehow be separated from one's active relation towards objects and the world in general. As he notes, 'Of course we cannot separate his thinking from his activity. For the thinking is not an accompaniment of the work any more than of thoughtful speech.'[27] Consciousness is thus a complex web of interrelated emotional and cognitive dispositions to habitual ways of acting in the world. Indeed, Wittgenstein is perhaps more critical of the subject than even Nietzsche, for he dismisses talk of mental states as implying an underlying *substance* that undergoes various states.[28] He adopts a quasi-behaviourist stance in which ascriptions of conscious intention preceding acts are seen as symptoms of a reliance on the concept of cause and effect: 'When people talk about graphology, physiognomics and such-like they constantly say "clearly character must be expressed in handwriting *somehow* . . ." "Must": that means we are going to apply this picture come what may.'[29] This type of interpretation projected onto actions is reminiscent of Nietzsche's criticisms of the metaphysical morality of intentions, though Wittgenstein is more concerned with the grammar of psychological explanations than with their history. Nietzsche, in contrast, is interested *above all* in the value judgements implicit in such ascriptions of intention and in the fact that they have a history. As he notes, 'During the longest part of human history – so-called prehistoric times – the value or disvalue of an action was derived from its consequences. . . . In the last ten thousand years, however, one has reached the point . . . where it is no longer the consequences but the origin of an action that one allows to decide its value' (*BGE* §32).

For Wittgenstein, therefore, consciousness is not a static, a prior determined substance, but enmeshed in the actions performed, which

parallels Nietzsche's insistence on the artificial nature of the separation of agent from act. Naturally one cannot posit a direct link between Nietzsche and Wittgenstein, but one can see in their philosophies a shared project of formulating an alternative model of subjectivity to the Cartesian cogito, without resorting to the denial of any mode of consciousness whatsoever.[30] In contrast, the scepticism that denies subjectivity per se paradoxically reiterates the essentialist position. This is an acute problem in the anti-humanism of Derrida, Deleuze and Guattari or Foucault, who end up positing in the place of the Cartesian subject something which has the same characteristics.[31] This is apparent in the work of Foucault, whose initial anti-humanism turns out to be self-defeating since it requires what it seeks to deny, namely, a subjective medium of self-reflection. Similarly, while Derrida rejects any notion of a spontaneous ego, replacing it with a subject mediated by the writing of language, the concepts of *écriture* and *différance,* have almost the same characteristics of spontaneity as the autonomous subject he is critiquing. While the 'desiring-machine' of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* does not fall into exactly the same category, since it does not stress the linguistic mediation of the subject, it still falls prey to a naive naturalism.[32] For Deleuze and Guattari pure, spontaneous positive desire seems to present an *authentic* primeval state prior to any social or linguistic determination. Nietzsche's positing of selfhood as a given does not involve him in an inconsistency. He need not be regarded as covertly reinstating a metaphysical position. Admittedly, the self is only a given inasmuch as it has been constituted by the web of contingent relations produced by interpretative will to power. Hence it does not have any necessary essence which might be said to somehow exist independent of the interpretative process of which it is the result. Nevertheless this web of relations is our world, and the self is equally enmeshed within that web of relations and fulfils specific functions in that web. It is as real as is the interpretative fabric of the world, and this is the crux of the issue. Just as the function of 'knowledge' has been systematically misinterpreted, so too the self has been viewed through a distorting lens which, worst of all, has led to the imposition of an oppressive and self-negating model of subjectivity.

Reconstruction

Nietzsche views the subject as a confused multiplicity, lacking any a priori centre or any single regulating principle. This obviously raises important questions with regard to his call for the return to an authentic self. What does he mean, for example, when he gives *Ecce Homo* the subtitle 'How One Becomes What One Is'? How can one become oneself, given that there is no *essential* self to become, or to which one can return? Nietzsche's own response to the question hardly clarifies the issue. He comments that 'To become what one is, one must not have the slightest inkling of what one is . . . where *nosce te ipsum* would be the recipe for disaster, self-forgetting, self-misunderstanding . . . becomes Reason itself' (*EH* 'Why I Am So Clever' §9). Evidently becoming oneself cannot derive its force from the Delphic command to 'know thyself,' which Nietzsche here quotes in Latin. Becoming what one is consists in recognising the self as an activity and, ideally, as a process of constant self-overcoming. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* Nietzsche's answer to the nineteenth-century Bildungsroman, the goal is not self-knowledge in order to have an understanding of one's limits. The self-knowledge of Goethe's *Willhelm Meister* is replaced by the self-overcoming of Nietzsche's hero. 'Human being is something that must be overcome' is the prophetic cry of Zarathustra (*Z* I 'Of the Joys and Passions'), and with this we are brought back to the endless dialectic of interpretation.

The dialectic of the interpretative process must of necessity always be incomplete: it always harbours the possibility of its own self-overcoming, and hence there can always new interpretations and perspectives. The ideal 'objective' interpretation will therefore bring as many individual perspectives as possible into a configuration. Becoming what one is means precisely this: an interpretative understanding of oneself, whose one-sidedness is revealed at the moment of its articulation. Will to power motivating interpretation always desires more, always desires more complete interpretations, the revelation of greater possibilities. The interpretation of the self, the recognition of oneself as always already interpreting and interpreted, is not a discovering of one's limits; it is an expansion of those limits. Hence we are restored to the ideal which Nietzsche had already expounded in his genealogical

study of asceticism: it is the ideal of allowing as many of the affects to speak out as possible. In the case of the self, it is to give the affects their proper place in the society of the soul rather than deny their very existence, as in Descartes, or admit their existence but use oppressive violence against them, as in Plato or the Church Fathers. Nietzsche states, 'One is *fruitful* only at the cost of being rich in contradictions; one remains young only on condition the soul does not relax, does not long for peace. . . . Nothing has grown more alien to us than that desideratum of former times, "peace of mind," the *Christian* desideratum' (*TI* 'Morality as Anti-Nature' §3).

Interpretation is also mastery, however, and application of the process of interpretation to oneself is also self-mastery, though self-mastery of a quite different order from the self-subjugation of the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche envisages a control over the affects which nevertheless does not deprive them of their vitality. In the summer of 1888 he writes, 'Mastery over the passions, not a weakening or a rotting of them. The greater the will's power of mastery becomes, the more freedom can be given to the passions. The great human is great through the room for play of his desires: however he is strong enough to make these wild animals into pets' (*KSA* 13:16 [7]). The Übermensch, as the ideal self-interpreting, self-creating being, is an aristocracy of the affects: there is order without subjugation, a sense of purpose without the imposition of a restrictive goal. The affects must be orchestrated so as to maximise their potential, while will to power recognises the necessity of a permanent readiness to change their configuration. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche offers an account of his own ideal of self-creation which mirrors precisely the reading I have given when he writes, 'For the task of a revaluation of all values perhaps more capacities were necessary than have ever been together in one individual, above all contrary capacities too, without allowing them to disturb and destroy each other. Hierarchy among these capacities; distance; the art of separating without creating enmity; to mix nothing; to reconcile nothing; a monstrous multiplicity which is nevertheless the opposite of chaos; this was the precondition, the long secret work and artistry of my instinct' (*EH* 'Why I Am So Clever' §9). Once again in this passage one can see a reflection of the process of the interpretative dialectic; competing capaci-

ties must be brought into some kind of order, yet into an order which does not rob them of their particularity, much as in interpretation individual perspectives must be allowed to maximise the general range of perspectives, without necessarily tyrannising the others.

For all its *apparent* liberalism, Nietzsche's freeing of the subject from metaphysics has anything but a liberal ideal of the self in mind. This is stated most clearly in *Beyond Good and Evil,* where he maintains that 'Every enhancement of the type "man" has so far been the work of an aristocratic society. . . . Without that *pathos of distance* that grows out of the ingrained difference between strata . . . that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either – the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states . . . the continual "self-overcoming of man"' (*BGE* §257). This view is followed later by an exploration of the nature of aristocratic morality based on hardness – 'every aristocratic morality is intolerant' (*BGE* §262) – which is formed in antagonism to a hostile and resistant environment. When the latter has been overcome, Nietzsche argues, the need for hardness disappears, and there emerges mediocrity and decadence.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the aristocratic nature of self-overcoming becomes clear, too, in his many objections to 'modern man.' Although his writings have in the second half of this century been adopted largely by left-wing thinkers, his thought also displays an embarrassing political conservatism which is difficult to square with Foucauldian or Deleuzian politics of liberated desire.[33] *Twilight of the Idols* offers a clear expression of his contempt for the democratic egalitarian ideal. Liberal institutions, he notes, are a form of decadence as soon as they appear. Freedom is not something which should be guaranteed in order to produce an environment free of tension. The only freedom worth having is that attained through struggle, and the greater the resistance to be overcome, the greater the value of the freedom achieved. He writes, 'My concept of freedom. The value of a thing lies not in what one can achieve with it, but in what one has paid for it, – what it costs us. I shall give an example. Liberal institutions . . . undermine the will to power, they are the levelling of mountain and valley given moral legitimacy

. . . with them the herd animal always triumphs' (*TI* 'Skirmishes of an Untimely One' §38). Nietzsche's writing is littered with disparaging references to the 'herd,' to 'herd instinct.' Modernity, he argues, consists in the 'degeneration and diminution of the human into a perfect herd animal (or, as they like to say, into the perfect individual of the "free society")' (*BGE* §203).[34]

Nietzsche's aristocratic politics are of cardinal importance to his account of the Übermensch. As I have claimed above, allowing the affects to 'speak' does not imply an abandoning of oneself to the passions. There must also be an ordering of the passions, to promote the existence of the Übermensch, to increase its power. Otherwise a lack of direction results in so much wasted expenditure. This lack of restraint, this pure affirmativity had been seen early on by Nietzsche as one of the main weaknesses of modern culture. Already in 'Homer's Competition,' the fifth of his *Five Prefaces to Unwritten Books* presented to Cosima Wagner in 1872, he had compared and contrasted Greek culture with that of his own time. The central feature distinguishing the two was the lack of negation in modern culture. One can flesh out in concrete terms the meaning of this strikingly Hegelian sentiment as follows. The guiding force of all Greek culture, seen most clearly in the Homeric poems, was the agonistic desire to compete; Greek culture was founded on strife, competition, the aim to excel. The Greek word for virtue, 'arete,' had the sense of excellence, rather than the humility associated with Christian ideas of moral virtue. The scorn of Homer is reserved not for evil doers, but for Thersites, for being weak, for lacking the aristocratic status which would signify his supremacy over others, becoming also the object of ridicule. So too the performance of tragedies was not executed merely for its own sake, but as part of a competition in honour of Dionysus. Even the Platonic dialogues were written, according to Nietzsche, out of this desire to do better than the rest, to show Socrates arguing with greater eloquence than the Sophists and making them appear foolish, even if the ostensible aim of the dialectic was to gain knowledge by mutual consent. As Nietzsche says, 'From childhood onwards every Greek found in himself a burning desire to be a tool for the health of his own city in the battles between cities: therein was his ambition kindled, and therein was it reined in and restrained. Therefore

individuals were freer in Antiquity, because their goals were nearer and more palpable' (*KSA* 1, p. 790).

The Greek affirmation of life was thus possible only on the basis of a determinate negation. The Greek could not use his energies unless channelled into a specific purpose, which involved a denial of some possibilities of action and an affirmation of others. Yet modern culture, with its democratic and egalitarian ideals, has forgotten this fact and has engendered a sickly kind of human, one who desires everything indiscriminately, who is caught up by a debilitating vertigo in the face of the infinite and lapses into a paralysis of action. As Nietzsche states, 'like swift-footed Achilles in the similes of Zeno the Eleate, infinity restricts him, he doesn't even catch up with the tortoise' (ibid.).

This theme is followed through to the last years of his career, specifically in his ambivalent reading of Socrates. On the one hand, Socrates is seen as responsible for the inauguration of metaphysics and the dismantling of Greek aesthetic culture – 'I recognised Socrates and Plato as symptoms of decay' (*TI* 'The Problem of Socrates' §2) – and Socrates' espousal of dialectical inquiry was the revenge of a plebeian on an essentially aristocratic culture. On the other, Nietzsche also recognises that behind Socrates' critical impulse lies the same will to power that drove the agonistic culture of Greece: 'he discovered a new kind of *agon* . . . he was the first fencing-master in it for the aristocratic circles of Athens. . . . He fascinated because he touched on the agonal instinct of the Hellenes' (*TI* 'The Problem of Socrates' §8). Throughout his writings Nietzsche emphasises the necessity for resistance, negation and above all suffering in the production of the Übermensch. Humans suffer in the name of the production of higher culture and higher forms of life, and it is the precondition of the achievement of the Übermensch that the majority of mankind should suffer. In 'The Greek State,' the third of the *Five Prefaces,* Nietzsche justifies slavery in the ancient world as a necessity to ensure great men: 'The suffering of wretchedly living people must be increased in order to facilitate the production of an artistic world by a limited number of Olympian humans' (*KSA* 1, p. 767).

On the individual level too, the self cannot produce a wider horizon of self-interpreting and self-creation except by overcoming resistance, by suffering. In the *Twilight of the Idols* he remarks that 'Today the indi-

vidual can only be made possible by pruning,' adding that the root of modern decadence lies in the refusal to accept this need for discipline and restraint (*TI* 'Skirmishes of an Untimely One' §41). This picture is supplemented in *Beyond Good and Evil* in Nietzsche's declaration that 'Every morality is, as opposed to *laisser aller,* a bit of tyranny against nature, but this is in itself no objection' (*BGE* §188). The objection arises when, as in the case of asceticism, the tyranny against nature becomes unproductive. Modern culture is a case of this unproductive tyranny, since it seeks to deny, in a manner similar to the ascetic ideal of metaphysics, the dynamic flux of the self. The Cartesian subject is posited as a substance untainted by the dynamics of the external world. Plato's soul is immortal, and not only does one lead a just life to be sure of a healthy soul, but also with an eye to the possible judgement in the afterlife which Rhadamanthus might pass on one's actions. In the *Phaedo* Plato's Socrates sees the symmetrical harmony of the soul as an indication of its immortality, of its resistance to change and decay. Likewise modernity seeks rest from the ceaseless struggle and conflict which determines the self and which is the source of the energies for self-overcoming. In contrast, Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical rejection of the possibility of absolute knowledge, combined with his adoption of the dialectic of interpretation with its implicit goal of attaining the Absolute, means that there never can be a moment of satiety, of rest. Will to power will always be confronted by the possibility of more; indeed, life itself can never be fully exhausted, for it is always possible to produce more interpretations. In contrast, Nietzsche writes, for the modern human the 'most fundamental longing is for the war which he is to finally come to a stop; happiness is to him . . . pre-eminently the happiness of resting, of being undisturbed, of being sated, of unity achieved at last.' Nietzsche compares him to the higher type of individual, whose instinct to live is born of precisely the opposite drive, the drive to wage war, the refusal to be satisfied, the individual who has achieved self-mastery, but only the mastery of his drives in order to direct them towards dissolving his own being and resurrecting another: 'Thus arise those magical ungraspable and unfathomable ones, those enigmatic humans predestined to victory and seduction, whose most beautiful expression is Alcibiades and Caesar . . . amongst artists perhaps Leonardo

da Vinci' (*BGE* § 200). The greatness of mankind is not to be sought in the noble simplicity which Winckelmann thought he had found in the Greeks. Neither is it to be sought in the ascetic ideal of self-knowledge and self-denial. It is rather more to be found in 'his range and multiplicity, in his wholeness in the manifold' (*BGE* §212).

At the root of this critique of the metaphysical search for certitude is the constitutive lack I analysed above, and in Nietzsche's reading the desire for a redemptive fulfilment is founded on the need to make good that lack. Clearly the metaphysical subject of modernity remains caught up within an economy of lack, while the Übermensch uses this incompleteness as a source of creativity. The state of the Übermensch, as representative of the post-metaphysical subject, is always provisional and contingent. It consists of an openness to its constant potentiality for new interpretations of self and the world, a form of individual being which always awaits its own dissolution. As Nietzsche says, '*Losing oneself.* Once one has found oneself one must understand how from time to time to lose oneself. . . . For to the thinker it is disadvantageous to be tied to one person all the time' (*HAH* 'WS' §306).

In keeping with his aristocratic disdain for modernity, Nietzsche emphasises that the Übermensch is a solitary being. Greatness does not lie in the herd; democracy and utilitarianism, with their concern for the common weal, can only bring about a decline of human existence and a weakening of the instincts. Nietzsche writes, 'He shall be greatest who can be most solitary, most hidden, most deviant, the human being beyond good and evil, the master of his virtues, the one who is overrich in will' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §45). The Übermensch is consequently also seen as the antithesis of the 'average man,' whom modernity has promoted to the status of norm. In contrast to this averageness of modern culture, 'Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority – where he may forget "men who are the rule"' (*BGE* §26). One hesitates to name a figure embodying those values Nietzsche views as paradigmatic, but his comments on Goethe in *Twilight of the Idols* make clear the kind of person he envisages. Goethe has the naturalness of the Renaissance man, whereby he refers to that kind of person for whom existence is a constant challenge to grow. 'He enlisted the aid of history, natural sci-

ence, Antiquity, especially Spinoza, and above all practical activity,' notes Nietzsche. 'He didn't cut himself off from life, he plunged himself into it; he was not disheartened and took as much as possible on himself, over himself, into himself. What he wanted was wholeness; he fought against the separation of reason, sensibility, feeling, will . . . he disciplined himself for totality, he created himself' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §49). Goethe is the ideal future kind of individual, who keeps himself open to as many styles of understanding and being as possible, yet without lapsing into the modern hankering for absolute freedom, which as noted earlier leads to a paralysis of action; his is the 'wholeness in the manifold.' In contrast, the 'Freedom I don't mean' of modernity with its 'demand for independence, for free development, for *laisser aller,*' devoid of any restraint and self-discipline, 'is a symptom of décadence" (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §41).[35]

Nietzsche's notion of the Übermensch or free spirit is formulated in opposition to, indeed, is an inversion of, the account of the subject in Hegel. This is apparent in a number of ways. First, Nietzsche's insistence on the *noble* soul as a model of human self-overcoming stands in complete contradiction to Hegel's own model, in which it is the 'bondsman' that achieves true self-consciousness. Specifically, while in the struggle for recognition between selves it is the bondsman that loses and submits to the other, the master, while having ensured victory over the bondsman, remains caught within a reified understanding of his own identity, unaware of its dependence on recognition by the other. Nietzsche's critique of his model is evident, for example, in his playing off 'slave morality' against that of the masters. His essay in *On the Genealogy of Morals* on the origin of moral evaluations clearly pits one system of values against another, and his sympathy for the value system of the masters is all too apparent. Hence he expresses his dismay 'that we no longer have anything left to fear in man; that the maggot "man" is swarming in the foreground; that the "tame man," the hopelessly mediocre and insipid man has already learned to feel himself as the goal and zenith' (*OGM* I §11). Second, Hegel's tracing of the development of self-consciousness out of consciousness stresses its relational basis; although the master ultimately comes to delude himself about the basis of his identity, the *achievement* of self-consciousness is only carried out through the other. Against this Nietzsche returns repeatedly to the non-relationality of the Über-

mensch; the emphasis on solitude thus marks out not only a political position but also a deeper philosophical theory concerning the self. The free spirit, noble soul or Übermensch, to use Nietzsche's lexicon, is not dependent on others but rather is a self-creating being, bringing into specific and momentary configuration the chaos of elements.

On the question of the self Nietzsche thus seems at his most distant from Hegel and dialectical thinking. However, he should not be taken at face value. As I indicated earlier, the process of self-mastery is itself undertaken through a process of productive negation, in which the 'more' of will to power is a guiding norm. This can be seen in his talk of 'more comprehensive states' of the self (*BGE* §257). Second, though the thrust of Nietzsche's thinking is oriented around the idea of subjective autogenesis, the Übermensch is just as dependent on the slave as is Hegel's master. The Übermensch is constantly defined in opposition to the herd and to the average man of modern society, and it consequently gains its identity through negation of the other. The solitude of the Übermensch gains its significance as a contradiction of the social tyranny of modern culture; it thus bears the negative imprint of modernity. Nietzsche himself was aware of this relation in describing himself as modern while at the same time distancing himself from contemporary culture. Nietzsche's ambiguous relation to modernity mirrors his ambivalence towards Hegel and dialectical thought – both its fiercest critic and its secret exponent.

Nietzsche has been criticised for his inability to conceive of a completely open self, inasmuch as 'letting go of oneself,' allowing for that reversal of customary perspectives, is always undertaken in the name of self-interest.[36] Admittedly, Nietzsche shows marked scepticism towards all forms of altruism, and he seems to regard all human activity as bound to some form of interest. However, the view that Nietzsche's thought would be more accomplished if he had taken on board the Christian perspective (as manifest in the slave's comportment in his dialectic with the Master), apart from being somewhat bizarre, is also misplaced. Central to Nietzsche's project, as I have interpreted it, is the attempt to somehow reconcile radical scepticism with faith in normativity, contingency and chaos with necessity. If we refuse to do this, if we refuse to submit knowledge and self-knowledge to scrutiny, there is

a potential for catastrophe. However, the way to avoid descent into reactive nihilism is not an easy one, since it involves a substantial risk. It involves putting all 'customary' perspectives in question, rendering everything familiar unfamiliar. As Nietzsche says in the preface to *Ecce Homo,* 'Philosophy, as I have hitherto understood it is living freely in ice and high mountains – seeking everything strange and questionable in existence,' to which he adds, 'Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge follows from courage, from hardness towards oneself' (*EH* preface §3). It is a risky venture inasmuch as the human form of life is one that thrives on stability, on the ossification of perspectives. Yet if we try to imagine a self, or an interpretative practice in general, which is not motivated by interpretative will to power, the significance of self-overcoming, as an act which places everything on which we depend in jeopardy, is lost. For if nothing is at stake, if there are no vested interests at work, there is also no sense in which self-overcoming is an achievement. Letting oneself go in the name of will to power is not a form of egoism, but rather is all the more significant an action when set against the background of one's being as a finite, self-asserting, desiring being. The free spirits are precisely those beings that can live by overcoming the selfsame perspectives on which they depend.

Nietzsche is of course aware of the possibility of an absolute openness, and he saw it in Buddhism. Yet this type of openness cannot ever figure in his thought, for it is a consequence of passive or reactive nihilism. All forms of appearance are felt to be mere illusion, and hence their constitution becomes indifferent, since nothing is at stake. It is a way of thinking that can only lead to pure inactivity, something which Nietzsche abhors, not in the name of selfishness, but rather because that is an easy or weak response. After all, as Georges Bataille pointed out,[37] the bondsman in Hegel's dialectic is 'open' with a view to saving his own skin; he willingly submits to the rule of the master because it is an easier choice than risking all in a life or death struggle. For Nietzsche there can be no such easy option, since without accepting risk nothing is achieved. As Zarathustra says, 'Free to die, and free in death, a sacred sayer of no, when it is no longer time for saying yes: thus he is an expert at life and death' (*Z* I 'Of the Free Death').

3

Laughter and Sublimity

Reading *The Birth of Tragedy*

Nietzsche's critiques of metaphysics and of the metaphysical subject are intimately linked with the question of modernity and the concomitant emergence of nihilism. As I suggested earlier, Nietzsche's philosophical critique is undertaken with a view to what he predicted would be its catastrophic cultural consequences. However, his assault on metaphysics, together with the substitution of the notion of interpretation, constitutes only one aspect of the overcoming of modern culture. The second is the restitution of an aesthetic culture; it is art that constitutes interpretative activity above all, and it is the artist that embodies the characteristics Nietzsche projects onto the Übermensch. In this respect Nietzsche's emphasis on the necessity for aesthetic revolution throws up important parallels with Friedrich Schiller, towards whom he displayed some considerable ambivalence.[1] In *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* Schiller sees art as both reconstructing the divided and alienated subject of modernity and functioning as the medium through which modern man can express his freedom: 'it is only through beauty that man makes his way to freedom.'[2] Moreover Schiller also shares Nietzsche's disdain for the common mass: aesthetic revolution is the privilege of the few.[3]

While the importance of art in Nietzsche's work is universally recognised, attention tends to focus solely on *The Birth of Tragedy*. Being the only full-length treatment of art in Nietzsche's oeuvre, the text tends to dominate interpretations of the subject. It is a perfectly comprehensible state of affairs, inasmuch as his later writing on art remains in many respects quite scattered and unfocused. Admittedly, the first volume of *Human All Too Human* contains a section of some seventy-eight

aphorisms devoted to art and artists. This concentration, however, tends to be exceptional and is matched only by Nietzsche's later tracts against Wagner. Consequently, my aim will be to sift through his entire corpus in order to produce a picture of his later ideas on art and artists. *The Birth of Tragedy* represents an immature expression of a philosophy of art which is subsequently reformulated in many ways, yet which is guided by his recurrent concern with preserving both scepticism and a belief in normativity, 'the doctrine of lawfulness in becoming and of play in necessity' (*KSA* 1, p. 833). As such one might argue that Nietzsche's attempt to come to grips with the question of art is what gives shape to his wider criticism of metaphysics, for 'Only the aesthetic person sees the world thus, who has learnt from the artist and the work of art how the struggle of multiplicity can nevertheless carry within itself lawfulness and right . . . how necessity and play, conflict and harmony have to come together in the production of the work of art' (ibid., p. 831). Despite its immaturity, *The Birth of Tragedy* remains central to Nietzsche's oeuvre, alluding to and introducing themes recurrent throughout his thinking. In addition, despite the claims on behalf of his own originality, Nietzsche's philosophy of art has to be understood as emerging from the aesthetic tradition. Nietzsche's philosophy of art has often been seen as heavily informed by Schopenhauerian *Kulturpessimismus*.[4] This is difficult to square either with Nietzsche's emphatic rejection of cultural pessimism, or with Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, of which Schopenhauer's doctrine of the absolute reality of the will offers a good example; in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche already speaks of 'will' as a sign, a linguistic fiction, rather than a metaphysical reality. I have indicated parallels between the work of Nietzsche and Schiller, and I shall return to Schiller later. However, of equal importance in understanding the context of Nietzsche's aesthetics is Kant. Nietzsche's writing constitutes a perpetual impulse to elude the thought of Kant, whose presence repeatedly reinscribes itself within the Nietzschean corpus. Thus *The Birth of Tragedy* is informed profoundly by both Hegel and Kant. It is Hegelian in the dialectic of Apollo-Dionysus (and in Nietzsche's notion of the redundancy of art in modern culture), and it is Kantian in his use of the discourse of the sublime to narrate the function of the tragic.[5] This claim is in itself not particularly original – Nietzsche

himself recognised this – but it is frequently overlooked, supplanted by considerations of the abstraction of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, without taking into account the genealogy of the ideas at work in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his later writings on art.

In his essay 'Genesis and Genealogy' Paul de Man subjects Nietzsche's book to an exemplary deconstructive interpretation.[6] At its heart is the contradiction between the Apollo-Dionysus opposition and the rhetoric of *The Birth of Tragedy;* Nietzsche brings a 'negative valorisation' to the (Apollonian) category of representation, but at the same time claims to make present in Apollonian rhetoric the Dionysian wisdom that purportedly *exceeds* representation. The authority with which Nietzsche speaks about tragedy doesn't square with the thematics of the text in which textual representation is a form of illusion. It is a problem familiar from Plato; Plato attacks the arts for their inability to represent the truth *as such,* then relies on aesthetic devices such as dramatic dialogue and myth to present the 'truth' of his discourse.[7]

De Man's reading has been subject of a number of criticisms, to the effect that Nietzsche does not rely on a simple opposition of the real and the representation, or truth and illusion.[8] The Apollonian and the Dionysian are equi-primordial, neither derived from nor secondary to the other. Both are to be seen as forms of representation (Nietzsche uses the term '*Erscheinungsform*' or 'form of appearance'), a term which even de Man recognises Nietzsche had used in his unpublished writing of the same period. In a long fragment from spring 1871, Nietzsche repeatedly subverts the Schopenhauerian vocabulary of the Will in *The Birth of Tragedy* by stressing that the Will is itself an '*Erscheinungsform,*' or 'form of appearance,' and he regards it as 'the primordial form of appearance whereby all becoming is to be understood' (*KSA* 7:12 [1]).

Although such criticisms are timely and perceptive, the argument tends to get bogged down in the discussion of the Apollonian and the Dionysian *in abstracto,* rather than cashing out in concrete terms the precise significance of these two ill-defined terms. While they are central to *The Birth of Tragedy,* it is perhaps useful to sideline them temporarily in order to examine the function of the tragic in *The Birth of Tragedy.* The key issue would then be what Nietzsche means with his idea that tragedy provides metaphysical consolation through the mimesis of

human destruction. One can then examine the relation of the lofty abstractions of the Dionysian and the Apollonian with the concrete praxis of tragic drama. Consequently, it is necessary first to locate Nietzsche's book within the history of nineteenth-century philosophies of tragedy, in particular, those texts that map out the relation of the tragic to the sublime. In this respect it is significant that Nietzsche praises Schiller's understanding of the meaning of the tragic chorus, for Schiller plays a seminal role in making explicit the connection between the sublime, in particular the dynamic sublime of Kant's *Critique of Judgement,* and the affirmative pleasure derived from tragedy. This connection was later exploited by the romantics and Schopenhauer, and it also organises the conceptual framework of Nietzsche's treatise.

Sublimity

The concept of the sublime has a long history, beginning with Longinus's *On the Sublime,* the rediscovery of which led to a proliferation of works on the subject in eighteenth-century Britain. I do not intend to embark on a history of the sublime. That would require a separate study and in any case has been exhaustively discussed elsewhere.[9] However, its salient aspects are worth recalling briefly. In Longinus the sublime denotes that moment when the individual's affective and cognitive disposition towards the world are subjected to a sense of displacement. He writes, 'amazement and wonder exert invincible power and force and get the better of every hearer. . . . Sublimity . . . produced at the right moment, tears everything up like a whirlwind.'[10] I refer to this process as a 'displacement' because the terms which Longinus uses to describe the effect of the sublime, *ekstasis* (literally, 'standing outside oneself'), and the action of the 'whirlwind,' *diaphoreo* (lit. 'carry off'), both contain a sense of being physically displaced, a notion that was taken up by the eighteenth-century motif of sublime 'transport.'[11]

This description accords well with the eighteenth-century penchant for psychologising accounts of aesthetic taste and finds itself echoed in the work of, say, Edmund Burke, who writes that in the sublime 'the mind is so entirely filled with its object that it cannot entertain any other, nor by consequence reason on that object . . . it anticipates our rea-

sonings and hurries us on by an irresistible force.'[12] The sublime is not merely an irresistible power, it also presents an occasion when the subject has an overwhelming experience of its own nullity, when the mind is literally robbed of its own powers. Yet at the same time, this annihilation of the subject is accompanied by the paradoxical expansion of the mind. Burke writes that the mind will always assimilate 'some part of the dignity and importance of the things which it contemplates' (pp. 50–1), a process which leads to 'that glorifying and sense of inward greatness that always fills the reader of such passages in poets and orators as are sublime' (p. 51). Hence the concept of the sublime has a dialectical structure, whereby the subject is robbed of its autonomy yet finds itself expanded by the same experience. It is a simultaneous negation and affirmation of the subject, a feature incorporated into the German tradition from Kant onwards.

In Kant's account a crucial passage can be found in the 'Analytic of the Sublime' in the *Critique of Judgement,* in which he describes the feelings of pleasure and displeasure aroused by the sublime in nature. In particular, a key point is his discussion of the dynamic sublime. The experience of the dynamic sublime occurs when the individual is confronted by a natural object whose overwhelming power has the capacity for annihilating them: 'Hence the aesthetic judgement can only deem nature a might, and so dynamically sublime, in so far as it is looked upon as an object of fear.'[13] This is not to imply, however, that the individual is *actually* threatened by the object, for then they would be more concerned with self-preservation than with judging the sublimity of the object. Above all one must be able to 'look upon an object as fearful, and yet not be afraid of it' (§28). In other words, one must be able to imagine oneself in a state of fear, without actually being in fear of the natural object; that is, the sublime experience is connected with the *representation* of a fearful object rather than with the direct encounter with it. Strictly speaking, the sublime object could never be experienced *as such,* most especially since a crucial aspect to the logic of the sublime is the contradiction between the inability to apprehend it directly and the ability to form a concept of it.

Accompanying the individual's affective response to the sublime, their experience of physical helplessness, is the capacity to transcend

the sublime object, to lay aside existential concerns. Kant notes that 'we also found in our rational faculty another non-sensuous standard . . . in comparison with which everything in nature is small' (ibid.). It is a parallel to the mathematical sublime where a feeling of displeasure at the inability of the imagination to form an adequate intuition of a colossal object, for example the Milky Way, is accompanied by one of pleasure due to our capacity to form a 'logical estimation' of its overwhelming magnitude.[14] This disclosure of a capacity to transcend the concerns of physical being and exercise free will in the face of necessity points towards morality, and within the architectonic of Kant's system this is precisely the function that aesthetic judgement fulfils, namely, that of a bridge between cognition and moral action. Indeed, Kant himself is anxious to stress this connection in order to defend himself against the charge that since the danger is only imaginary the sublime is a matter of 'little seriousness,' and hence the relation between the sublime and morality needs a little more explanation. In the introduction to the *Critique of Judgement* Kant stresses that judgement mediates between the two otherwise heterogeneous spheres of morality and cognition, or practical and theoretical reason. In the latter, Kant notes, 'Concepts of nature contain the ground of all theoretical cognition a priori and rest . . . upon the legislative authority of understanding, whereas in the former the concept of freedom . . . rests upon that of reason' (p. 15). In the 'Analytic of the Sublime' he notes too that the Imagination, which in the aesthetic judgement engenders a pleasurable and harmonious interplay between the faculties of reason and understanding, achieves its effect partly through dependence on the physical conditions of the judging subject, but also partly in accordance with the ideas of reason, which exercises free will in the act of judgement. Hence although the aesthetic judgement is universal, demanding assent from others, it is at the same time *subjectively* universal. As an instrument of reason, aesthetic judgement cannot be reduced to an objectively determined set of rules. Now, while the beautiful may maintain this delicately maintained balance between the understanding and reason, with neither gaining the upper hand, in the judgement of the sublime, the balance tips firmly towards pure reason. No longer governed by the conceptually bound interests of sensuous existence, we can turn to the super-sensuous stan-

dards of pure reason. This standard is nothing other than the moral law, and judging sublimity discloses the subject as a moral being that can obey, moreover is obliged to obey, the moral law in the exercise of free will; Kant acknowledges that 'the intellectual and intrinsically final (moral) good, estimated aesthetically, instead of being represented as beautiful must rather be represented as sublime' (§29). Thus waging war, provided it is undertaken out of moral duty rather than self-interest, is also sublime; it reveals the capacity to disregard one's physical welfare in fulfilment of higher moral obligations. One notes that here Kant is explicitly drawing out the tension between the infinitude of humans as natural beings and the infinitude of the demands of the moral law.

Kant's account of aesthetic experience is highly ambiguous, despite the apparent clarity which the above exposition might suggest. Occupying a mediating position between the psychologising theories of taste of Hutcheson, Shaftesbury and Burke on the one hand, and the fully-blown philosophies of art of the German Romantics and Hegel on the other, it remains unclear whether Kant is describing subjective or objective phenomena. What initially seems to be a subjective psychology of aesthetic experience becomes compromised by his analysis of the properties of the *object* relevant to judgements of taste, an ambiguity which provokes the critical response of, amongst others, Schiller. Dissatisfied with the ambiguous status of the notion of subjective universality in the Kantian sublime, Schiller attempts to establish an *objective* ground for the experience of the sublime such that it can be reproduced at will. Indeed, it is tragic drama which in his eyes can engender a feeling of the sublime unmatched by nature itself, and the sublime changes, in the hands of Schiller, from a merely subjective experience to an objectively determinable feature of tragedy.[15] The disinterested self, that from a safe spectatorial distance passes an aesthetic judgement on the sublime, becomes, in Schiller, quite literally the spectator in a theatre.

I shall not discuss Schiller's better known works, such as the letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man,* but rather examine his shorter essays on the sublime and tragedy, including 'On the Sublime,' 'On the Basis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects' and 'On Tragic Art.'[16] In many respects Schiller offers little in these essays that deviates substantially

from Kant's position, but he does discuss the dynamic sublime more extensively than Kant and in terms which, although dressed up in the moral language of the Enlightenment, look forward to Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*. In Schiller's essays the sublime has become less an epistemological and moral problem than an existential challenge. At the beginning of 'On the Sublime' he outlines the human existential condition thus: 'This is the case of Man. Surrounded by innumerable powers which are all superior to him and which play a game of mastery over him, he demands, through his nature [i.e. as the one being that can exercise free will] to suffer at the hands of no force.'[17] Continuing further, Schiller notes that culture, whose goal should be to enable the exercise of free will, has devised two ways to escape this predicament. The first, which he terms 'physical culture,' is to achieve mastery over nature through science and learning. In the supreme act of will to power mankind seeks to redress the imbalance of forces by turning the forces of nature into 'tools of his own will.'[18] Yet as he notes, this strategy is a limited one, for there are limits to what science can achieve. Inevitably the forces of nature will 'evade human power, and subject him to their own.'[19] The alternative strategy which culture has devised, so-called moral culture, is to transcend altogether the natural world, to abrogate the physical aspect of human existence. This moral education, which discloses the moral, rational and super-sensuous self, can be enhanced by appeal to the aesthetic tendency within us whereby our true nature can be 'aroused by certain sensuous objects, and cultivated towards this Idealist change in disposition by purification of one's feelings.'[20]

Having established the pivotal role of sensuous objects, and Schiller later sees art as a supplement to nature in the task of moral education, he goes on rigorously to distinguish between 'merely' beautiful and sublime objects. Above all Schiller warns against becoming too attached to the sensuous form of the beautiful object. The feeling of freedom offered by the beautiful object is illusory; it provides pleasure because it harmonises nature with reason and hence tempts us to make the same mistake as the scientists in 'wanting to bring this arbitrary chaos of phenomena into the unity of cognition.'[21] Thus works of art are deceptive through luring us into too great an attachment to the world of sensuous form, where we become enslaved again by the overwhelming forces of

nature. Thus the task of moral education can be carried out only by the *sublime* work of art – what Schiller terms 'emotive' art – which, although a sensuous object, must efface itself as such, a work where 'reason and sensuousness are not in accord'[22] and which, as in Kant, discloses our super-sensuous nature by sensuous means. Schiller adds; 'The sublime therefore creates for us a way out of the sensuous world, a world where the beautiful would like to keep us forever prisoner . . . often a single sublime emotion suffices to tear apart this web of deception.'[23] Far from seeking to shelter us from the overwhelming power of the contingent, natural world, it confronts us with them; it is a mimesis of the destructive forces at large in the realm of the sensuous:

> Our salvation does not lie in ignorance of the dangers beleaguering us, for this ignorance must eventually cease, but only through acquaintance with them. We are helped to this acquaintance by the terrible, magnificent spectacle of change, which destroys everything, then creates it again, then destroys it all again . . . which history displays in adequate measure, and which tragic art mimetically brings before our eyes.[24]

This affirmative catharsis accompanying destruction also explains the peculiar attraction of fear and pain. Schiller notes in *On Tragic Art* that the degree of pleasure obtained from an affect seems to be in inverse proportion to the agreeableness of its content: 'Everyone presses around the narrator of a murder tale; we devour the most fantastic ghost story with ever greater enthusiasm the more our hair stands on end.'[25] Following Kant, Schiller sees this encounter with the sublime as a shattering event. The nullity of the subject's sensuous existence is revealed, causing a feeling of depression, together with the revelation of the subject's super-sensuous, literally super-natural self, a realisation which is the cause of elation, and hence we see preserved the dialectical structure of the sublime as inherited from, amongst others, Burke. Naturally that art form which elicits these two responses simultaneously par excellence is tragedy, for on the tragic stage is performed the annihilation of one or more human beings, only to bring us to a higher awareness of our nature. It is the poetic genre which, as Schiller writes in 'On the Basis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects,' manages to 'delight us through pain.'[26] As if to capitalise on this insight Schiller lists a

number of examples from tragedy where dramatic heroines and heroes achieve a moral sublimity in the face of overwhelming adversity in the physical, indeed, figures who in the most extreme cases display an active will to self-destruct in their refusal to submit to sensuous contingency.

In tracing the transition from Kant to Schiller there is a noticeable shift in emphasis. Although the basic structure of the sublime remains constant, there are certain differences which leave Schiller closer to Nietzsche, as will be apparent later. The most important difference between Schiller and Kant is that the former places the sublime firmly within the sphere of culture; the response to the tension between, on the one hand, the finitude of subjective sensibility, and the demand to be able to exercise free will, on the other, is now a cultural task. As such it falls to art to articulate and resolve this problem, but since art in general appeals to the aesthetic 'tendency' within humans, tempting the spectator to linger in the realm of the sensuous, only a specific art form, sublime tragedy, can fully accomplish this.

If Kant and Schiller were central in raising the discourse of the sublime above that of a mere doctrine of affectivity, Schopenhauer was equally important in emptying it of the Enlightenment moralising which still underpins those two earlier thinkers. Schopenhauer is doubly important in the interpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy,* for he occupies a pivotal position as mediator between Idealism and the Romantics on the one hand, and the young Nietzsche on the other. As I have indicated, the relation of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer is, to say the least, problematic, for even at the time of writing his book Nietzsche, for all his rhetoric, was moving away from the metaphysical realism of Schopenhauer's doctrine of the Will. It is indisputable that Schopenhauer informed Nietzsche's thinking on the question of art, but at the same time their two positions, even in *The Birth of Tragedy,* are diverging, as will become clear later.

For Schopenhauer aesthetic experience, and the sublime in particular, produces a state in which one achieves insight into the illusory nature of the phenomenal world dominated by the principle of sufficient reason or *principium individuationis* and the will-to-live. Aesthetic experience reveals the autonomous self for what it is: a self-objectification of

the Will and nothing besides, a mere nullity. As Schopenhauer says, 'the individual is only phenomenon, exists only for knowledge involved in the principle of sufficient reason.'[27] The dissolution of individuality that occurs in aesthetic contemplation, where one savours the prospect of one's own extinction, shows the fear of suffering and death too to be illusory, bound as they are to the notions of selfhood and self-interest. Fear of death is entirely irrational for Schopenhauer, since death is merely a reversion to one's true, subjectless, state.

The sublime in particular renders the turn to aesthetic, will-less, contemplation all the more shattering since one is literally forced to wrench oneself free of considerations of self-preservation and desire. Contrary to the sublime object in Kant, sublimity for Schopenhauer presents the beholder with a spectacle whose threat to his continued phenomenal, bodily existence is actual. Schopenhauer writes, 'with the sublime, that state of pure knowing is obtained first of all by a conscious and violent tearing away from the relations of the same object to the will which are recognised as unfavourable, by a free exaltation.'[28] This state of pure knowing can be obtained either by being confronted by a hostile spectacle as in Kant's dynamic sublime – and Schopenhauer gives the example of being marooned in a desert – or by an encounter with the absolutely great, or the mathematical sublime. As an illustration of this latter type of experience Schopenhauer offers the following: 'If we lose ourselves in contemplation of the infinite greatness of the universe in space and time . . . we feel ourselves reduced to nothing. . . . But against such a ghost of our own nothingness . . . there arises the immediate consciousness that all these worlds exist in our representation . . . our dependence on it is now annulled by its dependence on us.'[29]

In the same tradition as Schiller, Schopenhauer sees tragedy as the art form which best facilitates experience of the sublime and, like Schiller before him, characterises the essence of tragedy as the mimesis of human catastrophe, which in Schopenhauer's thought is an epiphenomenon of the Will itself in its blind, purposeless striving. In particular, Schopenhauer devotes one section of the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* to an extensive account of the function of poetry and

its place within his metaphysical system. Tragedy is 'the description of the terrible side of life. The unspeakable pain, the wretchedness and misery of mankind. . . . It is the antagonism of the Will with itself.'[30] At the same time the depth of suffering, the insidious wickedness which is the object of tragic mimesis, serves to tear away the veil of the Maya, to expose the deceptive truth of the *principium individuationis*. As Schopenhauer says, 'The motives that were previously so powerful now lose their force, and instead of them, the complete knowledge of the real nature of the world, acting as a quieter of the will, produces resignation, the giving up not merely of life, but of the will-to-live itself.'[31] For this reason too it is wrong, Schopenhauer notes, to demand poetic justice. To demand this would be to restrict oneself to the concerns of the phenomenal world, to assume that the individual soul of the tragic hero deserves justice. The wisdom of tragedy is to render such demands obsolete and absurd.[32]

In the first volume of *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer is keen to ridicule any notion of a self as substance; and hence the ultimate paradox of tragedy is that it should provide a consolation for us by offering the disintegration of our own egos in the form of a dramatic spectacle. In the second volume, there are indications that he tends towards a more idealist position, albeit without the moral imperative accompanying both Kant's and Schiller's notions of the self. For in the section on poetry in the later volume he remarks that 'precisely in this way we become aware that there is still left in us something different that we cannot possibly know positively, but only negatively, as that which does not will life'[33] (*WWR* II, p. 433). This is one isolated remark though, and one should beware of laying too much emphasis on it, for the general outline of Schopenhauer's position shifts further away from the original formulation of the sublime. Schopenhauer has now rejected the dialectical structure of the concept; whereas it had hitherto involved moments of negation and affirmation, sublimity in his thought no longer contains any affirmation of the subject. *The Birth of Tragedy* is an attempt to answer both the naive metaphysics of the tradition from Burke, Kant and Schiller as well as the nihilism of Schopenhauer, whose employment of the sublime in many respects turns it on its head.

The World as Aesthetic Phenomenon

In the previous section I mapped out the discourse of the sublime, laying special emphasis on the tragic as a privileged locus of understanding, where the usual categories of knowing are pushed to their limits then revealed for what they are, namely, schematic forms of representation. In Kant, Schiller and Schopenhauer this knowledge can be disclosed only when the sensory aspects of human existence are stretched to the limit, whether it be through mortal threat to our sensuous selves, or the inability of the imagination to provide an intuition adequate to a particular concept.[34] In all cases there is revealed an aspect to human being exceeding sensuous finitude, one transcending the boundaries of the phenomenal world. Simultaneously, this knowledge is seen by Schiller and Schopenhauer to offer a solution to certain existential dilemmas. For Schiller it is the problem of reconciling the free will with the limitations of human embodiment. For Schopenhauer it is the matter of coming to terms with the meaningless suffering at the root of all phenomenal existence. Assiduously avoiding the Christian impulse to give suffering a meaning, namely, as the atonement for original sin, he prefers the deeper insight that fear of suffering and pain is misplaced. Unlike the theodicy of Greek tragedy, Schopenhauer's sublime is what Peter Sloterdijk has referred to as an *algodicy;*[35] it is an attempt to come to terms with suffering *after* the death of God. The key to all these thinkers lies in the category of the sublime, a category which combines beautiful sensuous form with the recognition that this form is itself only a phenomenal representation, or objectification, of another underlying metaphysical reality. Having dealt with these earlier thinkers it is now time to turn to Nietzsche and set him in relation to these other theories.

If one follows even the most conservative account of Nietzsche's epistemological critique, of necessity the function of the sublime as described above will be somewhat modified. Talk of revealing the real essence of the world, of tearing asunder the veil of the Maya or of the disclosure of the immortal super-sensuous self can have no place within *The Birth of Tragedy.* Although this work is still permeated, as Nietzsche later admits, with the vocabulary of Schopenhauer and 'reeks offensive-

ly Hegelian' (*EH* 'BT' §1), it has to be discussed against the background of the approximately contemporary essay 'On Truth and Lie in their Extra-moral Sense,' with which I began my analysis of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics. Additionally it has to be related to those writings of the early 1870s that indicate the extent to which Nietzsche has already distanced himself from the metaphysics of Schopenhauer.

As I have argued before, even in Nietzsche's earliest work there is a refusal to accept any metaphysical notions of essence or any distinctions between essence and appearance, essentia and existenia. Individuals inhabit a world of representations, ensnared in a semiotic universe, and herein lies the paradox of trying to understand a universe that is recognised as having no intrinsic meaningfulness. The closest one can come to understanding the 'indecipherable' reality is to see it as a goalless, insatiable, self-consuming Will along the lines of Schopenhauer. Yet even to declare that the world and its suffering are meaningless is in itself to make a meaningful statement. Notions of meaninglessness are already tied to a particular set of meanings, to a specific conceptual history, enmeshed within a certain configuration of values. In Schopenhauer's case it is as the negation of the Christian and Hegelian notions of a purposeful universe. This realisation is apparent in *The Birth of Tragedy* too when the 'truth' of existence cannot be conveyed directly but has to be mediated in the form of a myth, that of King Midas's encounter with Silenus. Indeed, the most powerful way of expressing this lack of meaning in the world which Nietzsche uses is not to attempt to name it at all but instead to describe the feeling of nausea which results once one has seen the absence of metaphysical meaning. He writes, 'In this sense the Dionysian person is similar to Hamlet: both have once cast a true glance into the nature of things, they have gained knowledge, and it nauseates them to undertake any action, for their action can change nothing in the eternal nature of things, they find it laughable or ignominious' (*BT* §7).

It is clear that within the framework already apparent in the early Nietzsche's thought, the sublime is no longer simply a means of overcoming the limitation of human embodiment through the disclosure of the metaphysical super-sensuous truth underlying all phenomenal existence. As I shall demonstrate shortly, the function of the sublime in Nietzsche is to dispel the aura of representation. However, it provides

metaphysical consolation not so much by revealing some metaphysical 'truth' but by exhorting the spectator to active nihilism. I have already suggested that Nietzsche does not criticise the conceptual apparatus of metaphysical thinking merely to score philosophical points, but out of a desire to go beyond the reactive nihilism he sees as a necessary consequence of metaphysics. It is a concern with cultural and spiritual health, and hence too his paradoxical use of Christian and medical imagery to describe both societies and moral codes. Consequently, in *The Birth of Tragedy* it is not merely a matter of types of representation, but rather of choosing the appropriate response to the challenge tragedy presents to its spectators. First of all, therefore, one must consider Nietzsche's statement that 'only as an aesthetic phenomenon can existence and the world eternally be justified' (*BT* §5).

There are two, by no means necessarily mutually exclusive, ways of interpreting this phrase. The first, looking forward to Nietzsche's later insistence on the fictional status of logic and scientific knowledge, assumes that for Nietzsche individual and societal existence can be rendered endurable only if we remember that the world we inhabit is a fiction. Hence, according to this interpretation, the point of Nietzsche's assertion would be to indicate that one need not feel oppressed by the straitjacket of Christian and bourgeois morality; they are manufactured values, to be replaced by other, more self-critical and hence healthier ones. This reading thus looks forward to Nietzsche's account of nihilism; the crisis of nihilism, where the world is devoid of intrinsic meaning and hence in need of justification, is averted by affirmation of the possibility of inventing a better world.

Alternatively there is the more usual interpretation, namely, that it is only through aesthetic representations that the world and human life can be redeemed. In this reading Nietzsche is close to Schiller. The passage immediately preceding the one under discussion supports such a reading, for Nietzsche writes, 'we may well assume of ourselves that . . . we have our highest worth in works of art – for only as an aesthetic phenomenon can existence and the world eternally be justified' (ibid.). Nietzsche's inclusion of the words 'higher worth' in this passage points towards that dialectic of negation and affirmation characteristic of earlier accounts of the sublime we have seen. For thus the work of art

would be thought of as offering a perspective on the world and the human existential condition which discloses a capacity within individuals to relate to their representations in a manner free of the ideology of metaphysics. According to this interpretation – and Nietzsche's mention of *works* of art in the plural might not be insignificant – it is a more low-level aesthetic concern. As in the cases of Schiller and Schopenhauer, Nietzsche seems to be awarding a special status to tragic works of art, as aesthetic objects that provide an insight inaccessible to the scientific worldview and a temporary release from the nausea of quotidian life.

So far I have only tentatively suggested that one move in this direction, yet a further examination reveals passages which are much more explicit and allow us to feel quite entitled to link Nietzsche's book with the theory of the sublime. In particular, section seven, which deals with the function of the tragic chorus, quite openly speaks of the sublime in Greek tragedy, the relevant section being worth quoting in its entirety: 'Here, in this highest danger of the will, there approaches, as a redeeming, healing enchantress, art; it alone can turn those nauseous thoughts about the horror and the absurdity of existence into representations with which one can live: these are the sublime, as the artistic harnessing of the horrific, and the comic, as the artistic breaking of the nausea of the absurd'. As if this were insufficient evidence Nietzsche notes earlier in the same section that tragedy provides the one true 'metaphysical consolation . . . that at the bottom of things life, despite all apparent change, is indestructibly powerful and joyful' (*BT* §7). These motifs will reappear in due course. However, having dealt with preliminary aspects of this interpretation, it is appropriate to go into greater detail.

Contrary to de Man, one can argue that the basic assumption underpinning *The Birth of Tragedy* and the logic of the Apollonian and Dionysian opposition is the acceptance that the world, being, existence, reality, truth, whichever term one chooses, can never appear *as such*. Since truth is a function of grammar, knowledge is of a world always already made intelligible.[36] At the heart of this position are a number of concerns which preoccupied the young Nietzsche in response to Schopenhauer. Chief amongst these is the problem of finding value in a world regarded as denuded of intrinsic meaning, as a site of unmitigat-

ed suffering. The Schopenhauerian response to these questions is characterised by an attitude of resignation. That of Nietzsche is quite the opposite, for his rejection of Schopenhauer's reactive nihilism is undertaken in the name of a will to live (which will later be superseded by will to power), and in *The Birth of Tragedy* he is exploring forms of representation that pass beyond the Schopenhauerian passivity he will later condemn so definitively.

The first way to further the will to live is to create a world of beauty, from which the nausea of life, the fear of meaninglessness, is banished. I am speaking of course of the Apollonian artistic impulse, which echoes Schiller's remarks noted above concerning 'physical culture.' This is the world of forms which seduce with their beauty, becoming themselves objects of desire, such as to elicit the response 'It is a dream! I want to dream further!' (*BT* §1). In a later portion of the text which, ironically, borrows heavily from Schopenhauer's aesthetic theory Nietzsche sums up the aim of the Apollonian thus: 'here Apollo conquers the suffering of the individual through the illuminating glorification of eternal appearance, here beauty gains victory over the suffering which permeates life' (*BT* §16). Drawing on Schopenhauer's equation of beauty with knowledge of the timeless Platonic Idea,[37] Nietzsche observes how Apollonian representation, manifest primarily in myth, strives towards a denial of the temporal, a denial which, he claims, facilitates political life. For once a people has failed to understand itself in terms of timeless myth, it undergoes a crisis of self-estimation, a condition which prepares the ground for the advent of nihilism. He writes, 'A people is only worthy, as is also a person, for as long as it can impress upon its experiences the mark of the eternal . . . and displays its unconscious conviction of the relativity of time' (*BT* §23). As Nietzsche notes, the beautiful finds itself symbolised by Apollo, the etymology of whose name can be traced back to notions of appearing and shining. This is the world of forms which supplement the contingent, fragmentary and arbitrary processes which rule everyday life. As Nietzsche says, 'The higher truth, the perfection of these states of affairs in contrast to the sketchy intelligibility of daily reality . . . is the analogue both of the capacity for affirmation and of the arts in general, whereby life is made possible and worth living' (*BT* §1). Hence the Apollonian form (and the beautiful

work of art is a mimesis of this natural impulse) supplements the essential lack or negativity at the base of existence, a lack which Schopenhauer had defined as the blind desire of the Will but which Nietzsche refuses to name *as such*. In addition, one can see foreshadowed Nietzsche's comments in *On the Genealogy of Morals* on the constitutive lack of subjectivity itself. The Apollonian makes good both the objective lack of determinacy of 'reality' and also the lack constituting modern subjectivity.

Having established these basic elements of the Apollonian drive, Nietzsche then goes on to flesh out in concrete terms how this manifests itself in the world of the Greeks. Both in its poetic form and in its mythological content Greek culture succeeded in banishing the nauseous from its cultural consciousness, instead hiding it under the mask of the Olympian pantheon and the Homeric epic. Indeed, one can conduct an archaeology of Greek mythology and see the sedimentation of different layers of Greek consciousness. For Nietzsche claims that the mythic victory of the 'light' Olympian gods over the Titans mirrors the actual historical censorship exercised by the Greeks on themselves: 'In order to live, the Greeks had to create these gods, out of the direst need . . . the joyful Olympian divine order was developed gradually from the original, titanic divine order of terror by that Apollonian impulse to beauty' (*BT* §3). One can also see a reflection of this same drive to transfiguration in the Homeric poems. What Rousseau had seen as a 'natural' and authentic harmony of humans with their environment, the nostalgia for which Schiller had termed 'naive,' turns out to be the final victory of Apollonian illusion.[38] Consciously echoing Schiller, Nietzsche writes, 'When we encounter the "naive" in art we have to recognise in it the highest effect of Apollonian culture' (ibid.). The apparent artlessness of the Homeric poems is produced by the ability of the epic to hide its own illusory nature. The simulacrum of the epic poem has displaced the 'Real,' and in its transfigurative function has become the desired object, desired because of its ability to make good the primordial lack. Nietzsche says of the Greeks that 'in order to idealise themselves, they had to see their reflection in a higher sphere. . . . This is the sphere of beauty, where they saw their reflected images, the Olympians. With this reflection of beauty the Hellenic "Will" fought

against the artistically correlative talent for suffering' (ibid.). Hence the world of the Greeks is lifted up, in Homer, out of its condition of everyday anxiety and suffering into the timeless, eternally laughing world of the Olympians. This self-effacement of the art work, which naturalises what is an illusory product of art, is to be found repeated in the ideology of the pastoral, which Nietzsche notes to be an essential element in modern culture. It is an image of nature which refuses to acknowledge its own imaginary status, but rather claims to disclose the 'natural,' unaffected by the trappings of civilisation. Nietzsche notes, 'That idyllic shepherd of modern man is merely a portrait of the sum of educational illusions which count for him as nature' (ibid.).

In all his remarks concerning the beautiful and the Apollonian, and in his critique of the pastoral ideology of modernity, Nietzsche is consciously echoing the ideas of Schiller. While it is misleading to equate Nietzsche's duality of Apollo and Dionysus with Schiller's distinction between the naive and the sentimental, it is undoubtedly the case that Schiller's opposition informs Nietzsche's thinking.[39] Schiller had noted the danger of lingering too long on *beautiful* representations, since they encourage an excessive dependence on sensuous form. The goal of aesthetic education was to employ representations in order to go *beyond* them, in order that a higher truth about human existence might be disclosed. In Nietzsche too, although notions of the super-sensuous have no place in the narrative of *The Birth of Tragedy,* the rule of the Apollonian, although a necessary fiction, is a dangerous one when given free reign. The result is the potentially dangerous exclamation, 'It is a dream, I want to dream more.' It represents only one side of the dialectic. Its attempts to censor the ineffable, no matter how rigorous, will eventually fail, and hence the other, Dionysian, drive will demand to be represented.

Within *The Birth of Tragedy* there is a double negation of the Dionysian as part of the dialectic that creates Greek culture. The first negation, both logically and historically, is what Sloterdijk has referred to as 'Doric precensorship.'[40] This throws up again the problem of articulating the inarticulable. Prior to the entry of the Dionysian into Greek culture, it is already engaged in a dialectic with the Apollonian, a process that takes place *before* the second sublation of the Dionysian and the Apollonian in tragedy itself.

The Dionysian, as preserved in the myths of the arrival of Dionysus in Greece from the East, originates from beyond the sphere of Greek culture, though Nietzsche is not interested in the facts concerning the historical origins of the cult of Dionysus. For Greek culture in *The Birth of Tragedy* stands as a cipher for human culture in general, just as the Orient serves to symbolise the pre-cultural, by which is to be understood that stage of human existence prior to the capacity for the production of discursive meaning in the world, and hence prior to the establishment of any specific regime of truth. This polarity of culture and the pre-cultural becomes clear through the terms Nietzsche uses to describe the Dionysian rites of Babylon, which represent a 'regression of human to tiger or ape.' So too when he first introduces the Dionysian, Nietzsche stresses the fact that it transgresses the boundaries between human and animal. He notes that 'The chariot of Dionysus is covered in flowers and garlands: the panther and the tiger stride under his yoke . . . all the stiff . . . distinctions fall apart' (*BT* §2). This condition which Nietzsche is attempting to symbolise thus obtains prior to the birth of culture.

In its dissolution of all the barriers set up by culture, this pre-Hellenic Dionysian state is what Nietzsche will later describe as 'becoming' or 'life.' Strictly speaking one should not even call it the Dionysian, for the metaphor of the 'Dionysian' which Nietzsche uses indicates that it has *already* been inserted into the symbolic order. In order to speak of the Dionysian, Doric pre-censorship has already taken place. There is always already representation, humans are always captives in a symbolic universe, and further, the Dionysian, as a metaphor for 'reality,' is always secondary. In mythological terms, the father of Dionysus is none other than Zeus, the head of the Olympian pantheon, and hence of the whole Apollonian order. The sense of nausea the existential predicament produces, and which the slick world of Apollonian forms and values endeavours to hide, is the result of a particular way of imagining the human condition. As Nietzsche develops his thoughts about art, knowledge and morality, we see that this nausea need never have existed – not because it can be hidden by some reassuring illusion, but because it is itself a response to a prior illusory representation, namely, that an absence of stability in the world should make it an ob-

ject of anxiety. Leaving behind the heritage of Schopenhauerian *Kulturpessimismus,* art will later become a much more affirmative activity.

The arrival of the 'Dionysian,' with its concomitant Doric precensorship, is important for another reason too. To understand why and how we must look at the passage where Nietzsche describes this Dorian response to the Oriental intruder. He writes,

> For a while they were completely secure and protected from the feverish stirrings of those (i.e. Dionysian) festivals . . . by . . . the figure of Apollo, who could hold out Medusa's head towards no more dangerous power than this grotesque and barbaric Dionysian force. It is in Doric art that the Apollonian majestic posture of refusal has immortalised itself. Yet this resistance became questionable, even impossible once similar impulses grew out of the deepest roots of Hellenic culture: now the power of the Delphic god was restricted to depriving this mighty opponent of his destructive weapons by an act of reconciliation, concluded at the right time. This reconciliation is the most important moment in the history of this Greek cult. (*BT* §2)

The crucial event in this semi-mythic, semi-historical narrative is the failure of the Apollonian impulse of Doric art to suppress the Dionysian drive completely. The relation between the two alters from one where the Dionysian is excluded, to a new relation of compromise; Dionysus has been awarded his place on Olympus.

Underneath this mythology Nietzsche is making claims regarding the limitations of the Apollonian analogous to those of Schiller concerning the beautiful. We recall that for Schiller the danger was of becoming too absorbed in the beautiful, and hence too dependent on the sensuous, material world. If this occurs, one remains trapped in the world of the contingent, the demand to be able to exercise free will remains unfulfilled. Thus when confronted with the fact of human sensuous finitude, even the beautiful form or work of art will eventually fail to provide metaphysical consolation. So too the purely Apollonian representation, although it endeavours to create a world of illusory forms which banish any existential anxiety, will always fail in its task. As makers of meaning, humans will always come up against that limit, where the fragility of meaning is revealed, where its shaky foundations will finally give way. At this point the Apollonian must effect a compromise with the

Dionysian recognition of the meaninglessness of the universe. Nietzsche writes of the Apollonian Greek, 'his whole existence full of beauty and proportion rested on a hidden underground of suffering and the knowledge which was uncovered by the Dionysian. And look! Apollo could not survive without Dionysus!' (*BT* §4).

At this stage of the argument the weaknesses of Nietzsche's own prose also become evident, in particular with regard to the sheer burden of meaning that Nietzsche imposes on his text. It attempts to be both mythological and historical, both philological and philosophical. Above all there is an extraordinary seepage of meaning from the terms Apollonian and Dionysian. We have now concluded that the Apollonian, despite its seductive illusions, will be revealed for what it is, mere representation. Thereupon it must enter into a compromise with the deeper wisdom of the Dionysian. Yet as I have suggested, the Dionysian can become an object of consciousness only as an Apollonian representation. This too is narrated by the story of the Doric pre-censorship. In spite of the difficulties Nietzsche creates for the interpreter it is still possible to accommodate these two apparently contradictory statements.

The term 'Apollonian' has two meanings. The first refers to the impulse to construct meaning. The Apollonian is the possibility of forming representations of the world. (I leave the nature of these representations deliberately indistinct, for although Nietzsche is most obviously implying works of art, the term could also include mental representations.) The second meaning of Apollonian implies a specific *kind* of representation, namely, one which attempts a false naturalisation of the human representing activity. It is a representation that refuses to acknowledge its status as such, instead masquerading as reality. Hence it can be seen as a *mis*-representation, and the Apollonian could be seen as a metaphor for ideological practice.

If we turn to the Dionysian, then under the first meaning of the Apollonian, it too is an Apollonian representation. As I noted earlier, one would have to conclude that the Apollonian must in some sense be considered to be prior to the Dionysian. However, the Dionysian also refers to a *type* of representation, and it is in considering how this type of representation differs from the Apollonian that it can be related to theories of the sublime. To understand how Dionysian representation

differs from Apollonian, one must examine its function within Greek lyric and the dithyramb.

Within the history of Greek literature, the birth of lyric poetry in the figure of Archilochus is always regarded as an extraordinary event. For the first time there is an authorial voice that proclaims itself as such. Additionally, in the surviving fragments of Archilochus there appear to be elements of his own biography.[41] One need only compare him with Homer, whose poems begin with an invocation to the muse or the goddess to tell or sing the story to realise the difference. In the Homeric poems the poet enacts a self-effacement by relegating himself to the status of a mouthpiece of the narrating divinity, and the authorial voice retreats into the background of the narrative, in a second self-effacing gesture. Nietzsche, however, influenced by Schopenhauer, whom he quotes at length, imagines something more complex to be at work. Far from presenting the fortified ego, the *principium individuationis,* for the first time in literary history through the strident subjectivity of the author, Archilochus is doing precisely the opposite. In portraying the lyric voice as full of contradictions, paradoxes and conflicting desires, in short as a collection of heterogeneous elements, Archilochus is undercutting the individuated authorial voice. As Nietzsche says, 'The "I" of the lyric poet thus resounds from the abyss of being: his "subjectivity," in the sense of the more recent aestheticians, is a delusion' (*BT* §5). In other words Archilochus is using a representation of a strong authorial individual voice, at the same time undermining the authority of that representation. One need not go as far as assuming that he is denying any notion of subjectivity per se, but rather, as I have suggested in my second chapter, of the strong, neatly individuated rational subject. Nietzsche adds, 'In truth Archilochus, the man who is passionately fired by love and hate is merely a vision of genius, who is no longer Archilochus, but world genius, who expresses his primordial pain symbolically through the allegory of Archilochus the person' (ibid.).

In examining subjectivity in lyric, I am not interested in subjectivity per se, but rather in the importance it has for defining the Dionysian representation. Following Nietzsche's account we can see that the lyric poet sets up a representation vested with authority (after all, who could be more authoritative about Archilochus's desires than Archilochus the

poet?), only then to reveal this representation to be just a representation, full of flaws and weaknesses. Thus the Dionysian representation seems to be performing a reflexive act, undermining its own status. We can see, too, with regard to subjectivity how it is that Homer's poems are firmly entrenched within the realm of the Apollonian. For although the authorial voice effaces itself in the act of narrating, this is a deceptive, and superficial, difference. More importantly within the poems, no representation is ever shown to be inadequate to its object. In particular the poems are dominated by unified, fortified egos, which survive unchanged after death. In the *Odyssey* Odysseus visits the underworld and encounters a number of figures who were living in the *Iliad,* and who are exactly the same, bar their lamentable circumstance. The souls of Agamemnon and Achilles are perfectly lucid and rational, and it is this which provides their pathos.

Following this interpretation one can see clearly the difference between Apollonian and Dionysian representation: the Apollonian refuses to renounce its claim to be a surrogate reality, whereas the Dionysian representation performs the reverse operation, foregrounding its own status as representation. The sublime origin of the Dionysian is clear. For Kant and Schiller, though not Schopenhauer, the sublime is the experience engendered by an aesthetic object that reveals the inadequacy of sensuous representation, but also discloses a higher, super-sensuous truth of the self. For Nietzsche, such humanist talk of the moral higher super-sensuous self is anomalous, yet the function of the Dionysian is similarly aimed at revealing the limitations of representation. Given Nietzsche's critique of Schopenhauer's metaphysics, there can be no direct comparison of the representation and the true metaphysical 'essence' of the world. At best it can be done purely negatively, as in the lyric of Archilochus, by disclosing the paradoxes and self-contradictions at work within the object.[42]

Having thus suggested a way of differentiating the Apollonian and the Dionysian, one must go further and examine how these two forms of representing occur in tragedy, and how it is that tragedy can become an affirmative art, given the stress hitherto on the purely negative aspects of Nietzsche's sublime. Nietzsche begins his discussion of tragedy proper with an analysis of its historic origin, in the main following Aristo-

tle's genealogy, which traces it back to the dithyramb, a primitive narrative verse form. This retrieval of the satyric chorus represents a return to the strictly *Dionysian* origins of drama, where the satyr acts as the counterpart of the Apollonian pastoral shepherd. I note 'Dionysian,' because the satyr shows all the illusions of culture for what they are; his is a primitive critique of ideology. As Nietzsche says, 'The satyr was something sublime and divine . . . here the illusion of culture was wiped away from the archetypal idea of humanity.' Inasmuch as the satyr caused the ideologically permeated image of humanity to 'shrink into a mendacious caricature' (*BT* §8), the Dionysian satyr was more truthful, because less deceiving and self-deluding. Yet this alone did not constitute tragic drama, for this would place tragedy on the same level as lyric, as a product of the first entry of Dionysus into Apollonian representation. What occurs in tragedy is a second sublation of Apollo and Dionysus, but this time not Apollo in the sense of the capacity to render the world meaningful through representations per se, but in its second sense, namely, as the drive to wilfully hide the world through beautiful forms.

Formally, the synthesis occurs with the introduction of action into the dithyramb, whereupon it becomes drama for the first time. Nietzsche envisages that the drama occurred when Dionysus appeared on stage rather than being the absent referent of the dithyrambic narrative. This moment represents the first element of the dialectic, for Dionysus now speaks in the language of Apollo: Nietzsche notes 'as an epic hero, almost in the language of Homer' (ibid.). Keeping in line with the philological tradition, Nietzsche observes that originally tragedy was exclusively concerned with the sufferings of Dionysus – hence its restriction to the celebrations and festivals in his honour – but adds that while in the extant tragedies the concerns seem to be with other mythical figures such as Heracles, the house of the Atreids, Medea and others, it is certain 'that all the famous figures of the Greek stage, Prometheus, Oedipus etc., are merely masks of that original hero Dionysus' (*BT* §10). In other words they are all expressions of the same wisdom, namely, that beneath Apollonian illusion there is another wisdom that recognises the displeasure engendered by acknowledgement of the lack of intrinsic value and meaning in the world.

This conclusion raises again the problematics I noted earlier, namely, the problem of reconciling both belief in meaning and also a radical scepticism. This is dramatically presented in *Oedipus Tyrannos* and *Antigone,* as well as in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound,* where the eponymous hero's gift of fire to humans is met with harsh punishment for transgressing a law that is repeatedly condemned for its arbitrariness. In such a case the conclusion is reached that 'Everything present at hand is just and unjust and in both cases equally justified' (ibid.). However, although the deceptive and self-satisfied Apollonian wisdom of Oedipus has been shown to be flawed, indeed with disastrous consequences, this is not a sufficient response. To remain with the purely sceptical moment of tragedy leads to the risk of descent into passive nihilism, a prospect which Nietzsche viewed with horror. The negation that is central to tragedy is thus combined with an affirmative aspect. Nietzsche introduces this idea in his discussion of Oedipus,

> who is destined to error and misery in spite of his wisdom, but who through his monstrous suffering finally exercises a magical beneficent force, which remains potent after his departure. The noble person does not sin, the profound poet intends to say: through his action every law, every natural order, indeed the moral world may well go to ground, yet precisely by virtue of this action a higher magical circle of effects is drawn, which found a new world on the ruins of the old one which has been toppled.
>
> (*BT* §9)

Later in the same section, when discussing Sophocles' play *Oedipus at Colonus,* which depicts the old Oedipus shortly before his death, Nietzsche informs us that 'the hero performed his highest activity in his purely passive behaviour' (ibid.). Here, if anywhere, Nietzsche comes closest to the language of more traditional theories of the sublime in tragedy. Although Oedipus is annihilated by forces beyond human comprehension, his fate is nevertheless not an ignoble one. Through his passivity, through his willing acceptance of his fate he exudes an aura and provides the impetus for others to reconstruct the world which has been torn apart by the events on stage. Like the Schillerian tragic hero, Oedipus refuses to be daunted by the coming calamity, but instead continues questioning about his own past, in an attempt to save the city he

rules. In *Antigone* one notes an actual will to self-destruction; Antigone refuses all the opportunities to save her life, and instead defiantly steers the same course into oblivion. So too Prometheus steals the gift of fire fully aware that he will be punished by the gods, thanks to his capacity for foreknowledge.

Although his thought emerges against the background of Idealist theories of the sublime, Nietzsche qualifies them in that he sees in all these examples instances of a capacity to affirm existence, rather than, say, disclosure of an immortal soul that will survive physical negation. Although Nietzsche had not yet arrived at this vocabulary, the tragic hero is an active, or 'accomplished,' nihilist, who actively confronts a world evacuated of metaphysical meaning. Echoing Schiller, there is in Nietzsche the notion that life can only be rendered bearable, indeed affirmed, when confronting its most nauseating aspects. Schiller had emphasised the responsibility of moral culture to present a mimesis of nature at its worst in order to achieve genuine moral enlightenment. So too in *The Birth of Tragedy* the annihilation of the tragic hero is a necessary process. By actually willing his or her downfall, the tragic hero can make light of the human existential predicament, in an act of sublime mockery of all that threatens to disrupt human life. For this reason too, though it remains undeclared, Nietzsche associates the sublime with the comic.

Unlike Schopenhauer, who discourages laughter as a foolish affirmation of the will to live, Nietzsche sees the comic as a companion of the sublime, in its refusal to submit to the nausea of existence. Later in the text Nietzsche concludes on the same note that 'Dionysian art too intends to convince us of the eternal joy of existence: only we are to seek it not in appearances, but behind them' (*BT* §17), also repeating Schiller's reservations about attaching too much significance to the beautiful form. Hence we should express no surprise that Nietzsche should choose the absurdly comic figure of the satyr as the archetypal Dionysian symbol, nor that historically during the festival of Dionysus the tragic poet was always required to submit, in addition to three tragedies, a comic satyr play – not as light relief after the draining effect of watching a trilogy of tragic dramas, but rather as an indication of the double aspect of the Dionysian. As Nietzsche says, 'The Olympian gods grew out of the smile of Dionysus, and humans out of his tears' (*BT* §10).

Nietzsche's assertion of the internal unity of the tragic and the comic looks forward to the theme of laughter that recurs throughout his oeuvre. The theme is announced in the very title of *Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft,* variously translated as *The Gay* or *Joyful Science,* and one finds it repeated within the text of that work, where Nietzsche speaks of the 'eternal comedy of existence,' commenting that the moralist 'does not at all want us to laugh at existence, neither at ourselves nor at him' (*GS* §1). The role of laughter plays an important part in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics here, since he contends that laughter serves as an antidote to those who teach of the purpose of existence. In contrast, the moralist, claims Nietzsche, discourages any move towards treating existence as a comedy. Hence, too, his criticism of the educational establishment, where he notes that 'In Germany, higher men lack one great means of education: the laughter of higher men, for in Germany these do not laugh' (*GS* §177). The theme is prominent, too, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,*[43] for the parable of the metamorphosis from camel to lion to child, with which Nietzsche opens the first book, is supplemented with Zarathustra's declaration later that 'higher, stronger, more victorious, more joyful men, such as are square-built in body and soul: *laughing* lions must come' (*Z* IV 'The Greeting') as a prelude to the advent of the childlike Übermensch. Zarathustra asks, for example, 'Who of you can both laugh and be elevated at the same time? Whoever climbs onto the highest mountains laughs at all tragedies' (*Z* I 'On Reading and Writing'). The theme is paralleled in other texts. Openly contradicting Hobbes's denigration of laughter, Nietzsche suggests valuing philosophers according to their humour: 'I would actually risk an order of rank among philosophers depending on the rank of their laughter – all the way up to those capable of golden laughter' (*BGE* §284). This also underlies Nietzsche's ambivalence towards Socrates, perhaps, for the latter was motivated not only by a plebeian desire for revenge, but also by a sense of ironic mischief, most evident in the comedy of his marriage to Xanthippe. Elsewhere in *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche notes,

> we are the first age that has truly studied costumes . . . prepared like no previous age for a carnival in the grand style, for the laughter and high spirits of the most spiritual revelry, for the transcendental heights of the highest non-

sense and Aristophanic derision of the world. . . . perhaps, even if nothing else today has a future, our *laughter* may yet have a future.

(*BGE* §223)

Indeed, not only might laughter still have a future, but according to Nietzsche's view of the means for overcoming nihilism, it will be essential to the future.

Nietzsche's allusion to the theme of the comic in *The Birth of Tragedy,* a theme which will have so much significance for his later thinking, once again reminds us of the debt his thinking owes to the theory of the sublime. There is an echo of Hegel's theory of comedy; just as for Nietzsche the comic arises out of the sense of the insubstantiality of appearances, so too for Hegel comedy is linked to the subject's recognition that appearances are projections devoid of objective existence. As Hegel notes, 'every independence of an objective content . . . is annihilated in itself and the presentation is only a sporting with the topics;'[44] comedy is thus the expression of 'a world whose aims are therefore self-destructive because they are unsubstantial.'[45] This notion of a connection between tragedy, comedy and the sublime, in their sense of the world as a play of appearances, was also proposed by figures ranging from the romantic poet and philosopher Heinrich Novalis to the philosopher Friedrich Vischer.[46] It also informed the dramatic practice of *Sturm und Drang* in the eighteenth century, as Walter Benjamin has suggested.[47] So too in Nietzsche, the theme of laughter stems from the problematics of sublimity thrown up by the tragic worldview and is paradoxically invested with special significance. For Nietzsche comedy is a matter of great seriousness. In many respects he inverts Schopenhauer's comments on comedy. Schopenhauer writes, 'The life of every individual, viewed as a whole and in general, and when only its most significant features are emphasised, is really a tragedy; but gone through in detail it has the character of a comedy.'[48] In contrast Nietzsche views it as absolutely necessary to regard the whole as a comedy, as an integral part of becoming an accomplished nihilist.

If we chose to rest with the above account, however, we would be entitled to regard Nietzsche as in some sense merely continuing the project bequeathed by Kant, idealism, romanticism and Vischer, albeit

denuded of their Christian moral sentiment. However, this would solely heed the Dionysian side of the equation. The Apollonian side, which has been both negated and preserved, remains under-represented, and it is this which distinguishes Nietzsche's tragic theory from that of those others. It additionally provides a connection between this early work on tragedy and his later critique of metaphysics in the name of language and interpretation. Commenting on the consequence of the tragic treatment of the Oedipus myth, Nietzsche notes that in addition to the aura which Oedipus's behaviour and destruction projects, which might be termed the feeling of the sublime elicited in the spectators, there is also awareness of the necessity of building on the foundations of the ruined world to which Oedipus belongs. With this architectural metaphor Nietzsche is articulating the position of those who are left over after the calamitous events have run their course. In other words, in the knowledge that the semiotic web of the universe is one which has limits, and given that we will inevitably come up against those limits, what is to be done? Are we to follow the example of Oedipus who, on finding out that *he* is, unwittingly, the murderer of his father he has been trying to find, blinds himself in a symbolic act of self-negation? As my account of Nietzsche's concerns in the first two chapters suggests, the answer would be no, and for two principal reasons.

First, in *The Birth of Tragedy,* as well as in his more explicitly anti-metaphysical writings, Nietzsche repeatedly stresses the impossibility of renouncing all forms of normativity. What enhances life is not the absence of norms, perspectives and so forth, but rather the self-conscious adoption of certain perspectives over others, and as we have seen, what is so problematic about metaphysics is not the fact that it is a perspective, but that it is a narrow one, allowed to become ossified. This is why the 'death of god,' to borrow Nietzsche's metonym, is greeted by many not as so much liberation, but rather with a distinct sense of horror evolving into passive nihilism. Thus after the dramatic catastrophe there must take place an act of reconstruction and rebuilding. The loss of one perspective anticipates only the establishment of another, more life-enhancing one. As I have argued in the last chapter, the free spirit is not one that gives itself up entirely to non-sense, but rather one that lives perpetually on the edge between meaning and non-meaning, and it is

this ability to conduct life as an experiment which is to be seen as a mark of strength. In this regard, therefore, Oedipus, for all his heroic self-sacrifice, is a passive nihilist. He willingly accepts his guilt, but at the same time plunges himself into a world that is now perceived as devoid of meaning. This diminution of self-worth at the end of *Oedipus Tyrannos* anticipates what Nietzsche later refers to as the self-hatred of the ascetic priest, whose hatred of the world for lacking any higher meaning is turned in on himself.

Second, there occurs in tragedy the highly symbolic act of expulsion which excludes the tragic hero from the sphere of the social. Sublime ridicule of the human condition may be possible for the tragic hero, such as Prometheus or Oedipus, but it is not a viable programme for cultural renewal. Here, despite the tempting parallels between the tragic hero and the Übermensch, the extent of their dissimilarity should be made quite clear. Upon the revelation that Oedipus has fulfilled his own fate, he is cast out from the community, so that the city, cleansed of the miasma of his crimes, can continue to exist. In other words, the continued presence of Oedipus within Thebes threatens to disrupt the entire social order. As Jean-Pierre Vernant notes, Oedipus 'is from then on "apolis"; he incarnates the figure of the excluded. In his solitude, he appears at once not yet human, a wild beast, a savage monster, and beyond the human, bearer of a formidable religious qualification, like a "daimon"'.[49] Similarly, at the end of *Antigone,* Creon, though admittedly the anti-hero, demands to be expelled from the city, to save it from the desolation afflicting it. Finally, in *Prometheus Bound* Aeschylus uses abundant spatial metaphors to emphasise the isolation of Prometheus from society, and indeed beyond the bounds of the entire known world. The Übermensch, in contrast, though apart from the mass of modernity, is not always solitary. An important element of Nietzsche's thinking about the Übermensch is the idea of *communal* genius.[50] This is indicated by his references to free spirits as 'we' or his comment that 'There must be many Übermenschen: everything good develops only among its own kind. *One* god would be a *devil.* A *ruling race*' (*KSA* 11:35). Similarly, Nietzsche also admires models of communal excellence, such as the Greek polis, the Venetian Republic or even the Jesuit order.

Consequently, while the illusions of Apollo cannot *completely* censor the irruptions of Dionysian wisdom, there is a simultaneous recognition of their necessity. As the fable of Oedipus indicates, they cannot be discarded, and this is true also for the Übermensch. Rather than becoming 'apolis' through the complete denial of Apollo's ideological illusions, the Übermensch, as an active nihilist, accepts them together with their utter contingency, accustomed to those multifarious 'reversals of perspective' that Nietzsche will recommend some years later. The catastrophe on the tragic stage presents the fragility of values: it alerts the spectators to a constant reassessment of the truth regime under which they live. As in the never-ending dialectic of interpretation I outlined earlier, tragedy presents a constant challenge to self-criticism and appraisal.

4

Wagner, Modernity and the Problem of Transcendence

> It may perhaps be recalled, at least among my friends, that initially I approached the modern world with a few crude errors and overestimations and, in any case, hopefully . . . what I failed to recognise at that time both in philosophical pessimism and in German music was what is really their distinctive character – their *romanticism.*
>
> (*GS* §370)

In the years following the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche came either to reject much of its content, or at least to express reservations about the manner of its presentation. He recognised that so many of the important insights of his first book, most especially his 'discovery' of the Dionysian and Apollonian artistic drives, were hindered by the vocabulary used to formulate them. In both the 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' with which he prefaced the second edition of the work in 1886, and his later account of it in *Ecce Homo,* Nietzsche is all too aware that at the time of composition he was still responding to the influence of idealist and Schopenhauerian metaphysics. This is not to imply that the early Nietzsche was an idealist; as I have suggested in previous chapters, his fragmentary writings from the same period as *The Birth of Tragedy* indicate the existence already of a considerable distance from Schopenhauer. However, while there are significant differences between them, Nietzsche still made use of much of the metaphysical vocabulary inherited from his predecessors. As he comments in the 'Attempt at a Self-criticism,' 'How very much I now regret that I did not have the courage (or immodesty?) at that time to permit myself in every respect a personal language for such personal views and ventures – that

with Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulae I laboriously sought to express alien and novel evaluations, which were fundamentally opposed to the spirit, and equally the taste, of Kant and Schopenhauer!' (*BT* 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' §6). As I have suggested previously, although Nietzsche's reading of tragedy diverges significantly from that of Schopenhauer, much of its conceptual shape is informed by the aesthetics of both Kant and Schopenhauer, with particular regard to their theories of the sublime. At the same time, however, his reading of the sublime was distinctly Nietzschean; he comments on Schopenhauer's doctrine of tragic resignation, 'How differently Dionysus spoke to me! How far removed from me was just this whole resignationism at the time!' (ibid.). In addition, he acknowledges, in *Ecce Homo,* the Hegelian organisation of much of the argument of *the Birth of Tragedy,* resulting in a seeming untimeliness: 'I thought these problems through while serving as an orderly during cold September nights in front of the walls of Metz: one could well believe rather that the tract was 50 years older . . . it reeks offensively Hegelian. . . . An "Idea" – the opposition Dionysian and Apollonian – translated into metaphysical terms; history itself as the development of this "Idea"; the opposition sublated into a synthesis by tragedy' (*EH* 'Birth of Tragedy' §1). As I have suggested earlier, while the opposition of Apollo and Dionysus encourages such a reading, the logic of Nietzsche's argument actually precludes any final synthesis; the resolution of the contradiction of the two is always presented as provisional.

In reflection, what preoccupied Nietzsche more with *The Birth of Tragedy* than this matter of 'mere' style, however, was the readiness he displayed in assimilating his hope for a cultural renewal to the artistic project of Wagner. Although the ostensible subject of the book is Greek tragedy, the second half largely consists of an analysis of European culture after the decline of tragedy through the agency of Euripides and Socrates. Modernity is largely read in terms of its epigonal status, and Nietzsche's attention to Wagner, in particular *Tristan and Isolde,* derives from the sense that his operas constituted a rebirth of Greek tragedy. Thus far worse than corrupting the Dionysian by forcing it into the straitjacket of Schopenhauer and Hegel was the fact 'that I ruined the grandiose Greek problem, as it unfolded in font of me, by mixing in the

most modern things. That I had pinned my hopes where there was nothing to hope for, where everything pointed all too clearly towards an ending' (*BT* 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' §6). And yet this 'mixing in the most modern things' is of crucial significance, for it is Nietzsche's subsequent disillusionment with Wagner that compels him to reassess his general views of art, which he first articulated in the first volume of *Human All Too Human,* published in 1878. In this text Nietzsche's earlier ideas are qualified by a number of considerations.

First, Nietzsche recognises the importance of distinguishing between 'good' and 'bad' art. In *The Birth of Tragedy* tragic drama is seen as having been extinguished by the non-aesthetic drive for philosophical understanding by Socrates. As the culmination of that process the culture of modernity is seen as simply hostile to art: 'A glance at the evolution of the German spirit will leave us in no doubt. . . . The inartistic parasitical spirit of Socratic optimism is revealed in opera as well as in the abstract character of our own mythless existence, in an art that has sunk to the level of pure entertainment' (*BT* §24). Consequently, the operas of Wagner consist in an *overcoming* of modern culture. Later Nietzsche comes to revise this view; the opposition between art and non-art (entertainment) is supplanted by one between good and bad art, the latter of which finds Wagner among its foremost exponents. Second, the opposition between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, while remaining an important element in his thought, is supplemented by the distinction between the 'classical' and the 'romantic.' Tacitly acknowledging the limited value of the opposition between Apollo and Dionysus, Nietzsche embraces concepts in contemporary aesthetic theory and interprets them in terms of his wider anti-metaphysical critique. Third, the notion that art presents a form of illusion, most specifically in its Apollonian manifestation, is increasingly emphasised, and interpreted as its cardinal virtue. Although the Dionysian returns again in Nietzsche's later writings, in the middle period it is far less prominent, no doubt partly because of the metaphysical and Schopenhauerian connotations of the term, as he discusses it in *The Birth of Tragedy.* Fourth, Nietzsche becomes increasingly preoccupied with the idea of the 'grand style,' which in many respects prefigures his notion of art as the expression of will to power. Underlying all of these shifts is the attempt to formulate a new

aesthetic vocabulary and set of concerns, which will function as a counter-weight to the yearning for transcendence in both the aesthetic theory to which Nietzsche is heir and the greater part of contemporary artistic practice. Indeed, Nietzsche's gravest charge against Wagner was that ultimately he was motivated by the same desire for redemption that underpinned Christianity and that threatened to engulf modern culture in general. I shall discuss each of these issues in turn, beginning with the difficult case of Wagner.

Wagner

In the last third of *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche equates the Wagnerian '*Gesamtkunstwerk*' and its putative dialectical synthesis of music and text with the Greek tragic drama, whose unity of Apollonian and Dionysian performs an analogous function. Against this Nietzsche contrasts the wholly 'unaesthetic,' 'Socratic' tradition of opera since Monteverdi, which in its demand for textual intelligibility fully subordinates the music to the libretto. Since Greek tragedy had performed a function of personal and cultural redemption, so Nietzsche reasons, the operas of Wagner can accomplish a similar task for modern culture and save it from the encroachment of nihilism. Wagner's compositional practice is also of central importance in this regard. Nietzsche's emphasis on the role of conflict and negation in the experience of the sublime parallels Wagner's own promotion of musical dissonance through his practice of 'endless melody,' in which harmonic resolution through cadence is constantly deferred by the modulation of the same melodic motif.[1] For Nietzsche this perpetual deferral of satisfaction is a close equivalent to the Dionysian joy in dissolution and negation. Nietzsche notes, 'even the ugly and the disharmonious is an artistic game that the will, in its eternal and inexhaustible desire, plays with itself . . . the desire produced by tragic myth has the same home as the erotic experience of dissonance in music.' Later he adds that dissonance is a Dionysian phenomenon 'that reveals to us again and again the playful building up and destruction of the individual world as the discharge of a primal desire' (*BT* §24). One might even speculate that quite apart from Schopenhauer's privileging of music amongst the arts, it is Wagner's use of dis-

sonance that drew Nietzsche to music rather than to any of the other arts, as a source for cultural renewal. yet while one of the grounds for Nietzsche's initial enthusiasm for Wagner lay in their shared interest in Schopenhauer, it was not necessarily the only one, even though it was the eventual cause of their parting. One can also explain Nietzsche's early attraction to Wagner in terms of the political role which the composer gives to art.[2] In his essays on *Art and Revolution* and *German Art and German Politics,* Wagner stresses the crucial role which art should play in culture, arguing that it made possible an ennobling of 'public spiritual life.' An emphasis on the political aspects of Wagner's understanding of the arts makes sense of many aspects of *The Birth of Tragedy,* in particular Nietzsche's concern with not only the renewal of the individual spectator of the drama, but also the central role occupied by tragic drama in sustaining the edifice of Greek culture as a whole. Additionally Nietzsche's extravagant claims made on behalf of Wagner are justified on the grounds of the *cultural* renewal and redemption which he sees as imminent. What has to be redeemed is not just the Socratic individual, but Socratic society as a whole. Modern society, modernity, theoretical culture is the problem, and it is a phenomenon that can be redeemed by the communal aesthetic form of Wagnerian opera.

However, the significance of Wagner goes further than this political appeal. For the relation between Nietzsche and Wagner is largely determined by their individual responses to the metaphysics of music inherited from Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's enthusiasm for Wagner stems largely from his disillusionment with modernity's self-imposed goal of scientific knowledge. In his account of the development of tragedy he sees the birth of Western theoretical culture at the moment when Socrates, as the archetypal 'theoretical' spectator, demands that the work be intelligible. Born less out of a hypertrophy of the Apollonian than out of a fundamentally extra-aesthetic impulse, this theoretical drive, or as Nietzsche terms it, 'Socratic optimism' appears on stage in the form of Euripidean drama, which subordinates all the symbolic elements of tragedy to the overarching demand for logical, intelligible discourse, hence the large number of set-piece debates in the plays of Euripides.

To stress still further the distinction between tragic and modern,

theoretical culture, he describes the goals of their artistic expression with different terminology. Nietzsche characterises tragic culture as 'the culture whose important mark is that of putting wisdom as its highest goal instead of knowledge' (*BT* §18). In other words, tragic culture aims at an indeterminate aesthetic expression of its understanding of the world, since such an understanding *can* only be an aesthetic one. In contrast, Socratic culture deludes itself in believing it can actually 'know' the world in intelligible concepts. Hence the subordination of tragic symbol to discursive logic, a process which, translated into the artistic production of Nietzsche's own time, becomes the subordination of operatic music to text. Nietzsche writes, 'Answering the wish of the listener to understand the words being sung, the singer speaks rather than sings, and increases the expressive pathos of the words with this half-singing: through this increase in the pathos he facilitates comprehension of the words and overcomes that remaining half, the music' (*BT* §19).

In his unpublished essay 'On Music and Words,' written at the same time as *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche claims that music, or as he calls it, the tonal basis of all speech, constitutes the condition of linguistic meaning per se: 'As our whole corporeality is related to that primordial manifestation, the "will," the word that consists of consonants and vowels is related to its tone foundation.'[3] Hence while language consists of gesture symbolism and tonal background, it is clear that the latter attains primacy, and this motivates Nietzsche's critique of any attempt to render music secondary: 'To place music in the service of a series of images and concepts, to use it as a means to an end . . . this strange presumption, which is found in the concept of "opera" reminds me of the ridiculous person who tries to raise himself into the air by his own bootstraps.'[4]

Although Nietzsche differs from Schopenhauer inasmuch as the Will is a 'form of appearance,' and thus an *interpretation* of the world's primal ground, his notes of 1871, together with the later sections of *The Birth of Tragedy,* giving priority to music over text, nevertheless bring him close to Schopenhauer and to Wagner. He moreover professes to see in Wagner's work the rebirth of those very aesthetic impulses that were stifled with the advent of theoretical culture. For, as he notes later in the

fourth of the *Untimely Meditations,* 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,' Wagner not only reverses the traditional hierarchy pertaining to the relation of words and music. In his use of myth he mobilises textual structures and content which resist the Socratic demand for conceptual clarity. Nietzsche writes, 'Myth is not based on one thought . . . but is itself a process of thinking; it communicates its ideas of the world, but as a succession of events, deeds and afflictions. The *Ring of the Nibelungen* is a huge system of thoughts without the conceptual form of thinking' (*UM* IV §9), a statement which complements his remarks from the notes of 1871 on programme music, so popular in the nineteenth century: 'Imagine . . . what an undertaking it must be to write music for a poem, i.e. to wish to illustrate a poem with music in order to secure for music a conceptual language in this way. What an inverted world!'[5]

While Wagner's musical praxis embodies for the young Nietzsche the rebirth of an authentically aesthetic art form, the surface similarities hide significant differences, as was the case too with Nietzsche's relation to earlier aesthetic philosophies. Wagner's commitment to Schopenhauer, the authenticity of his mid-life conversion, cannot be doubted. From the mid-1850s a number of letters to friends and acquaintances testify to his enthusiasm for the philosopher's works. In December 1854 he wrote to Liszt that 'I have been concerning myself with a person who has come to me in my solitude . . . like a gift from heaven. It is Arthur Schopenhauer, the greatest philosopher since Kant,'[6] and he writes on Schopenhauer again to Liszt in the following year (7 June), noting that 'This act of denial of the Will is the genuine act of the saint: he reaches perfection only in the complete negation of his personal consciousness.'[7] Wagner's commitment to Schopenhauerian metaphysics is most evident in his operas, which represent a potent symbolic expression of the metaphysics of the Will. But it is important to note that Wagner was concerned with the problem of redemption and transcendence throughout his career, both before and after his encounter with Schopenhauer.[8] Thus Schopenhauer's work offered Wagner a set of ideas which he found fruitful for his operatic oeuvre and which confirmed his existing ideas. From *Tristan and Isolde,* with its notion of the lovers' redemption through death and negation, to *Parsifal,* where the eponymous hero redeems everything and everyone through

his ignorant bumbling, Wagner's ideal is of redemption through complete dissolution of self-consciousness.[9] This may manifest itself in death, sheer idiocy or amnesia as in the case of Siegfried, the redemptive hero of the *Ring,* whose inability to recall his own past signifies the selfsame dissolution of subjectivity. The origin of such ideas is clear, for they repeat Schopenhauer's understanding of the redemptive function of asceticism and all forms of negation of the will to live, and it is clear, too, that as Nietzsche became more and more aware of the extent of his differences with Schopenhauer, so his disenchantment with Wagner was perhaps inevitable.

In 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth,' Nietzsche returns to the question of Wagner, though with a rather different emphasis. It is undoubtedly the weakest of the *Meditations,* for even more so than in *The Birth of Tragedy* written six years previously, much of it consists of embarrassingly fawning praise of Wagner. Yet though consisting largely of hagiography, it already betrays a certain ambivalence towards him. The praise seems partly intended to remind Wagner of the true calling of his work, thus warning him not to fall victim to the temptations of popular appeal. Nietzsche notes, for example, that 'After he realised the connection between contemporary theatre, theatrical success and the character of contemporary man, his soul no longer had anything to do with this theatre: he was no longer interested in aesthetic fanaticism and the rejoicing of the excited masses. It must have incensed him to see his art swallowed up so indiscriminately in the jaws of insatiable boredom and the craving for diversion' (*UM* IV §8). Given that Wagner was already welcoming the adulation afforded him late in life, this reads far more like an appeal to him than an account of his musical career.

For all its weaknesses, however, 'Richard Wagner in Bayreuth' is significant in that Nietzsche widens the scope of his critique of modern, 'debased' opera. Whereas in *The Birth of Tragedy* the particular significance of Wagner lay in his resurrection of music in the face of the Socratic demand for verbal intelligibility, Nietzsche now offers a much more wide-ranging account of the difference between the Wagnerian music drama and opera. In particular, Wagner now represents a counter to the dangers of *popular* art, in particular, the theatre. Early in 'Wagner in Bayreuth' Nietzsche complains that 'All the modern arts have until

now been gradually debased, either as narrow and atrophied or as luxury items. Even the uncertain disconnected memories we moderns have inherited from the Greeks of true art may come to rest' (*UM* IV §1). Accompanying this debasement of aesthetic sensibility are, on the one hand, a calculating exploitation of art as a cultural 'good' or a heightened neurotic demand for emotional stimulation.

The first is a consequence of the dominance of economic values. Nietzsche notes that 'In former times one looked down with honest nobility on people who dealt in money as a business . . . one admitted to oneself that every society had to have intestines. Now, as the most covetous of its religions, they are the ruling power in the soul of modern humanity' (*UM* IV §6). Paradoxically allying himself with the 'enemy of art,' Nietzsche criticises the 'squandering of money on the construction of [the art lover's] theatres and public monuments,' for 'There is no hunger, no satisfaction, but always a tired playing with the appearance of both, for the purposes of the most vain kind of display' (*UM* IV §5). Although he stops short of formulating a critique of a commodity aesthetic, Nietzsche nevertheless draws links between the appetitive consumption of art as a form of vain cultural display and the rise of economic values.

Regarding the role of emotional stimulation in contemporary art he observes that 'Whenever I look at the thousands of people in the populous cities as they go by with an expression of stupidity or in haste, I always say to myself they must be in poor spirits. And yet for all of them art is merely there to put them in worse spirits . . . they are mounted and drilled remorselessly by *improper feelings,* and they are not allowed to confess their own sorrow to themselves; if they want to speak, convention whispers something in their ear such that they forget what they originally wanted to say' (ibid.). Modern art thus provides the mass public with an artificially heightened, but completely false set of emotional responses which verge on a kind of induced mass hysteria. At the root of this is the problem of the 'guilty conscience' of the modern soul, and modern art has taken up the task of inducing either 'stupefaction or delirium! To put to sleep or to intoxicate! To silence the conscience by one means or the other' (*UM* IV §6).

Despite the immaturity of the text, Nietzsche is introducing themes

that figure prominently in his later writings, in particular the problem of the constitutive lack of modern subjectivity that he outlines in *The Genealogy of Morals* and its accompanying need for redemption. In this respect contemporary popular art fulfils the same function as Christianity or metaphysics, namely, the offering of some form of refuge. Nietzsche's mistake, as he was later to admit, was to see a counter-movement to this degraded art in the work of Wagner. An indication of his recognition that he had misread the significance of Wagner first appears in the second volume of *Human All Too Human,* in which he warns of the dangers of Wagner's music, and in particular the dangers of its lack of measure and structure: 'His famous artistic means . . . the "endless melody" – strives to break all mathematical regularities . . . it is overly rich in its invention of effects that sound to the older ear like rhythmical paradoxes and blasphemies,' and yet in contrast to the earlier works, where such dissonant paradoxes were seen as Dionysian expression, Nietzsche now warns that 'Considerable danger can emerge from the comfortable imitation of such art; alongside an overripe rhythmic feeling there has always lurked a wildness and the decline of rhythm.' Such music displays a loss of proportion, and comes all too close to the '*female* essence of music' (*HAH* II, §134).

Nietzsche's comments are taken up and expounded at much greater length in his two late polemics, *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner,* and in numerous unpublished notes from the late 1880s. He writes in *The Case of Wagner,* 'Victor Hugo and Richard Wagner – they signify one and the same thing, that in cultures of decline wherever the choice falls into the laps of the masses, authenticity always becomes superfluous, disadvantageous, retrogressive' (*CW* §11), thus equating the mass appeal of Wagnerian theatre with a bogus popular culture still bound to the demands of slave morality. The 'endless melody' of Wagner is now linked with decadence. Paraphrasing Paul Bourget, he notes, 'What is the mark of every literary decadence? That life no longer resides in the whole. The word becomes sovereign and leaps out of the sentence, the sentence reaches out and obscures the meaning of the page, and the page comes to life at the expense of the whole – the whole is no longer a whole. This, however, is the simile of every style of decadence: every time there is an anarchy of atoms' (*CW* §7). In literary

terms one could imagine this critique of the fetishism of the fragment as directed towards the work of a contemporary poet such as Mallarmé, but Nietzsche's interest in decadence is particularly oriented towards its expression in music. Here there is a clear analogy between the atomisation of poetic style and Wagner's reduction of melodic structure to the single tonal unit. The organisation of melody around periodic punctuations, cadences and repetitive motifs is replaced by a system in which every individual note is of equal significance, and it is this which explains the 'wandering tonality' of Wagner, for in the western musical tradition a hierarchy exists amongst the tones, some are essential, others are inessential or do not belong in the musical key of the composition. In Wagner such distinctions are eroded; as Nietzsche notes, Wagner is 'our greatest miniaturist . . . who crowds into the smallest space an infinity of meaning' (ibid.). As I shall explore later, this shrinking of the musical period can be linked with Nietzsche's comments on will to power, in which 'endless melody' can be read as a weakness of will, a collapse in the organising power of will to power.

Quite apart from his attention to the question of Wagner's musical technique, Nietzsche takes issue with the values underpinning Wagnerian music drama. He asserts, 'Everything that has ever grown up on the soil of impoverished life, this entire false coinage of transcendence and the Beyond, has found its sublimest advocate in the art of Wagner. . . . My friends, drink just the philtres of this art! Nowhere will you find a more pleasant way of unnerving your spirit, and of forgetting your masculinity under a rose bush' (*CW* 'First Postscript'). It is also notable that while Nietzsche rejects Wagner's concern with redemption, he still acknowledges the extraordinary power the composer's music exerts over the listener. Hence Nietzsche's repeated insistence on his differences with the composer almost seems calculated to convince himself as much as his readers. In the section of *Nietzsche contra Wagner* entitled 'We Antipodeans' he writes, 'The revenge on life itself – the most wilful kind of intoxication for such impoverished people! . . . Both Wagner and Schopenhauer answer the two-fold need of these last people – they deny life, they defame it, for this reason they are my antipodeans.' In his search for transcendence Wagner enacts the same denial of life sustaining metaphysics, and his music dramas produce in the audience a

similar yearning. It is Wagner's popularity which makes him so dangerous.

Nietzsche brings to bear a further charge against Wagner, namely, that of having destroyed music. In order to distance his own conception of the artist from Wagner, Nietzsche uses almost any word available for Wagner except that of artist. Wagner is accused of being a charlatan (a term also reserved, strangely, for Victor Hugo), a decadent, a seducer, a womaniser, an actor, and his music is a kind of 'underhand' Christianity, but it is not 'authentic art,' since 'music has lost its world-transfigurative, affirmative character – it is music of décadence, and no longer the flute of Dionysus' (*EH* 'The Case of Wagner' § 1). Although Nietzsche's rejection of Wagner is given great prominence in the light of their close personal relations, in terms of his thought, the disaffection with his former mentor is part of a wider recognition that much contemporary art embodies the very values that Nietzsche believed were part of metaphysical, Socratic, culture. In *The Case of Wagner* he even sees Wagner's weaknesses as being shared by Brahms, who is usually thought of as the former's antithesis. This supposed contrast is, he argues, illusory. Despite its classicism, the music of Brahms is motivated by the same metaphysical yearning as that of Wagner: 'He has the melancholy borne of impotence; he does *not* create out of fullness, but *thirsts* after fullness. If one discounts what he imitates, what he borrows from the stylistic forms of either the great past or the exotically modern – he is a master of copying – what is most particular to him is *longing*' (*CW* 'Second Postscript').

Towards a New Evaluation

Nietzsche's rejection of much contemporary art reaches its climax in his late polemics against Wagner. However, as I noted earlier, a general awareness that 'art' is an ambiguous phenomenon can already be seen in *Human All Too Human*. While in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had seen the aesthetic impulse as fundamentally unlike the Socratism of modernity, in the later text he sees a frequent continuity between religious sentiment and artistic practice. He observes, for example, that 'If it is believed that we have rid ourselves of the habit of religion, this has not happened to the extent that we do not find joy in encountering religious experiences

and moods devoid of conceptual content, as in the example of music' (*HAH* I §131). This view is reiterated in a later aphorism which asserts that 'Art raises its head where religion recedes. It takes over a host of feelings and moods produced by religion' (*HAH* I§150). Even for the free spirit, argues Nietzsche, who has overcome all metaphysical impulses, 'the highest effects of art produce a resonance of the long silent, indeed broken chord of metaphysics' (*HAH* I §153). Art, alongside religion, can act like a narcotic; rather than confronting the cause of suffering, for example, it reinterprets the experience, 'through awakening a pleasure in pain, in emotion in general (which is the starting point for tragic art).' In contrast, 'The more the dominance of religions and all narcotic art recedes, the more sternly men confront the elimination of evil, which admittedly turns out badly for tragic poets – for there is less and less material for tragedy' (*HAH* I §108). Art thus functions as a kind of anaesthetic, and in contrast to *The Birth of Tragedy,* in which this anaesthetic function is celebrated as a product of Greek wisdom, Nietzsche seems to harbour a more ambivalent attitude towards it.

The metaphysical foundation of art is evident in the repeated presence of a concern with the transcendent in many art works. In an aphorism entitled 'The Beyond in Art,' Nietzsche admits that 'It is admitted with deep pain that in their most elevating moments artists of all times have lifted up their ideas to the state of heavenly transfiguration, which we now recognise to be false: they glorify the religious and philosophical errors of mankind' (*HAH* I §220). Nietzsche seems to view this practice, which 'assumes a metaphysical significance for art,' as belonging increasingly to the past; the examples he cites include Raphael, Michelangelo, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Gothic architecture. However, in an earlier aphorism on 'The Desensualising of Higher Art,' he comments on a tendency in contemporary music for the material texture to be made secondary to the conceptual content: 'For this reason we tolerate much greater tonal forces, much more "noise," because we are better accustomed than our forebears to listen for *reason* in it.' Consequently the attention to the material texture of music is supplanted by the incessant search for meaning, such that the 'sense organs become blunt and weak' (*HAH* I §217). This process, which Nietzsche sees occurring also in the visual arts, implies a return of the metaphysical dual-

ism more commonly associated with the explicitly religious art of the past.

There is a curious contradiction in this position. For while Nietzsche is critical of this 'metaphysical' underplaying of the substance of music, he is also hostile to the fetishism of musical material apparent in Wagner, as I noted earlier. This can perhaps be resolved by recalling that the particular object of censure is the tendency to atomisation which can follow a material fetish – at all times his criticism focuses on the loss of structure that follows an over-attention to the musical fragment. Nietzsche is far from endorsing a formalist practice or art criticism. Indeed, explicitly singling out Kantian aesthetics for censure, he appears to regard the process whereby 'the symbolic takes the place more and more of the existent' (ibid.) as retrograde. If this is not spelled out in such terms in this particular aphorism, a later fragment from 1885 makes the point more forcefully, in which Nietzsche writes that 'To strive for desensualisation, that seems to me to be a misunderstanding, or an illness or a cure, where it is not mere hypocrisy and self-deception,' adding that '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"' (*KSA* 11:37 [12]).

In *Human All Too Human,* therefore, one can detect the emergence of a more differentiated understanding of art in Nietzsche, in which it is recognised that art can be just as ensnared within the trap of metaphysics as any other cultural activity. Art is not *simply* the counter to metaphysics, or the basis of a fundamental renewal of culture, even if a specific type of aesthetic practice has the *potential* for precisely this cultural renewal. More often than not, art is just as much a symptom of the problem of modernity than it is a a solution. This is made explicit later in the 'Attempt at a Self-criticism,' in which he expresses his suspicion that his own formulation had given his work a romantic accent, in that art appears to offer a 'metaphysical comfort.' In contrast, he argues, 'You should learn first of all an art of this-worldly comfort' (*BT* 'Attempt at a Self-criticism' §7). Again we see an attempt to apply the general critique of metaphysical dualism to the sphere of art, in which art functions, or rather should function, according to a monistic logic, in which it is stripped of any intimation of transcendence. Quite clearly

Nietzsche is therefore suggesting a set of criteria for judging the worth of works of art, one of which is also the notion of the 'grand style,' which I shall discuss later.

Although he does not specifically refer to modern art in these aphorisms, it is clear that it is the specific condition of art in modernity which Nietzsche is describing rather than art in general. This is indicated by the many other references to contemporary art which put forward a similar argument. One central problem for Nietzsche is that art is potentially coming to its end in the culture of modernity. In the second volume of *Human All Too Human* he notes that art has become redundant 'in the age of work,' a comment which parallels his critique of the commodification of art. It has been reduced to 'a matter of amusement, of relaxation: we dedicate to it what is left over of our time, our energies' (*HAH* II §170). The consequence is that there has developed what Nietzsche terms 'petty art,' more adapted to the desire for an art of relaxation. There remains 'great art,' Nietzsche argues, which struggles to survive in the air more suited to the petty art of 'enchanting diversion,' and he expresses his gratitude that such great art still persists when it would be easier to flee. However, he also recognises that in the future, even if more time were available for aesthetic enjoyment, 'our great art will be unusable' (ibid.). The aesthetically motivated critique of modernity also occurs in *Daybreak,* in which Nietzsche attacks the capitalist reduction of art to a matter of mere commerce, thus debasing the worth of the artist. In an aphorism bearing the motto 'To know nothing about trade is noble' (*D* §308) Nietzsche argues, 'To sell one's virtue only for the highest price, let alone carry on usury with it, as teacher, official, artist – makes of genius and talent a shopkeeper's affair' (ibid.). The pessimistic summation of this and the earlier aphorism discussed is prefigured in the first volume of *Human All Too Human* in an aphorism on the 'Sunset of Art.' Here Nietzsche notes that 'In the same way that one recalls youth in old age, and celebrates memorial events, so soon humanity will relate to art as if it were a moving memory of the joys of youth.' To be sure, artists will still be highly regarded, but this is because the artistic type will soon be seen as a relic from a previous era, and honoured as a reminder of the 'happiness of earlier times.' Nietzsche concludes, 'The sun has already set but the sky of life still glows

and is still lit up by it, even though we can no longer see it' (*HAH* I §223). Paradoxically, therefore, art, by virtue of its very redundancy sets in motion a hankering for the resurrection of the past.

In order to interpret the function of such hankering in the present, Nietzsche draws on the notions of the classical and the romantic to describe alternative aesthetic practices. This constitutes an important departure, for although in his later writings the Dionysian and the classical/romantic dichotomy are brought together as critical terms in his diagnosis of the contemporary cultural crisis, in works such as *Human All Too Human, Daybreak* and *The Gay Science* the Apollonian-Dionysian opposition virtually disappears. In 'The Wanderer and his Shadow' Nietzsche offers his first formulation of the opposition between the two: 'Classical and romantic – both those spirits of a classical and those of a romantic bent – these two species exist at all times – entertain a vision of the future: but the former do so out of a *strength* of their age, the latter out of its *weakness*' (*WS* §217). In *Daybreak* the romantics are seen as 'resurrectors of the dead,' whose impulse to repeat the past is driven by vanity (*D* §159). The distinction between the two aesthetic impulses is spelled out more forcefully in *The Gay Science,* which in many respects represents Nietzsche's most articulate statement of his mature aesthetic evaluation. Having equated romanticism with philosophical pessimism, of which the most prominent exponent is Schopenhauer, he goes on to ask,

> What is romanticism? Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. But there are two kinds of sufferers, on the one hand, those who suffer from an *overfullness* of life . . . and then those who suffer from the *impoverishment of life,* and seek rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves through art and knowledge, or intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia and madness. All romanticism in art and knowledge corresponds to the dual needs of the latter type, and that included (and includes) Schopenhauer as well as Richard Wagner.
>
> (*GS* §370)

This conception of romanticism becomes central in Nietzsche's later writings, particularly in the Nachlass fragments on art. In one fragment

from 1887, for example, he wonders 'whether the antithesis of active and reactive doesn't lie behind the antithesis of classical and romantic' (*WP* §847).

Romanticism is thus driven by lack, or hunger, and in contrast classicism is driven by an excess of force, energy and life. Nietzsche's critique can be read in literal terms, in which he can be seen as attending to the romantic concern with the infinite, a concern that can be found in Tieck or the Schlegel brothers.[10] The constitutive function of lack in romantic philosophy can also be seen in Schopenhauer's positing of will as a metaphysical foundation. However, Nietzsche's target is more broadly defined, for although he identifies specific artists and writers, including Wagner, Schopenhauer, Delacroix, Brahms and others, as 'romantic,' the term refers to the general persistence, indeed increase, of the demand for redemption in modernity, whether it is through the self-negating Wagnerian subject or the metaphysical search for absolute certainty. In this regard Nietzsche sees modern art as corrupted by the dominance of metaphysics, such that the present is faced with a paradox of both a hegemonic drive to scientific rationality and an ever increasing craving for heightened emotional expression. He notes, 'Dissoluteness and indifference, burning desires, cooling of the heart – this repulsive juxtaposition is to be found in the higher society of Europe of the present day. The artist believes he has done a great deal if, through his art, he has for once set the heart aflame beside these burning desires: and likewise the philosopher if, given the coolness of his heart he has in common with his age, he succeeds through his world-denying judgement in cooling the heat of the desires in himself and in this society' (*HAH* II §182). As I indicated earlier, Nietzsche criticises the metaphysical suppression of the body and here he notes that in the place of giving human affectivity its proper place within the hierarchy of the soul there emerges the artificial sentimentality of romanticism, which stands for the hysteria of modernity per se. This recalls Nietzsche's criticisms of Wagner for creating mass hysteria in the audience, itself a microcosm of the more general condition of cultural modernism. Underlying Nietzsche's judgement is a distinction between 'false' and 'authentic' art, in which the latter works as a counter-movement to metaphysics and the former functions as one of its more visible symbols. In an aphorism en-

titled 'Degenerate Varieties of Art' Nietzsche notes that for all 'genuine species' of art there also exist 'degenerate' types, 'art in search of repose and excited and agitated art' (*HAH* II §115). Again paradoxically, the craving for repose and the fascination with agitation and excitement belong together; the one is the consequence of the failure of the latter. They are contrasted with Nietzsche's conception of a classical aesthetic in which the affectivity of artistic practice is reigned in.

Romanticism, driven by the hunger for 'calm seas,' thus degenerates into an overexcited, uncontrolled hyperaffective state. No doubt thinking of contemporary bourgeois taste in this context, Nietzsche writes, 'The florid style in art is the consequence of a poverty of organising power in the face of a superabundance of means and ends' (*HAH* II §117). In a slightly later aphorism Nietzsche discusses the origins of the baroque in the light of these more general considerations; 'the feeling of a lack of dialectics or inadequacy in expressive or formal ability, combined with an over-abundant, pressing formal impulsion, gives rise to that stylistic genre called the *baroque*.' He later adds, 'The baroque style originates whenever any great art starts to fade, whenever the demands in the art of classic expression grow too great. . . . It is precisely now, when *music* is entering this last epoch, that we can get to know the phenomenon of the baroque style in a particularly splendid form' (*HAH* II §144). The use of the example of music is important here, because Nietzsche again has Wagner in mind, as the exemplar of musical modernism. It is significant, too, that he warns against simply dismissing baroque as rhetorical excess, admitting that it has nevertheless occupied the attentions of the high-minded (and not just the plebeian mass), even if 'he whose receptivity for the purer and greater style is not blunted by [baroque] may count himself lucky' (ibid.).

In contrast to the excess of romanticism, Nietzsche recommends the employment of 'biting coldness,' in order to create the 'grand style' that will supersede modernity: 'All modern writing is characterised by exaggeratedness; and even when it is written simply the words it contains are *felt* too eccentrically. Rigorous reflection, terseness, coldness, simplicity, deliberately pursued even to their limit, self-containment of the feelings and silence in general – that alone can help us' (*HAH* I §195). In the second volume of *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche returns to this

theme, noting that 'All great art . . . likes to arrest the feelings on their course and not allow them to run *quite* to their conclusion' (*HAH* II §136). In contrast to the 'bombastic' and 'inflated style' of modernity (*D* §332), Nietzsche recommends, therefore, the same form of dialectical rigour which, as I argued in the first chapter, he brings to bear to the question of interpretation. Great artistic representations, Nietzsche reminds us, consist of a selective image of the world, displaying an ability to constrain creative impulses that the baroque and the romantic were unable to do; 'the good poet of the future will depict *only reality* and completely ignore all those fantastic, superstitious, half-mendacious, faded subjects upon which earlier poets demonstrated their powers. Only reality, but by no means every reality! – he will depict a select reality' (*HAH* II §114). Although Nietzsche does not overtly describe this practice as classicism, it clearly prefigures what he will later come to term 'Dionysian classicism,' and the inclusion of 'Dionysian' in the term also alerts us to the nuances of what he is implying. For while his opposition to romanticism and preference for a certain aesthetic austerity could easily lead one into reading Nietzsche as a late-nineteenth-century conservative, his critique of romantic modernity is not in the name of a timeless classicism, even if he still sees in the Greeks an exemplary culture. This can be gleaned from his comments on Lawrence Sterne in *Human All Too Human*. Praising Sterne as a truly free spirit in comparison with whom all his contemporaries seem stiff and crude, Nietzsche writes, 'What is to be praised in him is not the closed and transparent but the "endless melody": if with this expression we may designate an artistic style in which the fixed form is constantly being broken up, displaced, transposed back into indefiniteness so that it signifies one thing and at the same time another' (*HAH* II §113). Hence Nietzsche's classicism has a significantly modernist tone, for despite the central importance of a controlling structure, that structure is always subject to displacement and dissolution. Again the parallel with the larger notion of a dialectic in perpetual flux is suggested here. Undoubtedly there is a parallel with Wagner and romanticism, but the important difference is that, as in the case of Sterne, the artistic free spirit is able to manipulate the negation of meaning consciously, whereas the modern artist seems to be *victim* of a nihilistic loss of meaning. This distinction prefigures that

later drawn between the passive reactive nihilist and the active, accomplished nihilist, of which Sterne would be an example.

The notion that the 'free spirit' consciously manipulates meaning develops the theme expounded in *Human All Too Human* that art is a matter of simple falsity. This modifies the position stated in *The Birth of Tragedy.* In that work art is a complex process of deception and truth; the artistic impulse to Apollonian *fiction* is matched by the Dionysian vision of the abyss. Although both are 'forms of appearing,' in the case of the Dionysian this stems from the essential contradictions of the *via negativa;* the contingent and arbitrary nature of meaning can be symbolised only through its negation in Dionysian ecstasy. In contrast to this twofold relation of truth and fiction, wisdom and deception, *Human All Too Human* regards art as a matter of straight falsity. In this regard the comic, which in the earlier work is mentioned only secondarily to the central question of tragedy, becomes more prominent. In the first volume of *Human All Too Human,* in an aphorism entitled 'Playing with Life,' Nietzsche notes the importance of frivolity in Greek culture, beginning with Homer. He writes, 'Simonides advised his compatriots to take life as a game; they were only too familiar with its painful seriousness . . . and they knew that even misery could become a source of enjoyment solely through art' (*HAH* I §154). This idea is generalised in a slightly later aphorism in which the artist is seen as retarded 'inasmuch as he has halted at games that pertain to youth and childhood' (*HAH* I §159). It is important not to read into these comments an affirmation of the idea that art offers a metaphysical consolation for suffering by regression to a form of subjective self-annihilation. This would consist of a reversion to Wagnerian romanticism, from which Nietzsche was at this time attempting to break free. The artistic lying of the Greeks is not connected with a metaphysical hunger; it does not aim at a final redemptive stasis. Rather, it stems from insight into the levity of existence.

The notion of play can be compared with Kant, for whom aesthetic play consisted of a purposive activity but one without teleological finality. For all his repudiation of Kant, there remain important similarities between Nietzsche and the older philosopher – for both, the aesthetic drive has an intrinsic connection with play. The nature of the difference between the self-conscious deception of the Greeks and the hunger-

driven myths of modernity is made clear in an aphorism from the second volume of *Human All Too Human,* in which Nietzsche writes that 'The man of the world of antiquity knew better how to *rejoice:* we how to *suffer less;* the former employed all their abundance of ingenuity and capacity to reflect for the continual creation of new occasions for happiness and celebration: whereas we employ our minds towards the amelioration of suffering and the removal of sources of pain' (*HAH* II §187). The deception of the Greeks functions as a prophylactic in contrast to that of modernity, in which it serves as a palliative. Again, as in his more general thought, Nietzsche is less concerned with the opposition of falsehood and truth and more interested in the different uses to which falsehood is put; his critique of metaphysics is aimed not at the fact that it is in some manner 'false,' but that its productive fictions have become exhausted and self-defeating. Nietzsche's comments on the different kinds of deception can thus be compared with his well-known assertion that 'the *strength* of knowledge does not depend on its degree of truth but on its age . . . on its character as a condition of life' (*GS* §110).

Deception and lying will become central to Nietzsche's general project for a post-metaphysical culture. In *Human All Too Human* it is the preserve of the Greeks and of art: '"We are capable of telling many lies" – thus the muses once sang when they revealed themselves to Hesiod. – Many vital discoveries can be made if we for once apprehend the artist as a deceiver' (*HAH* II §188). Nietzsche's endorsement of the essential falsity of art is also a strategic move, for it celebrates the one aspect of art that had led Plato to call for its exclusion from the ideal state.[11] Hence in the specific question of art Nietzsche is adding to his general project of overturning the cultural legacy of Platonism and, accordingly, metaphysics. Consequently, he is not merely reworking his own understanding of art but also placing it at the core of his wider critique of the metaphysical tradition. This is clear from the way in which Nietzsche repeatedly places artistic lying at the service of a more general overcoming of metaphysical seriousness:

In Greece the profound, thorough, serious spirits were the exceptions: the instinct of the people was inclined, rather, to regard seriousness as a kind of distortion. Not to create forms, but to borrow them from abroad and transform

them into the fairest appearance of beauty – that is Greek: imitation, not for use but for the end of artistic deception, the repeated defeating of an imposed seriousness, ordering, beautifying, making shallow and superficial.

(*HAH* II §221)

The emphasis on the mendacity of art is stressed further in an aphorism in which Nietzsche discusses the origin of cultic representations. Taking issue with the idea that the representation of gods underwent an evolution, from the animistic worship of stones and wood to the anthropomorphic statues of more developed cultures, Nietzsche argues that the humanisation of the gods in fact constituted a departure from religious belief, in which the representation of the gods in human form was an aesthetic act driven by 'godlessness.' In addition, he notes that the art of the Greeks preserved the simultaneous logic of showing and concealing that had underpinned the more primitive cultic figures: 'The oldest image of the god is supposed to *harbour and at the same time conceal* the god – to intimate his presence but not expose it to view. No Greek ever *beheld* his Apollo as a wooden obelisk, his Eros as a lump of stone; they were symbols whose purpose was precisely to excite fear *of* beholding him' (*HAH* II §222). One can see in this passage an echo of the dual artistic functions of concealing and revealing that had been argued in *The Birth of Tragedy,* although on the whole the account of art in *Human All Too Human* tends to espouse the more univocal view of falsity I noted earlier. This passage bears a further echo of *The Birth of Tragedy,* for while not mentioning it by name, Nietzsche is drawing on the sublime. It is not used in order to suggest that art is a locus of transcendence, but rather to see it as a site of ambiguity and the frustration of meaning. It is possible to compare Nietzsche's assertion with Hegel in this regard; in his *Lectures on Aesthetics* Hegel argues that the Symbolic, the first stage of art, is enmeshed in this same lack of clarity, inasmuch as the Absolute is conceptually underdetermined, and the work of art, its sensuous expression, cannot find an adequate form.[12] Significantly, Hegel links this contradiction between the Absolute and its sensuous manifestation with the sublime, for as I have noted earlier Hegel's notion of the sublime focuses on the gap between the *endeavour* to represent infinity and the impossibility of doing so.

In the aphorism of *Human All Too Human* the general argument is that the simple 'comes neither first nor last in time,' and that Apollonian clarity is a secondary phenomenon: 'As the cella contains the holy of holies, the actual *numen* of the divinity, and conceals it in mysterious semi-darkness, *but does not wholly conceal it;* as the peripteral temple in turn contains the cella and as though with a canopy and veil shelters it from prying eyes, *but does not wholly shelter it:* so the image is the divinity and at the same time the divinity's place of concealment' (ibid.). Again the function of the image as both revealing and concealing recalls the wider dialectic of immanence and transcendence central to Nietzsche's engagement with modern culture and its projected supersession; as Nietzsche says, 'In regard to knowledge of truths the artist possesses a weaker morality than the thinker' (*HAH* I §146), and the morality of truthfulness is one of the central problems of the modernity he wishes to overcome.

Regarding the question of art, Nietzsche raises one further theme in *Human All Too Human,* in his attempt to wrest art away from the metaphysical connotations of Wagner and romanticism, namely, the concept of genius. Although 'genius' is a key concept in Nietzsche's thought, he gives it a completely different meaning from that given it by his contemporaries. In particular, he critiques the myth of spontaneous artistic creativity. For example, in the sphere of religion he dismisses the cult of saints and oracular priests as the misinterpretation of a pathological condition, and adds, somewhat facetiously, that Socrates' daimon may have been only an ear infection (*HAH* I §126). More specifically, he asserts elsewhere that the cult of genius stems from vanity, a way of explaining away the ability of others to produce works of art we ourselves feel incapable of. In contrast, Nietzsche compares the genius with the 'inventor of machines, the scholar of astronomy or history' (*HAH* I §162). Alongside these activities, genius is better explained as the product of a certain single-mindedness, and he describes the genius as a superior type of bricklayer. Apart from the obvious provocation of these comments a serious point is also being made, for the cult of artistic genius relies largely on a metaphysical notion of subjectivity, in which the artist, having little to do with the hard labour of actuality, is imagined as producing a work as a perfect totality, suspending mundane temporali-

ty. Nietzsche's stress on the genius as a type of workman is intended to shift the orientation of thinking about art and its production away from romantic ideas of transcendence, and as such it prefigures his later thought of the Übermensch as immersed in the constant temporality of self-overcoming. There is, Nietzsche admits, a particular temptation to think of artistic production in terms of the romantic myth of genius, since 'no-one can see in the work of the artist how it has *become;* that is its advantage, for wherever one can see the act of becoming one grows somewhat cool. The finished and perfect art of representation repulses all thinking as to how it has become.' At the same time, however, he regards the crediting of the artist as a genius, while the scientist is seen merely as a workman with a superior intellect, as 'a piece of childishness in the realm of reason' (ibid.). In contrast even in the case of a supposed genius such as Beethoven, 'the most glorious melodies were put together gradually and, as it were, culled out of many beginnings' (*HAH* I §155).

Yet although the belief in genius and inspiration stems from the misrecognition that 'all the great artists have been great workers' (ibid.), the myth of genius is also encouraged by modern art. While Nietzsche does not name it as such, it is clear that contemporary art, and more specifically the music of Wagner, is implied in his assertion that

> The artist knows that his work produces its full effect when it excites a belief in an improvisation, a belief that it came into being with a miraculous suddenness; and so he may assist this illusion and introduce those elements of rapturous restlessness, of blindly groping disorder, of attentive reverie that attend the beginning of creation into his art as a means of deceiving the soul of the spectator or auditor into a mood in which he believes that the complete and perfect has suddenly emerged instantaneously.
>
> (*HAH* I §145)

Here Nietzsche's critique of the emotional hyperbole of Wagnerianism takes on another facet; not only does the artificially heightened rapture satisfy the longing of the debased audience of an inartistic modernity, it also enhances the narcissism of the artist who wishes to gain the label 'genius.' At bottom, however, the only difference between the genius and the merely talented artist, argues Nietzsche, is that the former is

better at hiding the 'barrel-organ,' since 'they too can do no more than repeat their same old tunes' (*HAH* II §155), a comment which again seems aimed at Wagner's repetitious use of the *leitmotif*. Nietzsche is therefore suspicious of improvisation for the values it may connote,[13] but is also critical of a reliance on repetition which has subsequently been seen as an essential element of the popular culture for which Nietzsche reserved so much scorn. At the same time, however, he is not urging a reactivation of the purely classical, in spite of his fondness for Mozart.[14] As I indicated, the classical comes to be mediated by a Dionysian disruption of rigid aesthetic hierarchies, and this is also apparent in Nietzsche's comments on the importance of incompleteness, where 'the complete produces a diminishing effect' (*HAH* I §199). Again the model of a constant deferral of dialectical closure, which governs his conception of interpretation, has a part to play here and anchors the question of art in Nietzsche's critique of 'knowledge.' The issue of what Nietzsche means by the classical will be explored later, but the reference to repetition and improvisation introduces a theme of more immediate relevance, namely, the relation of modernity, art and time, and it is to this theme I now turn.

5

Memory, History and Eternal Recurrence

The Aesthetics of Time

> Only if history can endure to be transformed into a work of art will it perhaps be able to preserve instincts or even evoke them.
>
> (*UM* II §7)

The question of time and history constitute central elements in Nietzsche's thinking. It is well known, for example, that one of his more substantial charges against metaphysics is that the philosophical faith in logical categories leads to a petrifaction of life. The vital flux of becoming is devalued, and, instead, notions of being, stability, in short, timelessness, are valued more highly. Such a desire for stability and unity results from a 'need for inertia' (*WP* §600), whereas the ability to accept ambiguity, constant change and the 'reversal of customary perspectives' (*OGM* III §12) constitutes a 'sign of strength' (*WP* §600). One of the principal causes of this process is a mis-recognition of what and how the vocabulary of logic, and language in general, signifies. The crucial error of metaphysics is to have assumed that language refers to a pre-existing real, awaiting the correct term to be applied to it, a critique I outlined in the first chapter. This reification and hypostatisation of language necessarily bequeaths a certain conception of time in its wake. The faith in the certainties of grammar necessarily restricts a priori what can be considered to be an existent, and even what it means to exist. For Nietzsche the problem can be traced back to Socrates, whose apparently innocuous search for definitions, originally a problem of semantics, is transformed by Plato into one of ontology. The inability of mundane existence to offer anything that could fulfil Plato's desire for an adequate definition of such notions as 'good,' 'true' or 'just' compels him to posit

the truth as consisting in atemporal ideas, and to denigrate the empirical world as an untruth. For all his substantial differences with his teacher, Aristotle did little to challenge such a conception of existence and time; indeed, in many respects he can be considered to have consolidated it.[1] For this reason Nietzsche speaks highly of Heraclitus, whose pronouncement that 'everything is in flux' embodies Nietzsche's own suspicions of being.[2] In order to counter the metaphysical petrifaction of 'life,' Nietzsche frequently employs the notion of 'becoming.' It functions as a counterweight to the metaphysical fetish of being, and its denial of time.

Nietzsche's concern with the problem of time thus forms part of his general critique of metaphysics, but it has a further dimension, too, in that time had become a particularly pressing issue in relation to the meaning of modernity. In particular, as Koselleck has argued, the modernity which Nietzsche analyses was not only perceived to be different from what had gone before, it was also marked by a transformed consciousness of time and history.[3] Specifically, the 'new,' the 'modern' become the dominant values in the understanding of history, establishing the self-understanding of modernity as not simply succeeding the past, but as a radical break with it. Moreover this understanding of modernity as a culture of permanent renewal contradicts the metaphysical *denial* of transience, and this tension informs the cultural neurosis that Nietzsche saw as emerging in his own time. From a Nietzschean perspective the historical consciousness of modernity indicates one more reason why the search for normative values *without foundations* is so pressing. Accordingly I shall discuss the problem of modernity and time, relating it, first, to Nietzsche's early consideration of the meaning and function of history and, second, to his theme of Eternal Recurrence, before going on to discuss the specifically aesthetic inflections of this problematic.

Modernity and History

It is commonly recognised that the first self-conscious manifestation of the modern understanding of history and time is Kant's essay 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?' in which the temporali-

ty of human being is marked by progress towards the ideal of rational autonomy.[4] History is thus no longer a simple sequence of events but is governed by an underlying logic. This logic is set within a temporal matrix in which the present is always a *negation* of the past, the future is infinitely open (one can speak of a historical sublime in this conception) and the present is always historical.[5] At the moment of its appearance the present has already become obsolete, and hence it functions as a point of constant transition between the past and the future, having no real duration itself. This conception of history and time is also central to the thought of Hegel, though with an important modification. Whereas the Kantian subject progresses to autonomy *in* history, it is the unfolding of the Hegelian '*Geist*' that provides history with its shape and momentum. As Hegel states, 'The aim of world history, therefore, is that *Geist* should attain knowledge of its own true nature, that it should objectivise this knowledge and transform it into a real world, and give itself an objective existence.'[6]

Kant and Hegel represent the best known philosophical articulations of this concept of time and history, but it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that it became widespread, in the form of a general optimism about the possibility of technical and scientific progress, and also an emerging literary and artistic avant-garde. Here one can see a further dimension to Nietzsche's critique of the optimism of Socratic culture, for his criticism is directed towards the notion of univocal individual and cultural development. With regard to the artistic avant-garde, Nietzsche saw in Wagner, Flaubert, Baudelaire or Delacroix a nihilistic intensification of the general problem of the relation of present and past. While the relation of the present to the historical past was already problematised in the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,* the desubstantialisation of the present, its historicisation in modernity, also problematised its own relation to itself. Hence the particular neurosis Nietzsche observes in romanticism, or the reliance on the repetitive and minimal *leitmotif* in the music of Wagner, which reflects the minimisation of the content of the historical present in modernity. In this context the intimate relation between nineteenth-century historicism and the emerging avant-garde is made clear, for both are fuelled by the temporal logic of modernity. In the former the historical present is sat-

urated by the past, whereas in the latter the contemporary is consumed by its efforts to evade its own obsolescence.[7]

Nihilism, the self-devaluation of values, thus receives a temporal inflection. Just as the metaphysical ideology of knowledge was bound to bring about its own undoing, so the optimistic faith in progress and infinite futural development would inevitably problematise the present. There thus emerges an obsession with loss; the orientation towards a self-renewing future implies that temporality is not mere succession, but is marked by loss, obsolescence and decay. In this respect it is no coincidence that the rise of modernity is accompanied by the culture of the museum. Nietzsche notes that 'We of the present day are only just beginning to form the chain of a very powerful future feeling' (*GS* §337), and this orientation towards the future is accompanied by an excessive historical sense. It is a sense, 'to which we Europeans lay claim as our speciality . . . only the nineteenth century knows this sense, as its sixth sense . . . our instincts now run back everywhere; we ourselves are a kind of chaos' (*BGE* §224). Though the ostensible object of Nietzsche's observation in this aphorism is the eclectic taste of nineteenth-century Europe, one can read into this a deeper sense of the historicisation of all culture, the disappearance of the present. As Nietzsche argues, 'The oversaturation of an age with history . . . implants the belief, harmful at any time, in the old age of mankind, the belief that one is a latecomer and epigone; it leads an age into a dangerous mood of irony in regard to itself and subsequently into the even more dangerous mood of cynicism' (*UM* II §5). This is confirmed by a passage from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* where Nietzsche writes, 'now cloud upon cloud rolled over the spirit, until eventually madness preached "Everything passes away, therefore everything is worth passing away"' (*Z* II 'Of Redemption'). For Nietzsche an essential part of the crisis of modernity is the unravelling and an intensification of metaphysics; the metaphysical denigration of mundane existence for its impermanence is intensified by the temporal consciousness of modernity.[8]

Although Nietzsche's interest in time and history is best known from the enigmatic theme of Eternal Recurrence of his later writings, it is already apparent in his earlier work. His notebooks from early 1873, for example, contain a number of fragments on the question of time, a re-

sult of his reading pre-Socratic thinkers such as Parmenides and Heraclitus. Most significant amongst these jottings is a critique of the linear idea of time: 'We measure time against a spatial constant and thereby assume that time is constant between moment A and moment B. Yet time is not a continuum; there is no line, just completely different moments in time. Actio in distans' (*KSA* 7:26 [12]). Nietzsche's early interest in the question of time and history crystallises in the second of the *Untimely Meditations,* 'On the Uses and Disadvantage of History for Life' (*UM* II §1). The essay begins with a parable, drawing out a fundamental distinction between animal and human existence: 'Look at the herd that grazes by you: it does not know what yesterday, what today is, it jumps around, eats, rests, digests, jumps around again, and so on from morning to night, from day to day, closely tied to its pleasure and displeasure.' Faced with this spectacle, the human asks the animal why it does not tell him of its happiness, and consequently 'The animal wishes to answer him and say "that's because I always forget what I was going to say" – but then it forgot even this answer and so remained silent.' In contrast, human being is weighed down with memory of the past, its essential historicity being defined as a fundamental determinant of its character. As Nietzsche says, 'He [i.e., the human] is surprised by his own inability to learn how to forget, and the fact that he constantly hangs on to the past: no matter how far and fast he might run, the chain runs with him.' Continuing further Nietzsche writes, 'In contrast, the human stands up to the great and ever greater burden of the past: this presses down on him or makes him bend over, it hinders his path like a dark and invisible weight.'

Memory is thus a primal determinant of human being, and Nietzsche even offers an elementary psychology on the basis of his understanding of the function of memory, according to which humans are caught in a form of schizophrenia. For while humans are marked by memory and history, the precondition to any thought or deed is the ability to forget. To recall, Nietzsche's analysis of metaphysics in his essay 'On Truth and Lie in Their Extra-moral Sense' pointed towards the constitutive function of forgetting in the construction of concepts. In the essay on history he notes, 'Imagine the most extreme example, a human who did not have any ability to forget, who would be condemned to seeing becom-

ing everywhere: such a person no longer believes in his own being, no longer believes in himself, sees everything flowing apart as animated points and loses himself in this stream of becoming: like the true pupil of Heraclitus he will no longer dare to lift his finger.' Formulating an embryonic perspectivism, Nietzsche insists on the necessity of a temporal horizon, in order to bring this overwhelming flux of time and history temporarily to a standstill: 'every living thing can only be healthy, strong and fruitful within a certain horizon: if it is incapable of drawing a horizon about itself . . . it will succumb, weakly or overhastily to a timely decay' (ibid.).

According to this preliminary account, human existence is structured by a dialectic of memory and amnesia, temporality and atemporality, being and becoming. And yet while Nietzsche seems to be making very general claims about human being, his comments are formulated in response to the specific problem of time and history in modern culture. Consequently one particular concern in this essay is modernity's excess of memory. Writing of the 'soul of modern man,' Nietzsche notes that 'Historical knowledge streams in unceasingly from inexhaustible wells . . . memory opens all its gates' (*UM* II §4). Moreover, the larger part of the essay is devoted to the discussion of specific types of historiography prevalent in his own time, namely, critical history, antiquarian history and monumental history. Yet, paradoxically, 'the unhistorical and the historical are necessary in equal measure' (*UM* II §1), and hence the discussion of the various modes of historiography that can be appropriated productively.

In critical history the historian uses his art 'once again in the service of life. He must have and occasionally employ the capacity to break apart and dissolve the past, in order to be able to live: he achieves this by putting it on trial, painfully cross-examining it, and finally condemning it' (*UM* II §3). In one sense one might detect here an anticipation of Nietzsche's genealogical interrogation of history, but there is an important difference. Although Nietzsche does not use the term yet, critical history is a product of nihilism; in its questioning of the past, and its recognition that 'human violence and weakness have always played a major part' in history, it is led to conclude that '"Everything which comes to be deserves to wither away. Thus it would be better if nothing

ever came into being"' (ibid.). History is thus condemned, a position which approximates the nihilistic denial of temporal existence that Nietzsche later regards as central to the metaphysical tradition.[9]

Antiquarian history, in contrast, lovingly preserves everything belonging to the past, offering the exemplary form of the hypertrophic historical sense of modernity. It consists of the 'repulsive spectacle of a blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of everything that has ever existed' (ibid.). Nietzsche's criticism of this type of history is twofold. First, the reverence towards the past is indiscriminate and thus pays no attention to questions of *evaluation*. Second, since it is concerned only with preserving the past, it mummifies history: 'antiquarian history itself degenerates from the moment it is no longer animated and inspired by the fresh life of the present' (ibid.). As Walter Benjamin later remarked, 'historicism presents an eternal image of the past.'[10] The concern for the preservation of the past constitutes one more symptom of the particularly modern temporal sense. It is notable, too, that for Benjamin it finds an analogue in the figure of the collector.[11] Hence antiquarian history devalues the present, and critical history the past, both of which have the same consequence, namely, a denial of temporality.

Monumental history exercises a selective appropriation of the past, not in order merely to retain it for antiquarian interest, but in order to reuse those past moments for the present. It is based on a logic of analogies. Nietzsche notes, 'History belongs above all to the active and the mighty one, who leads a great struggle, who requires models, teachers, consolers and cannot find them in the present' (ibid.). This is made all the more explicit when he expounds the aims and principles of the monumental historian:

> whatever was once able to stretch out the concept 'human' and replenish it more finely, that must be ready to hand for eternity, in order to facilitate this for eternity. That the great moments in the struggle of individuals form a chain, that in them is constituted a range of mountains through millennia, that for me the most elevated aspect of such a moment long past remain alive, bright and great – that is the fundamental thought in the belief in humanity which expresses itself in the demand for monumental history.
>
> (ibid.)

Much of the language Nietzsche uses to describe monumental history might indicate that this is closest to his own view of history. At the opening of the essay he quotes a letter from Goethe to Schiller: 'In any case I find everything detestable which merely instructs, without increasing my activity, or at least animating it' (*UM* II foreword). Encouraging an ethic of mimesis, that is, the mimesis of past great events and their continued execution, monumental history departs from a linear view of history and moves towards a cyclical understanding.[12] Great action is facilitated by the repetition of selected past events, a repetition which establishes a momentary permanence, freeing the agent from historical paralysis. And yet, as Nietzsche points out, 'with seductive similarities' monumental history 'inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism; and when we go on to think of this kind of history in the heads and hands of gifted egoists and visionary scoundrels, then we see empires destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions launched' (*UM* II §2). The inspiration that the analogies of monumental history provide function on the basis of a falsification of history, an overlooking of any of the past that interferes with the construction of analogies. Nietzsche's monumental history is thus a description of the ideological appropriation of history.

A central part of Nietzsche's essay is the concern with the consequences when one mode of historiography becomes the only one; for all his criticism of each in turn there is a recognition that each also has a positive use, but only if mediated by the others. Thus, for example, critical history provides the antiquarian with a mechanism for interrogating history, while monumental history prevents antiquarian history from degenerating into an exercise in the gathering of dead historical information. However, a further part of his essay focuses on the institutions of knowledge in contemporary Germany. Specifically, Nietzsche criticises the role of education and the reduction of history to science ('*Wissenschaft*'). The treatment of history as a dry science, to a vast quantity of 'indigestible stones of knowledge' (*UM* II §4), has had the effect of reifying historical knowledge. Nietzsche writes of the schism between inner and outer man, in which the exterior world of public, cultural knowledge has become split from the inner needs and uses of knowledge. What Nietzsche regards as 'true' culture is consequently cultivat-

ed inwardly, in contrast to the desiccated but officially sanctioned culture of contemporary Germany. Hence modern Germany 'is not a real culture at all but only a kind of knowledge of culture; it has an idea of and feeling for culture but no true cultural achievement' (ibid.). The criterion of real culture remains unspecified, but it is not difficult to conjecture that the object of Nietzsche's criticism is something like antiquarian history, which, when undertaken alone, robs the past of any meaningful and constructive relation to the present. Regarding the question of historical knowledge, Nietzsche's critique is motivated by the distinction between history as a scientific and as an aesthetic practice. As we have seen, history as a science fuels the decadence of modernity, while it becomes increasingly apparent that for Nietzsche it is only through an aesthetic practice that critical, monumental and antiquarian historiographies can be brought together 'in the service of life.' Thus 'the significance of history will not be thought to lie in its general propositions . . . but . . . in its taking a familiar, perhaps commonplace theme, an everyday melody and composing inspired variations on it . . . disclosing in the original theme a whole world of profundity, power and beauty' (*UM* §6). Behind this musical metaphor is a notion that bears some similarities to monumental history, but which stresses its *aesthetic* basis. In addition, Nietzsche emphasises the importance of a kind of aesthetic objectivity. He continues, 'For this, however, there is required above all great artistic facility, creative vision, loving absorption in the empirical data, the capacity to imagine the further development of a given type.' Nietzsche distinguishes between aesthetic objectivity – 'the outwardly tranquil but inwardly flashing eye of the artist' – and scientific or scholarly objectivity, which is possible precisely because the subject has no meaning for the scholar: 'This is the relationship between the classicists and the Greeks they study: they mean nothing to one another' (ibid.).

It is important to recall that Nietzsche's attack on the culture of historical learning in late-nineteenth-century Germany is grounded on a more general philosophical concern, namely, the role of time in general, from which two conclusions are reached. The first is a sense that modern culture has a corrupted relationship to history, and this parallels my earlier comments about the specific temporal logic of moderni-

ty. Second, Nietzsche indicates the artistic basis of a counter-modern temporality, in which the past, the present and the future are brought together into an aesthetic relation, underpinned by a form of aesthetic objectivity. In the latter, scholarly detachment is combined with affective investment. This model informs Nietzsche's espousal of Dionysian classicism, as well as his positive attitude towards the Renaissance. It also forms the problematic into which is inscribed the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence.

Eternal Recurrence

Eternal Recurrence is notorious as the most elusive aspect of Nietzsche's thought, and one cannot hope to give an exhaustive account of its full range of meanings and uses within the space of a single chapter. Hence my treatment of the Eternal Recurrence will of necessity be highly selective, leaving to book-length studies on the subject a more complete understanding of the 'thought of thoughts.'[13] Undoubtedly a large part of the problem of interpretation stems from Nietzsche's refusal to present it in a unified and coherent manner. Adopting a strategy of resistance to conceptualisation, Nietzsche presents the doctrine as so many speculative thoughts and unanswered questions. When first presented in published form, in *The Gay Science,* it is communicated as follows: 'What if a demon crept up on you in your lonely solitude during the day or at night and said to you: "You will have to live this life, which you are now living and have lived, once more and countless times again"' (*GS* §341). Elsewhere, and especially in the Nachlass, it is presented as a cosmological theory, with scientific 'proofs.' There is the additional problem that Nietzsche is keen to express how inarticulable is the 'thought of thoughts.' In one fragment from the period of the composition of *The Gay Science* he introduces the idea that everything might recur, adding, 'Beginning of August 1881 in Sils-Maria, 6,000 feet above sea level and much higher above all human things' (*KSA* 9:11 [141]). In the section on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo* he refers to this note when he describes the genesis of the thought. He writes, 'The founding conception of this work [i.e., *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*], the thought of Eternal Return, this highest formula of affirmation that can ever be at-

tained, belongs to August 1881: it is cast onto a sheet with the subtitle: "6,000 feet beyond humanity and time"' (*EH* Z §1).

Its various formulations permit it to be interpreted as an ontological doctrine, as a scientific theory (fully furnished with scientific proofs), a speculative cosmology, or as a moral imperative. In Martin Heidegger's interpretation, for example, Eternal Recurrence is central to Nietzsche's thought, more fundamental even than will to power. In the very first section of Heidegger's discussion of Eternal Recurrence he writes, 'the doctrine of the eternal return of the same is the fundamental doctrine in Nietzsche's philosophy. Bereft of this teaching as its ground, Nietzsche's philosophy is like a tree without roots.'[14] In addition, he regarded the idea as a fundamental metaphysical 'assertion concerning beings as a whole,'[15] equal to Plato's doctrine of the Ideas. In one sense it is a scientific theory, a cosmological doctrine and a moral imperative, and at the same time it is none of these. I would argue rather that it is a strategic gambit, which continues Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical obsession with transcendence. As I have argued earlier, the logic of time pays an essential role in this process.

In the scientific version of the doctrine, the argument runs as follows:

> If the world may be thought of as a certain definite quantity of force and as a certain definite number of centres of force . . . it follows that in the great dice game of existence, it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In infinite time every possible combination would at some time or other be reached; more, it would have been reached an infinite number of times. And since between every combination and its next recurrence all other possible combinations would have to take place, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circular movement of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circular movement that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum.
>
> (*WP* §1066)

This passage is rather awkward, most particularly because the manner of argumentation and the premisses of the argument run counter to the nature of his work of this period, with its ever increasing hostility to the sciences and scientific thinking.

One solution to this difficulty is to suggest that one need not interpret Nietzsche as treating this as a real argument in which he believes.[16] Instead Nietzsche is employing the language of contemporary sciences merely to demonstrate that his theory can just as easily be argued for *in scientific terms* as the contemporary conception of time as a linear process. Nietzsche is thus not trying to prove the doctrine of Eternal Recurrence with a 'scientific' proof, but rather demonstrating that a notion of cyclical time might be no less valid than one of linear time. For Nietzsche the doctrine requires a level of comprehension far above that of everyday human thinking, yet given that this is not possible for all, he is obliged to present it in different terms. In one sense, therefore, one could compare this passage with the 'Antinomies of Pure Reason' in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. In the four Antinomies Kant puts forward arguments both to assert and to contradict a variety of cosmological and metaphysical beliefs such as the infinity of space and time, the indivisibility of matter, the universality of causality, the existence of an 'absolutely necessary' being.[17] The purpose is not to argue for one particular position against another; rather, it is to demonstrate the *possibility* of arguing for either, even though both, for Kant, lead to an insoluble paradox. The only solution is to recognise the limitations of reason; the contradictions arise only when rational argument aspires to account for what lies beyond the limits of experience. Nietzsche's rehearsal of a 'scientific' argument parallels the Antinomies, indeed, could even be conceived of as a parody of them. A similar point can be said of Nietzsche's cosmological 'proof' of cyclical time, which mimics the language of Aristotelian thinking. A fragment from 1885 addresses the understanding of time as linear in a manner analogous to the scientific 'proof,' in other words by countering the teleological assumptions of Aristotelianism on its own terms: 'If the world had a goal, it must have been reached. If there were an unintended final state for it, this too must have been reached. If it were at all capable of tarrying, of becoming fixed, of "being," if, amongst all its becoming, it were capable just for one instant of "being," then all becoming would long since have come to an end, similarly with all thinking, with all "spirit." The fact of "spirit" as a becoming proves that the world has no goal, no final state and is incapable of being' (*WP* §1062). Again Nietzsche is not trying to prove his doc-

trine; rather, he is bringing under scrutiny the implications of the Aristotelian assumption of linear time, leading towards a moment of apocalypse and subsequent redemption. He is cashing out in these terms what it would mean to maintain both a recognition of the dynamics of world history and belief in a telos which would amount to a transcendence above and beyond the world of becoming. Implicit in this polemic is also an assault on Hegel's philosophy of history. For, Nietzsche is arguing, if the movement of spirit, or '*Geist,*' towards Absolute Knowledge constitutes the unfolding of world history, the question is raised as to the course of history once spirit has reached its goal. And yet while Nietzsche is critical of Hegel, his own considerations of time and history highlight the role of thinking both becoming and being, time and eternity, as was evident already in *Untimely Meditations.* On this view, then, the more scientific or cosmological elaborations of Eternal Recurrence form part of a polemic informed by an *ad hominem* approach to its targets, and it is this approach which most graphically illustrates Nietzsche's treatment of metaphysics as a textual practice, where the manner to undermine such practices is not to critique them in the name of some other, higher truth, but rather to assimilate oneself to the peculiarities of their discourse in order to dismantle them from within.

Eternal Recurrence is anticipated in many ways in Nietzsche's earlier account of the function of history and the past in informing human agency. However, there are differences, and we must examine the manner in which he explores the possible meanings of Eternal Recurrence. I shall begin with its two most accessible appearances, in *The Gay Science* and *Beyond Good and Evil.* In the former it is introduced as a question. Nietzsche asks, 'how would it be if . . .?' In response to the question he asks how one might respond: 'Would you not cast yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon that spoke in this manner? Or have you ever experienced a monstrous moment when you would answer him "you are a god, and I have never heard anything more divine!" If that thought gained power over you, it would change you as you are, and perhaps crush you; the question with everything and anything "do you want this once more, and then countless times again?" would lie in your hands like the greatest of burdens' (*GS* §341).

Here Nietzsche is not putting forward a statement concerning the 'objective' nature of cosmological time. Rather, his interest is in how human behaviour would be affected if one accepted the thought of Return. Does one resign oneself to this 'vicious circle' of time, cursing the very demon that suggested the idea, or does one fully affirm and embrace the idea, the response Nietzsche terms *amor fati?* This is the crucial aspect of the thought of Eternal Return, inasmuch as it has bearing upon the thought of redemption and transcendence, and it is this aspect which Nietzsche discusses more explicitly in the aphorism from *Beyond Good and Evil.* For here, Nietzsche notes that whoever attempts to fully explore pessimism in all its world-denying manifestations will also be open to 'the ideal of the most high-spirited, animated and world-affirming human, who has not only come to terms with what was and is, and learned to endure it, but also desires to have it again, just as it was and is, for eternity, crying out insatiably "da capo"' (*BGE* §56). In both aphorisms Nietzsche is concerned with a sense of time that would contradict the temporal logic of modernity, for which time and history are problems to be overcome.

I mentioned earlier Heidegger's view that Eternal Recurrence represents Nietzsche's fundamental metaphysical position as regards the question of beings and their constitution. Given Nietzsche's extensive criticisms of the delusions of logic, metaphysics and science, it is difficult to imagine him claiming Eternal Recurrence to be the objective 'how' of things. Instead Nietzsche is interested in the implications of re-thinking temporality, regardless of its 'truthfulness.' He is suggesting that by viewing time cyclically, one might conceive of human agency and social activity differently so as to avoid the onset of nihilism. More recently it has been suggested that Eternal Recurrence is a statement about human identity.[18] In particular, it is possible to highlight the role of repetition in forming identity, ranging from the iterative nature of linguistic signs through to the use of imitation in acquired learning and the central role of memory in the construction of identity. Unfortunately, this reading simply re-inscribes Heidegger's ontological interpretation at the level of the social. Eternal Recurrence is now a theory concerning the nature of human historical existence and as such recalls Freud's use of the notion in his speculations on the function of repetition in human psychology.

The mimetic theory of human behaviour, the understanding of language as a system of *iterable* signs and the acceptance of the fact that experiences are structured by a common horizon naturally draw us towards the idea of seeing Eternal Recurrence as a descriptive analysis of the temporality of human being. Yet such an interpretation fails to take into account the fact that Nietzsche's interest is in how 'incorporation' of the idea of Eternal Recurrence would *change* and *alter* human thinking and practices, not in whether it constitutes an adequate description. The thought is described as a burden which threatens to crush those to whom it is communicated. One is therefore compelled to ask why a *description* of the mimetic aspects of human activity should be seen as a crushing burden, and moreover what room this leaves for the dramatic term *amor fati?* To understand this still further we must turn to Nietzsche's most difficult presentation of the doctrine.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra,* Nietzsche identifies the impossibility of recuperating the past, the recognition that the past cannot be changed or restored to the present, as one of the principal causes for the human rage against time. All volitional acts have to accept the past as the absolute other of the present, as absolutely irrecoverable. He notes that '"It was": this is the name of the will's gnashing of teeth and most solitary affliction. Impotent towards what has been done – it is a malevolent spectator of everything past,' and he adds further on, 'The fact that time does not flow backwards is the cause of its anger: "Whatever was" – this is the name of the stone that it cannot budge' (*Z* II 'On Redemption'). It is this very fact which is the origin of the will's desire for revenge against the past, its condemnation of the object beyond its power, and consequently, because of the historicity of human being, its condemnation of life itself.

Earlier in the same section we find Zarathustra coming into contact with the 'inverse cripples' of modernity, those representatives of modern theoretical culture who suffer from hypertrophy of one particular organ, the most striking example being the strange creatures consisting of an ear on a stalk. The significance of this episode is all too clear: their hypertrophic mutation symbolises the incomplete and one-sided understanding of modern humanity, with its rigid and narrow interpretative perspective on the world. As Zarathustra says, 'I am wandering

amongst humans as if amongst the fragments and limbs of humans,' and it is this notion of fragmentariness which Nietzsche then returns to when describing the posture of the volitional agent towards time past: 'All "it was" is a fragment, a puzzle, a fearful chance event – until the creative will says to it: "but that is how I wanted it! that is how I shall want it!"' (ibid.). Nietzsche is thus addressing the specific problem of time in modern culture; as I have suggested, the temporality of modernity renders the present always already obsolete. The obsession of modernity with the 'now' as a transcendence of the past is transformed into an obsession with the 'it was.' The absolute heterogeneity of present and past portrays the past as irrecoverable and develops various kinds of 'madness': 'the will takes revenge on everything capable of suffering for the fact that it cannot go back.' It can be the nostalgia for everything past, which results in the indiscriminate preservation of all history, as exemplified in antiquarian historiography. It can lead to the desire to transcend time altogether: '"Where is the redemption from the flux of things and the punishment of existence?"' or to the nihilistic conclusion: '"And this is itself justice, that law of time, whereby it is destined to devour its children": thus madness preached' (ibid.).

The function of Eternal Recurrence is apparent in a later section in *Zarathustra,* where the eponymous hero approaches a gate called 'Moment,' a gate lying at the point of convergence of the two paths of eternal past and eternal future. How should this placing of the gate between these two paths, those of the eternally past and the eternally futural, be understood? I would like to suggest that the way in which Nietzsche describes this experience mirrors the temporal logic of modernity. The present has no substance; it is a mere point of transition between the past and the future. The future and the past are envisaged as infinite paths – a parallel with the historical sublime, in which the future in particular is conceived as perpetually open. The scene is thus a dramatisation of the modernist model of time, but Nietzsche is also interested in interrogating that model. He writes, 'Are not all things so tightly knotted together that this moment carries all things in its wake? – Thus itself in addition?' (Z III 'Of the Vision and the Riddle'). All moments of time bear the trace or the imprint of all others, in a scheme which stresses the intertwining of past, present and future. What is introduced here,

and what is implicit in all of Nietzsche's discussions of Eternal Recurrence, is a questioning of the separation of time into heterogeneous 'aspects.' Nietzsche is proposing a temporality in which each moment of the present belongs to the past and to the future, robbing it of any particular privilege in epistemological and ontological terms. The significance of this stems from the fact that the axiomatic role of the 'now' in modern culture lies at the root of its neuroses about history and its nihilistic denial of time.

In one sense Eternal Recurrence is also fundamental to modernity, as Walter Benjamin would later suggest; the appearance of the ever new degenerates into a repetition of the ever same.[19] However, Benjamin is focusing on the question as a purely formal problem, in which the present becomes abstracted and evacuated of any content. Nietzsche's treatment of Eternal Recurrence, in contrast, regards the present as overrich in content, inasmuch as it has the future and the past inscribed within it. No longer the occasion for the transcendence of the past, the present functions as the site where the past is multiply interpreted and appropriated. Here the lesson of *Untimely Meditations* reappears, since Nietzsche had focused on the necessity of plural historiographies, which are combined as an artistic act. Presentness is thus always an aesthetic achievement, and thus Nietzsche is divorcing the present from the new. Stripping the present of its privilege as the place of the appearance of the absolutely new nullifies the sense of the past as something that is no longer, that is lost. It is also important that Nietzsche's emphasis on history as an aesthetic *appropriation* absolves him of the charge of resorting to a conservative anti-modernism, where the present is always in the shadow of tradition.

The question remains, however, as to why this should prove a crushing burden. There are two possibilities, of which the first is indicated by Benjamin's reading of Eternal Recurrence. Benjamin's attention to the formal structure of Eternal Recurrence reveals the extent to which Nietzsche's so-called thought of thoughts entails less the application of a completely new model of time, and more an inversion of the meaning of an already existing one. In this it parallels the transformation of reactive into active nihilism and calls for a sheer effort of will. In both cases the present is the point of collision between past and future, but now it

is no longer a simple empty vanishing point, but rather a point from which the meaning of the past (and the future) is constantly being rethought. The repetitive nature of the present now stems from the fact that in purely formal terms, the past is always being refigured, but its content never remains the same. *Amor fati* logically follows from this. Far from being a fatalistic acceptance of everything that has been, it is an affirmation of everything that has been in light of the recognition that the *meaning* of history can always change depending on the content of the present. It is a counterpoint to the nihilist rage that the transience of existence deprives it of the right to be. The love of all existence maximises the possibility of interpretations, and thus the range of possibilities of the present. It forms a parallel to Nietzsche's emphasis on retaining the maximum number of perspectives. This leads on to the second way in which Eternal Recurrence presents a crushing burden. Just as Nietzsche seems to regard only the Übermensch as capable of living in the uncertainty of the plurality of perspectives, so the addition of a historical dimension multiplies the challenge it presents. One can see a distant echo here of Hegel's dialectic, in which the repetitive structure of affirmation, negation and sublation contrasts with a differential progression of content. So too the perpetual recurrence of all existence does not imply an identity of meaning. Eternal Recurrence thus presents the totality of past inscriptions as a set of potentialities. This can become a crushing burden if we allow ourselves to be overwhelmed by the sheer range of potentialities, becoming, like Achilles in 'Homer's Competition,' paralysed by the infinity of choices. Alternatively it can be an opportunity to exercise a certain selectivity, in choosing which marks we should allow to inscribe themselves on the future, which itself will eventually be our own past. We can choose which patterns should become recurrent, and change who we are, as individuals.

Time and the Question of Art

A fundamental aspect of Nietzsche's understanding of history is the sense that the past should always be appropriated aesthetically, in contrast to the mummifying practices of academic historical discourse. In addition, Nietzsche was also deeply concerned with the impact of the

question of history on an understanding of artistic production. In this context it is important to recall that the idea of modernity was most potently experienced as a problem in the realm of aesthetic discourse, when the dominance of classical artistic models was questioned in late-seventeenth-century France, a questioning that gained ever greater momentum and urgency during the course of the century, culminating perhaps in German romantic literary theory and its antecedent, the *Sturm und Drang* of the young Schiller and Goethe.[20] From *The Birth of Tragedy* onwards, the relation to the ancients frames much of Nietzsche's discourse on art. However, now the ancients are no longer a problem; indeed, Nietzsche appropriates Greece as a counter to the impoverishment of modernity. For Nietzsche the question of aesthetic time is no longer focused on the legitimacy of the external cultural inheritance, but on the temporality *within* the work of art and within aesthetic experience. In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had drawn much of his account of beauty from Schopenhauer, where the beautiful was characterised as invoking a suspension of time, hence the exclamation of the Apollonian dreamer, 'It is a dream, I want to continue dreaming,' or rather, a suspension of the linear time of modernity and its replacement by the circular time of artistic ecstasy. This is the basis of the drive for stability and ahistoricity that characterises beauty, to which end metaphysical will to power devotes all its interpretative energies. As Zarathustra famously sings, 'Pain speaks: Pass into decline! / Yet all desire wants eternity – / – wants deep, deep eternity!' (*Z* IV 'The Sign').

The significance of the beautiful, and especially of the work of art, is not to be derived solely from its tendency to produce permanence within the temporal flow of life or 'becoming,' however. This, in its most general form, would be common to art and to all human interpretative activity in general. The will to form, this will to permanence at all time must not be confused with the task of antiquarian history, which, in its desperate attempt to transcend history, halts time by the indiscriminate preservation of everything past. Rather, as will to power, as becoming, in a manner analogous to Eternal Recurrence, it too represents a *selective* production of permanence, engendered by the rapture of the aesthetic state. Here, then, in a different context there recurs Nietzsche's Dionysian classicism.[21] Whereas in the previous chapter I

explored Nietzsche's interest in classicism in relation to his hostility to the excess of romanticism, now the classicist reappropriation of the past is read in the light of the problem of history. In this regard the temporal significance of the sublime also comes into its own. As Karl-Heinz Bohrer has pointed out, a central motif in *The Birth of Tragedy* is 'the sudden,' which Nietzsche adopts from the tradition of the sublime.[22] The 'sudden' appearance of the Dionysian represents a concentrated 'punctuation' of the present that momentarily suspends time. Bohrer's analysis of the role of the sudden in Nietzsche and in the subsequent history of modernism is highly suggestive, but his emphasis on the Dionysian moment in Nietzsche misrepresents the extent to which the sublime is a dialectical process in which the Dionysian suspension of time is sublated by the Apollonian reaffirmation of historical presence. Artistic praxis, as Nietzsche imagines it *should* be, is characterised by the momentary breaking down of a temporal horizon at the same time that the horizon is re-affirmed. History is negated, then re-instated, in mediated form, a notion which is obviously suggestive both in terms of how Nietzsche viewed the function of artistic tradition and in terms of how he viewed the role of time *within* the work.

In *Twilight of the Idols* there are a number of aphorisms that indicate the parallels between Nietzsche's conception of art and his ideas of historical appropriation. He writes that 'The essential thing about rapture is the feeling of increased power and plenitude. From these powers one bestows upon things, one compels them to take from us, one violates them – this process is called Idealising . . . A sweeping emphasis on the main features, so that the others disappear beyond them' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §8). In the following aphorism he asserts, 'In this state [i.e. the state of rapture or intoxication] one enriches everything out of one's own plenitude: one sees what one wants to see, one sees it swollen, pressed, strong, overladen with power' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §9). Art, for Nietzsche, does not affirm through some symbolic representation of transcendence, or through the transcendent redemption of the aesthetic state. Rather it transfigures through re-production of the monumental. In the same way that he imagines the *thought* of Eternal Recurrence capable of countering the sickliness of modernity, so selective aesthetic repetition and idealisation produce an affirmative transfiguration of the world.

The horizon of ahistoricity required for human agency is brought about in art through its selective permanentising of a temporal world. In a note from 1888 Nietzsche writes that 'artists are not to see anything as it is, but more fully, but more simply, but more strongly: for this they must have a manner of eternal youth and spring, a type of permanent rapture in their body' (*WP* §800). Quite clearly Nietzsche is laying down the outline of a classical aesthetic. The emphasis on permanence, simplification and idealisation seems a virtual repetition of notions current one hundred and fifty years previously. However, one has to be wary of assimilating his project to eighteenth-century classicism. His evident sympathies for monumental history have to be set against his recognition of its dangers, and so likewise the specificities of his classicism have to be acknowledged. Admittedly, his persistent resurrection of the Greeks indicates his preference for a certain tradition, but I would suggest that this be thought of as following the model of Eternal Recurrence. In other words, the return to the Greeks is more of a *selective* reappropriation, a theme to which I shall return later.

It is also important to explore the function of permanence *within* the work of art, in particular, through the contrast between Wagner and tragedy. As I have noted, a central element in Wagner's 'endless melody' is the reduction of melody to minimal *leitmotifs* – Nietzsche referred to Wagner as 'our greatest musical miniaturist' (*CW* §7) – which are then endlessly repeated. As Nietzsche comments, 'Wagner was unable to create on the basis of the whole, he had no choice, he was compelled to make fragmentary pieces, "motifs," gestures, formulae, doubling and hundred-fold repetition' (*CW* §10). Yet this repetition of minimal motifs was regarded by Nietzsche as the sign of Wagner's decadence; it disrupted the temporal punctuation of the melodic form and thus constituted a collapse of musical structure. That Nietzsche viewed Wagner's music in this way is evident from an aphorism in *Human All Too Human* entitled 'How modern music is supposed to make the soul move,' where Nietzsche compares the rhythm of pre- Wagnerian music in terms of dancing, in contrast to Wagner, who invites the listener to swim: 'The artistic objective pursued by modern music . . . can be made clear by imagining one is going into the sea, gradually relinquishing a firm tread on the bottom and finally surrendering unconditionally

to the watery element.' With this metaphor Nietzsche is expressing the notion that Wagner's music 'endeavours to break up all mathematical symmetry of tempo and force, and sometimes even to mock it . . . the brutalisation and decay of rhythm itself' (*HAH* II §134). It was Wagner's use of repetition that later led Adorno to see it as music for amnesiacs; for Adorno, the absolutism of the repetitive motif paralleled commodity fetishism and advertising, a view that echoes Nietzsche's criticism that Wagner's music drama represents a debasement of art into popular entertainment.[23] Furthermore, the link between Wagnerian endless melody, repetition and commodification recalls Walter Benjamin's employment of Eternal Recurrence as a description of capitalist modernity that I noted earlier. For Nietzsche, and subsequently for Adorno, the music of Wagner is organised around an empty repetition that disrupts all sense of time. As Adorno notes, in Wagner 'time seems to be a kind of abstract framework.'[24] This mirrors the reduction of time in modernity to a succession of empty abstract 'nows' and contrasts with the temporality that Nietzsche is trying to think through in his presentation of Eternal Recurrence.

Nietzsche's criticism of time and rhythm in Wagner can thus be extended to qualify his own classicism, which is not based around a repetition but appropriation, and this difference is fortified by reconsidering his reading of tragedy. In *The Birth of Tragedy,* Nietzsche employs the discourse of the sublime as the basis of his interpretation of tragedy and art in general. Tragic drama performs a twofold function: through its mimesis of destruction and negation it draws out the limits of human knowing, overthrowing all attempts at making meaning. As such it achieves in dramatic terms what Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics performs in philosophical discourse, namely, an undermining of belief in the fixity of signs. The second function – what might be termed the affirmative moment of the dialectic – is to transform the negation of meaning into active nihilism. It opens up a space in which judgements are asserted and the contingent nature of their interpretative horizon revealed. Hence tragedy is the artistic representation of the dynamic system of interpretative will to power.

While in other respects he is explicitly opposed to the tradition of post-Kantian aesthetics, Nietzsche has here, perhaps unconsciously, ap-

propriated a central element of the Idealist and Romantic philosophies of art in order to translate his most radical thoughts concerning truth, knowledge and time into the sphere of aesthetics. His reading of tragedy implies a certain understanding of truth and temporality, none of which is articulated fully at the time of *The Birth of Tragedy,* but which is developed in his later work. As I indicated earlier, immediately after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy* the duality of the Dionysian and the Apollonian becomes much less significant in Nietzsche's considerations of art. Yet while the Apollonian remains of lesser significance, the Dionysian returns in his later writing. In both his preface to the second edition of 1886 and in his commentary on the work in *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche claims his major innovation to be the introduction of the notion of the Dionysian – and here I read the words 'Dionysian' and 'Dionysus' as they appear in his later work – to be rhetorical figures, metonyms for the whole dialectic of tragic wisdom I have outlined. In his later writings the dialectic of Dionysian and Apollonian becomes supplanted by the oppositional pairs Dionysus and Christ (or the Crucified) and Dionysus and Socrates. Both function to symbolise the conflict between metaphysics and its antithesis, and the disappearance of Apollo from Nietzsche's language again indicates that 'Dionysian' denotes the entire *dialectic.*[25]

The work of art, as an expression of will to power, as the construction of a world, thematises the temporality of becoming and Eternal Recurrence through the production of a non-permanent order of meaning, and in the tragic artwork by depicting a succession of worlds whose basis is negated then reaffirmed. In each of these aspects of art we find an implicit affirmation of immanence, a refusal to present a world that might transcend its own temporality, where human being is immersed in time. Inasmuch as the temporality of the work of art represents an important weapon in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, the temporality of art requires further exploration in two key areas, namely, art's lack of interpretative finality and its mimetic engagement with its own history. I shall deal with each in turn.

In terms of the first area, the interpretative finality of art, Nietzsche's thinking works through an idea discussed by Kant. A crucial aspect of Kant's aesthetic theory is the notion that the aesthetic object is

inhabited by an essential semantic ambiguity, and indeed it is this indeterminacy which in Kant makes aesthetic judgement into such an important vehicle for the free play of the imagination. Both in judgements of the beautiful and in judgements of the sublime the significant factor is the conceptual indeterminacy of the representation such that no objective finality can be imputed to it, for 'in order to represent an objective finality in a thing we must first have a concept of what sort of thing it is to be.'[26] This lack of a specific concept of what sort of thing the representation is meant to be, while usually seen as the distinguishing mark of free beauty (as opposed to dependent beauty), is extended in the 'Analytic of the Sublime' to include both the sublime and the beautiful. Kant writes, 'the beautiful seems to be regarded as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of understanding, the sublime as a presentation of an indeterminate concept of reason' (§23).

In other words, the conceptual indeterminacy of the representation means that while the representation does seem to possess a certain internal finality, hence purposiveness, its end can never truly be established. The imagination can supply possible final ends to the representation but will never be able to rest on a final purpose. For Kant this process enhances life; he notes that 'the beautiful is directly attended with a feeling of the furtherance of life, and is compatible with charms and a playful imagination,' adding that 'the sublime is a pleasure . . . brought about by the feeling of a momentary check to the vital forces followed at once by a discharge all the more powerful' (§23).

In the case of the sublime, what defeats the possibility of any conceptual finality is the magnitude of the representation, which so threatens to overwhelm the senses that we pay no attention to trying to form a concept of what sort of thing it is. Crowther writes, for example, that 'an animal of a definite species could be sublime. It would have to be of so monstrous a size that, psychologically speaking, we are so engrossed in the act of trying perceptually to apprehend its enormity that we pay no attention to (indeed are wholly distracted from) the kind of animal it is. In this case the animal's very size is "contra-final."'[27] As I noted earlier, it is significant that Kant discusses art in the 'Analytic of the Sublime,' rather than the 'Analytic of the Beautiful,' since art, like the sublime, instead of merely producing a free play of the faculties, actually

induces a tension between the imagination and understanding by the sensuous presentation of aesthetic ideas. Aesthetic ideas, that is, those ideas of reason 'which language . . . can never get quite on level terms with or render completely intelligible' (§49) thus present an image in art which 'surpasses nature,' able to 're-model imagination.'

For all his putative opposition to Kantian aesthetics, Nietzsche has in fact absorbed a crucial element of Kant's aesthetic thought in two ways. First, Kant's central claim concerning the purposiveness without purpose of the beautiful, or the conceptual indeterminacy of the sublime and art, leads to the notion that the process of comprehending and apprehending the representation is never completed. In cases of the mathematical sublime, in which the object is so vast that it exceeds the powers of intuition, time would have to stand still, an impossible demand, since time is itself a form of intuition, and hence as a constituent of experience cannot be overcome. Consequently the subject is caught in a temporal loop, robbed of any finality in its attempt to come to terms with the object of judgement. Second, Kant considers this to be an invigorating process, one which constantly remodels experience. Even in the case of the sublime, which one might consider to be an entirely negative, because overwhelming, experience, Kant regards it as indirectly enhancing the cognitive faculties, causing an ever greater discharge of cognitive energies. This restructuring of experience by art is echoed by Nietzsche's claim, in *Human All Too Human,* that 'religion and art (metaphysical philosophy too) take pains to transform sensibility, partly through transformation of our judgements about our experiences . . . partly through the awakening of pleasure in pain, in emotion per se (whence the art of the tragic serves as their starting point' (*HAH* I §108).

These two particular aspects of Kant translate easily into Nietzsche's thinking about art. Specifically, the notion of indeterminacy, which became a key element both in the art theories of the romantics and in Hegel's analysis of romantic art, prefigures the paradigm of knowledge-as-interpretation in Nietzsche's thought, which I have emphasised throughout.[28] Ambiguity as a theme runs throughout Nietzsche's writings, and specifically his writings on the romantic and the classical, as cultural and artistic typological classifications. In the first volume of

Human All-Too Human he had ascribed the effect of art to its lack of finality. He opens aphorism 178 with the title 'Incompleteness as that which is effective,' and then elaborates how 'relief figures work so strongly on the imagination that they are, as it were, on the point of stepping off from the wall and suddenly, hindered somehow, come to a halt: similarly the relief- like representation of a thought, of a whole philosophy, is more effective than an exhaustive excursus' (*HAH* I §178). It is an argument he repeats later, describing 'Incompleteness as an artistic stimulant,' and claiming that 'Incompleteness is frequently more effective than completeness' (*HAH* I §199).

The entire section entitled 'From the soul of artists and writers' is littered with aphorisms which assert the importance of ambiguity and non-sense as an artistic stimulant. He discusses the 'Joy in nonsense,' claiming that the 'overthrowing of experience into its opposite, of purposiveness into purposelessness . . . causes pleasure' (*HAH* I §213). Although he may claim to be deliberately challenging Kant's celebrated maxim of 'purposiveness without purpose,' Nietzsche can here be seen rather to be merely pursuing to an extreme what is implicit in Kant's *Critique of Judgement*. It is a way of thinking that points towards the later view, expressed in 1888, that 'the aesthetic state has a superabundance of means of communication . . . it is the high point of communicability' (*WP* §809). Here I take Nietzsche to be referring to the excess of meaning in any particular work of art, for the aesthetic state 'is the source of languages . . . languages of tone as well as the languages of gesturing and looking' (ibid.). This claim supports the idea of the aesthetic state (and hence the work of art) as the site of the creation, destruction and re-creation of meaning, in contrast to philosophic or scientific discourses, which simply replicate predetermined patterns of signification.

The notion of the fragmentary, whose importance to German romanticism is well attested, also remains a prime concern for Nietzsche.[29] In *The Gay Science,* for example, he writes of 'The stimulus of incompleteness,' noting that 'I see here a poet who, like many a person, achieves a higher stimulus with his imperfections than with everything which is well-rounded and perfectly formed in his hands.' Continuing in this vein he writes that the artist's work 'never completely expresses

what he would like to express, what he would like to have seen: it appears as if he has had the foretaste of a vision, not the vision itself' (*GS* §79). It is this adoption of a Kantian thematic which lies at the root of Nietzsche's celebration of plurality and ambiguity, the 'joy in uncertainty and polysemy,' where 'the spirit thereby enjoys its plurality of masks and its artfulness . . . it feels best protected and concealed precisely through its Protean art' (*BGE* §230). It is a conviction retained by Nietzsche up until his final writings, claiming in *Twilight of the Idols* that one is inevitably compromising oneself 'whenever one is consistent. Whenever one goes in a straight line. Whenever one is less than quinquesemic [*fünfdeutig*]' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §18).

Nietzsche is not making a claim concerning all artistic forms of expression, for as I suggested earlier, he makes a typological distinction between romantic and classical which can be read as a metaphor for his own complex clash with modernity. A note from 1887 entitled 'Aesthetica' makes quite clear the manner in which the notion of ambiguity becomes translated in Nietzsche's thinking into a specific problem for the modern. He argues, for example, that 'the preference for questionable and terrible things is a symptom of strength,' repeating his claim later when he writes, 'It is a sign of the feeling of power and well-being how much one can ascribe to things their terrifying, their questionable character; and whether one at all needs "resolutions" at the end' (*WP* §852). Hence we conclude the 'strong' work of art refuses to produce any finality of meaning, instead affirming its own ambiguities, the ambiguities of the world it has created, but without lapsing into the complete collapse of meaning and structure that Nietzsche detects in romanticism. As such it is bound up both to will to power, which seeks resistance, and to the temporal structure of Eternal Return. The work of art, and here Nietzsche is still thinking primarily of tragedy, refuses to offer a moment of final resolution. It thematises the lack of interpretative finality of the world in general, and hence we see all the more the connection between the world and the text, viewing the world *as* a text, art *as* the world, an understanding which I have drawn on in the first chapter.[30]

Nietzsche's emphasis on the incomplete, the fragmentary and the ambiguous in his aesthetic writing raises a potentially awkward issue,

for at first sight it appears to contradict his predilection for classicism and his dislike of romanticism, with which the fragmentary is more usually associated. In addition, a further problem arises upon reading the remainder of the 1887 fragment I just quoted. Nietzsche writes, 'the artists of décadence, who at bottom stand nihilistically towards life, take refuge in the beauty of form . . . in the select things where nature became perfect . . . the "love of beauty" can thus be something other than the faculty of seeing the beautiful, of creating the beautiful: it can also be the expression of inability' (ibid.). With these remarks Nietzsche seems to have overturned his prior schematic opposition of romantic and classic, or modernity and his own anti-modernist position. Previously the modern, or the decadent, bore the mark of disorganisation, lack of form and so forth, whereas in contrast the classical is admired precisely because it represents a putting-to-work of will to power, an ability to control and master, a phenomenon I shall discuss in greater depth in the next chapter. Now the characteristics seem to be reversed. Additionally Nietzsche sees strength manifest not only in the beautiful but also in the ugly. In a fragment from 1888 he argues, 'There is no pessimistic art . . . art affirms. Job affirms. But Zola? de Goncourt? The things they show are ugly, but that they show them comes from joy in the ugly . . . it's no good! you are fooling yourselves if you claim otherwise. How liberating Dostoyevsky is!' (*WP* §821). Nor is this a momentary aberration. Already in *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche argues that 'One imposes far too narrow limitations on art when one demands that only well-ordered morally balanced souls may express themselves in it. As in the plastic arts, so in music and poetry too there is an art of the ugly soul . . . and the mightiest effects of art . . . have perhaps been mostly achieved by precisely that art' (*HAH* I §152).

This apparent contradiction is not insoluble however. It can perhaps be resolved by turning to the ambiguous character of a wide variety of Nietzschean themes such as nihilism, art, truth and so forth. As I have previously argued, nihilism is a bi-valent notion, implying both a reactive and an active response towards the death of God, and the legitimacy crisis of modernity. So too, if we extend his argument we can see this bi-valency operating in Nietzsche's critical aesthetics. The love of de-

struction, or of the terrible, for example, can equally be the product of two very different impulses. In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche observes, 'The longing for destruction, change, becoming can be the expression of a superabundant power pregnant with the future (my term for that, as is known, is "Dionysian"); but it can also be the hate of the ill-constituted, the disinherited, the underprivileged, who destroys, has to destroy, because that which is permanent, indeed all permanence, all being itself, provokes it and arouses indignation' (*GS* §370). Likewise, in the same aphorism, Nietzsche claims that the will to eternalisation can be both a sign of strength – and here he gives the examples of Rubens, Goethe, Hafiz and Homer – and also of weakness, of ressentiment, symptomatic of which he finds Wagner and Schopenhauer.

In order to understand the meaning of Dionysian classicism, the active will to eternalisation and also to destruction, it is necessary to return to the original schema of tragedy and the dialectic of affirmation and negation. To recall, in *The Birth of Tragedy* the artistic process is constituted by a double movement of negation and affirmation. The Apollonian will to eternity is disrupted by the negation of the Dionysian, which in turn is countered by a configuration offering some form of permanence, no matter how contingent. In other words, it is a matter of recognising the necessity of some interpretative horizon, which must be affirmed, but whose contingency and hence *impermanence,* must also be affirmed.

I have already argued earlier in this chapter that Nietzsche employs the term 'Dionysian' in his later work as a metonym for the dialectic of Dionysian and Apollonian, of the simultaneous affirmation and negation of mundane semiosis. Given this reading, his Dionysian classicism is not merely a re-working of the Apollonian will to form, recast in the thematics of will to power. Rather, it is a will to form which is also a will to the dissolution of that particular formal configuration just achieved, as a necessary moment of tragic wisdom. What distinguishes Dionysian classicism from the antiquarian is that the weak reactive spirit seeks refuge in the form thus achieved, lapsing into an ideological fetishism of permanence. In contrast, for Dionysian classicism, that sense of organisation, of harmony achieved, does not function as some kind of therapy, or a redemptive turning away from becoming. For it is permanence

always-already waiting to be dissolved and re-figured, and in this way art can be said to be both creating perfection yet also functioning through its essential imperfection and incompleteness. Here too Nietzsche falls back on a position first articulated by Kant.[31]

In his elucidation of the concept of genius in the *Critique of Judgement,* Kant is very specific that while art is the product of a spontaneous and original genius, this spontaneity, to avoid degenerating into 'original nonsense' (§46), is tempered by the necessity of its products being exemplary models. The production of art is not reducible to a set of formulae, and yet it still draws on models from the past. It is because of this dual nature that Kant rules out the notion that aesthetic antecedents can serve as models to be imitated: 'Rather, the rule must be gathered from the performance . . . so as to let it serve as a model not for *imitation,* but for *following*' (§47). The conservatism of Kant's account is therefore lessened by his insistence that instead of allowing the artistic tradition to crystallise into an objectively imposed set of demands, the true product of genius constitutes a productive engagement with that tradition. Nietzsche's own classicism, which is deeply immersed in his general considerations of time and history, also draws on this type of formulation, and no better example can be thought of than the role of the Greeks. While in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche seems intent on resurrecting tragedy in all its details, in his later writings it is the Greek attention to art as surface, as dialectical play to which he repeatedly returns, indicating that he regards the Greeks as examples to be followed and not imitated. Yet admiration for the Greeks need not be equated with simple nostalgia for Greece.[32] Although tragedy remains a prominent element in his thinking, the Dionysian (and the Apollonian) becomes detached from the specific historical example of Attic tragedy. Nietzsche is therefore attempting to apply the notion of a monumental history to aesthetic practice, which therefore opposes the attempt either to completely negate the historical or to become so immersed in history that 'too much energy is thrown away on all possible resurrections from the dead' (*D* §159). The problem of exemplariness and imitation first appears explicitly in the second *Untimely Meditation,* where Nietzsche specifically criticises the Germans for an excessive historical sense, in which the past functions as a source for imitation rather than

active re-figuring. Already, in terms of the problem of the past, the distinction between active and passive, which later becomes central to the concept of nihilism, is playing a significant role in Nietzsche's cultural criticism. In contrast to the imitation of past models, Nietzsche sees them as constant challenges to be overcome. The excess of history is a sickness that 'has attacked life's creative power,' and 'the antidote to the historical is called – the unhistorical and suprahistorical' (*UM* II §10). Thus the monumental aesthetic consists of the combination of a 'suprahistorical' forgetting and an 'unhistorical' remembrance that again reveals the dialectic at the heart of Nietzsche's thinking. One aphorism from *The Gay Science* celebrates this dialectic of remembrance and forgetting quite explicitly and indicates the character of Nietzsche's classicism:

> The degree of the historical sense of any age may be inferred from the manner in which this age makes translations and tries to absorb former ages and books. In the age of Corneille and even of the Revolution, the French took possession of Roman antiquity in a way for which we would no longer have courage enough – thanks to our more highly developed historical sense. And Roman antiquity itself: how forcibly and at the same time how naively it took hold of everything good and lofty of Greek antiquity, which was more ancient! How they translated things into the Roman present! . . . Thus Horace now and then translated Alcaeus or Archilochus; and Propertius did the same with Callimachus and Philetas. . . . As poets they had no sympathy for the antiquarian inquisitiveness that precedes the historical sense.
>
> (*GS* §83)

The French appropriation of Rome, and the Roman appropriation of Greece, is permeated with the sense of the present, in an interlinking of the past with the present and, inasmuch as the work is to be an exemplary model for artists to come, the future. In this regard, therefore, Nietzsche is looking forward to what might succeed the modernist problematics of time, history and tradition, in an aesthetic practice that embodies Eternal Recurrence.[33]

6

Towards a Physiological Aesthetic

> All art works tonically, increases strength, inflames desire (i.e. the feeling of strength) excites all the more subtle recollections of intoxication.
>
> (*WP* §809)

Nietzsche's preoccupation with the question of time forms a central part of his critique of metaphysics and modernity, in which the modernist obsession with time and history is countered with the idea of Eternal Recurrence. The denial of time could be seen as standing at the origin of metaphysics, in Plato's valorisation of timeless Ideas, but Nietzsche's argument is that as in so many other respects, modernity constitutes both the climax of metaphysics and the moment of its unravelling. Hence the denial of temporality is joined by its dialectical negation, a morbid fascination with decay and decline, which is produced by the sense of time as a problem, and of temporality as a succession of mutually transcending 'nows.' The path to overcoming the temporal logic of modernity lies both in an aestheticisation of historical knowledge (though not at the expense of 'objectivity') and in the model offered by certain forms of artistic praxis, which embody a certain temporality both in terms of their external relation to the artistic tradition and in their internal semantic structure.

In his attention to the question of time and modernity, Nietzsche is undercutting the idea of transcendence sustaining metaphysics. The notion of transcendence, however, has both a temporal and a *spatial* dimension, and the concept consequently depends on extensive use of spatial and temporal metaphors for its exposition. It is apparent from the discourse of the sublime in which, as I have indicated before,

Longinus's use of the metaphor of 'transport' becomes prominent in eighteenth-century writings on the sublime. It also persists after Nietzsche; Heidegger's analysis of '*ekstasis*' attends to the manner in which Dasein not only projects itself into its own future horizon, but also moves *beyond* itself – as if it could physically leave its current embodied location and survey its own possibilities from some non-locatable other point.[1] It is this aspect of transcendence, as a spatial remove from mundane existence, and Nietzsche's attempt to subvert it, that forms the focus of this chapter. Again, art is granted particular significance in this, for it is the relation between art and the body, the notion of art as applied physiology, that underpins Nietzsche's writing on the subject.

In his magisterial book on Nietzsche and the body, Eric Blondel has exhaustively analysed the linguistic structure of Nietzsche's texts, pointing out not only the metaphors of the body that Nietzsche uses extensively, but also his purposeful lack of a uniform style, his frequent refusal to present logical philosophical propositions, his reliance on rhetorical and unresolved questions (*GS* §125), his use of active substantive verbs instead of nominal abstract terms and, finally, his refusal to present clear, unambiguous 'concepts,' as in the case of Eternal Recurrence or the Dionysian.[2] Underpinning these rhetorical traits is an attempt, for Blondel, to give expression to the body, whose lack of conceptual rigour or ascetic self-discipline Nietzsche deliberately exaggerates. It is in this context too that one should read, for example, Nietzsche's frequent metaphor of the process of interpretation as a gastric or digestive process.[3] Of course, one has to be cautious in ascribing such ruses to a covert materialism, as if to imply that the hidden referent of all of Nietzsche's rhetorical strategies is the body *tout court*.[4] Setting the body *outside* the economy of signification in this manner runs the danger of reaffirming what Nietzsche is trying to undercut, namely, the notion of a transcendent signified, which in this case would be human embodiment. I am thus interpreting Nietzsche's emphasis on the body as a *strategy* in his project of countering metaphysics and its ideal of transcendence. The body is important to Nietzsche not merely as an end in itself, but also as a means to ground human thinking thoroughly in the world of the 'here,' the '*Diesseits*,' both temporally and spatially, in opposition to the metaphysical orientation toward the 'beyond,' the '*Jenseits*.'

The Discourse of Physiology

I have already indicated the ways in which Nietzsche critiques the metaphysical concept of subjecthood, by first pulling apart the atomic Cartesian subject and then substituting an alternative, less constricted model of selfhood. In the process a key role is given to the recognition of the body as a determinant of thinking. It is generally acknowledged that this emphasis was informed to some extent by Nietzsche's reading of Friedrich Lange's *History of Materialism* in 1866 as well as some of Schopenhauer's pronouncements on the body.[5] In *The World as Will and Representation* Schopenhauer frequently expounds a physiologism so crass that it appears as if he is satirising contemporary biological and medical science. To give just one example, he argues that those engaged in intellectual argument are frequently incapable of movement, since 'as soon as their brain has to link a few ideas together, it no longer has as much force left over as is required to keep the legs in motion through the motor nerves.'[6]

At a more fundamental level, it is the body that serves as the basis for Schopenhauer's attempt to equate the Kantian thing-in-itself with the Will. In particular, he distinguishes between the body as a perceptual object and the body as the locus of agency. In the case of the former, the body is as much an illusion as the rest of the phenomenal world, whereas in the latter it is an objectification of the Will. As Schopenhauer notes, 'The act of will and the action of the body are not two different states objectively known, connected by the bond of causality . . . but are one and the same thing, though given in two entirely different ways, first quite directly and then in perception for the understanding' (*WWR* I §18). It is this possibility of experiencing the body in a non-phenomenal manner that leads Schopenhauer to conclude that willing must be intimately related to the metaphysical essence of things. Hence the body and its actions are 'nothing but the phenomenal appearance of the will, its becoming visible, the *objectivity of the will*' (*WWR* I §20). Ultimately, for Schopenhauer, the body, as a phenomenal representation, is a problem to be overcome, as part of the general process of unravelling the *principium individuationis*. Nevertheless, his comments endow it with a significance that Nietzsche later comes to incorporate. He ex-

horts the reader in *Ecce Homo* to 'Sit as little as possible; give no credence to any thought that was not born outdoors while one moved about freely – in which the muscles are not celebrating a feast, too. All prejudices come from the intestines' (*EH* 'Why I Am So Clever' §1). Shortly afterwards Nietzsche adds that 'genius is determined by dry air, by clear skies – that is by a rapid metabolism, by the possibility of drawing again and again on great, even tremendous quantities of strength' (*EH,* 'Why I Am So Clever' §2), a sentiment that is prefigured in the more pithy claim, in *Beyond Good and Evil,* that 'The abdomen is the reason why a person does not take himself too easily for a god' (*BGE* §141).

For fairly obvious reasons, the comparison between Nietzsche's interest in physiology and Schopenhauer's thinking on the body should not overlook the far more significant differences between the two. While Schopenhauer acknowledges the body's potency, he is still concerned to free the mind from its effects, regarding it as a hindrance to true thought. In contrast Nietzsche sees the body as one of the principal determinants of thinking; the two are inseparable, and as such the body gives thought its form, indeed, facilitates it. Although his discussions of the body are frequently flippant and mischievous, designed, perhaps, to deflate the solemnity of philosophical discourse, the significance of the body is evident in the frequency of his references to it.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the body, though motivated by larger strategic reasons, is partly informed by an interest in contemporary medical and psychological discourses. In his unpublished notes there are references to Willhelm Wundt, commonly regarded as the founder of experimental psychology,[7] Charles Féré, the neurologist student of Charcot, together with other figures in the medical and physiological sciences such as Ernst Weber, Willhelm Roux and Claude Bernard.[8] Medical and scientific imagery pervades Nietzsche's writing;[9] as early as the first volume of *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche claims that historical philosophy 'can no longer be separated from natural science,' adding that 'All we require . . . is a *chemistry* of the moral, religious and aesthetic conceptions and sensations' (*HAH* I §1). Here one can see already an anticipation of his deliberate conflation of biology, chemistry and psychology in his exploration of will to power. A central aspect of Nietzsche's

cultural criticism is to describe cultural phenomena in physiological or neurological terms; there are some twenty different applications of the term 'physiology' and 'physiological' in his analysis of contemporary culture and thought.[10] These include his view of Wagnerian theatre as a product of 'physiological degeneration' (*CW* §7), his definition of modernity as a 'physiological contradiction' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §41) and his claim that ascetic priests are 'physiologically inhibited' (*OGM* III §18). More provocatively and, one assumes, with a certain degree of levity, Nietzsche claims that 'the spread of Buddhism (*not* its origin) depends heavily on the excessive and almost exclusive reliance of the Indians on rice' (*GS* §134), producing a general state of slackness.[11] Nietzsche concludes the aphorism with the speculation that the nihilism of the present day may originate in excessive alcoholism in the Middle Ages.

In addition to these examples one should also mention Nietzsche's description of nihilism as a symptom and as a medical condition. Earlier I outlined one of Nietzsche's explanations for the onset of nihilism, namely, the misreading of the nature of signs. However, the genealogy of nihilism has to go back further beyond this phenomenon of misinterpretation and analyse the physiology of the organism that has so easily taken the semiotic universe for something more. Nietzsche's genealogical analysis of Christian morality and of the ascetic ideal is well known for uncovering that decadent form of life which bestowed a particular meaning on the terms 'good' and 'bad.' However, the notion of morality as a symptom, or 'sign language' of a specific physiological condition, predates the *Genealogy of Morals.* In *Daybreak* Nietzsche claims moral judgements to be derived from feelings of pleasure and displeasure when he writes, 'Is not the origin of all moral judgement to be found in heinous little conclusions: "whatever harms me is something evil (harmful in itself); whatever aids me is something good (beneficial and useful in itself)"' (*D* §102). In *The Gay Science* he makes the clear connection between morality and physiology all the more explicit saying that 'Whoever now intends to conduct a study of moral affairs is opening up for themselves an immense field of work. All kinds of passion will have to be individually considered. . . . Are we acquainted with the moral effects of means of nourishment? is there a philosophy of nutri-

tion?' (*GS* §7). This presents an understanding of the origins of value, which pervades Nietzsche's thought until his last, unpublished, notes, from his claim in *Beyond Good and Evil* that 'in short morals are merely a sign language of the affects' (*BGE* §187), to the list from the summer of 1888 which includes 'Inartistic conditions: consumption, impoverishment, evacuation – will to nothing. Christian, Buddhist, nihilist. Impoverished body' (*KSA* 13:17[9]). Hence Nietzsche's note from 1886 which sums up 'My attempt to understand moral judgements as symptoms and sign languages, where the processes of physiological success or decline . . . betray themselves' (*WP* §258). Ultimately, too, it is possible to trace this path of thought back to its origins in *The Birth of Tragedy,* where Nietzsche pointedly explains Socrates' behaviour as the product of a certain *instinct,* paradoxically contradicting the goal of Plato to eliminate instinct and the passions from cognition and judgement.

Given his analysis of values and morality in physiological terms, Nietzsche's interpretation of nihilism in exactly the same way repeats a general strategy. Passive nihilism is born when the metaphysical longing for truth and certainty encounters the recognition that such values no longer have the legitimacy formerly invested in them. The recognition of the latter clashes with the desire for the former, and hence the feeling of disarray and conflict that follows, which Nietzsche sees as the 'logic of our great values and ideals when thought through to their end' (*WP* preface §4). This crisis is one which we are all part of, in Nietzsche's reading, and following his physiological interpretation of value, it implies that human being is somehow physiologically defective. Regarding contemporary cynicism and pessimism he notes, for example, that 'the name [pessimism] should be replaced by "nihilism," that the question whether non-being is better than being, is itself a disease, a sign of decline, an idiosyncrasy. The nihilistic movement is merely the expression of physiological decadence' (*WP* §38). Nihilism is the function of a 'weakness of the will' (*WP* §46) and, consequently, 'what is inherited is not the sickness but sickliness: the lack of strength to resist the danger of infections' (*WP* §47). Nietzsche interprets the cultural products of decadent modernity from this perspective, and in his later work treats Wagner the romantic as a case study of the wider physiological and psychological disorder of the modern age. In *The Case of Wagner*

he observes that 'Unknowingly, against our will, we all have values, words, formulae, morals of contradictory bodily origins – considered physiologically, we are false. . . . A diagnosis of the modern soul – where would it begin? . . . with a vivisection conducted on its most instructive case' (*CW* epilogue). This 'instructive case' of modern neurosis is Richard Wagner. As Nietzsche says, 'The art of Wagner is sick. The problems he brings on stage – problems of pure hysterics – his convulsive affectivity, his hyperstimulated sensibility . . . not least his choice of heroes and heroines, looked at as physiological types (a gallery of invalids! –): all this together presents an image of sickness which leaves no room for doubt. Wagner est une névrose' (*CW* §5). The formal qualities of Wagner's work are also now interpreted in physiological terms. Where in *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche had referred to Wagnerian excess as baroque, in a fragment from 1888 he draws on the French physiologist Claude Bernard noting that 'Health and sickness are not essentially different . . . there are only differences of degree between these two kinds of existence: the exaggeration, the disproportion, the non-harmony of normal phenomena constitute the pathological state' (*WP* §250).

Following this brief account it is clear that Nietzsche's use of medical and physiological imagery forms a central component of his cultural critique. I suggested earlier that his use of such language does not indicate an espousal of the sciences per se, but rather is linked to a wider concern move to undercut the yearning for transcendence so central to the metaphysical tradition. His emphasis on physiology thus provides his critique with an orientation towards this-worldly immanence. Moreover, in addition to its general role in his critical project, the discourse of physiology also becomes central to Nietzsche's re-orientation of aesthetics, specifically, in his assault on the aesthetic tradition from Kant onwards. Of this perhaps the most graphic example might be found in his claim that 'a Raphael is unthinkable without a certain overheating of the sexual system' (*WP* §800). The choice of Raphael is of course deliberate and provocative; most frequently associated with the Catholic Church of the Renaissance, Nietzsche is trying to prise apart Raphael's art from the spiritual values of Catholicism in order to explore the affective, erotic motivation of art.

The Physiology of Art

Although Nietzsche's 'physiology of art' is usually associated with his later writing, an attempt to rethink aesthetic experience and production as a physiological, affective state can be traced back to *The Birth of Tragedy*. Indeed, an emphasis on the dependence of the aesthetic drive on instinct is central to the way in which Nietzsche distances himself from Schopenhauer.[12] The most basic example is the way in which he refers to the Dionysian and Apollonian as 'drives,' where the effect of the Dionysian is a state of 'intoxication' similar to the 'influence of a narcotic drink' (*BT* §1). Thus aesthetic experience is a physiological state, and this explains why both the Dionysian and Apollonian are seen as expressions of overwhelming instincts of the human organism. This image is continued in Nietzsche's subsequent work, such as the first volume of *Human All Too Human*. Art, he argues, teaches us 'to take pleasure in life and to regard the human life as a piece of nature' (*HAH* I §222). In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche begins to construct a more developed physiological aesthetics. Describing his response to music, he notes that 'my foot feels the need for rhythm, dance, march; it demands of music first of all those delights that are found in good walking, striding, leaping, and dancing. . . . What is it that my whole body really expects of music? I believe its own *ease:* as if all animal functions should be quickened by easy, bold, exuberant, self-assured rhythms' (*GS* §368). Elsewhere he draws a parallel between art and love (*GS* §59). The connection between art and the body finds its boldest expression in his writings from the late 1880s. Art is now the 'great stimulant to life' (*WP* §853), and 'Aesthetics is irredeemably bound to . . . biological presuppositions' (*CW* epilogue). As Nietzsche notes, 'Aesthetics is nothing but applied physiology' (*NCW* 'Where I Raise Objections'). One note from 1887 entitled 'Aesthetica' lists the sexual drive and intoxication as 'states in which we infuse a transfiguration and fullness into things and poetise about them,' arguing that the sexual drive, intoxication and violence were 'all predominant in the original artist' (*WP* §801). Later in the same note he adds that 'Art reminds [us] of states of animal vigour: it is on the one hand an excess and overflow of blooming physicality into the world of images and desires: on the other, an excitation of the

animal functions through the images and desires of intensified life' (*WP* §802).[13]

This last passage indicates the extent to which Nietzsche conceives the physiology of art in terms of both reception and production; animal excitation is produced by and produces representations of 'intensified life.' At the same time, however, an important thread in Nietzsche's aesthetic thought is to attempt to shift the orientation of aesthetics towards the consideration of the producer, rather than the passive and 'feminine' position of the spectator. The urgency of this re-orientation has to be understood within the broader context of Nietzsche's physiology of art, and in particular its strategic role in critiquing the aesthetic tradition. Much of Nietzsche's mature writing on art, artists and aesthetics gains its identity from this tradition of thought which it sets out to oppose, and this is particularly the case for his physiology of art in particular. He mobilises the metaphor of the body and the vocabulary of medicine in an attempt to critique both the formalist aesthetics of Kant and the 'decadent' modernism of Richard Wagner, together with the ever-growing contemporary belief in art for art's sake, *l'art pour l'art,* which in Nietzsche's 'system' is subsumed under the notion of 'romanticism.' The physiology of art also functions as a link between Nietzsche's concern with contemporary artistic practice and theory, on the one hand, and his increasing reliance on will to power as a diagnostic concept on the other.

I have noted that in *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche is already forming an aesthetic theory which, for all its reliance on Schopenhauerian vocabulary and ideas, differs significantly from Schopenhauer. The key issue over which they differ is the question of the relation between art and human affectivity. For Schopenhauer the experience of art is one of the few opportunities for the affective desires of the Will to be suspended, and for a higher level of cognition to occur. For Nietzsche, on the other hand, any notion of artistic detachment from desire is completely alien. Although it is only later that he develops an erotics of art, *The Birth of Tragedy* already indicates the extent to which art is intimately connected with human affective existential concerns. Yet while one would assume that Nietzsche is primarily contradicting Schopenhauer, the ultimate object of Nietzsche's critique is the aesthetic tradition to

which Schopenhauer belongs, and of which Kant was the founder. Thus, in addition to the cultural pessimism of Schopenhauer, Kant frequently serves as a polemical target in Nietzsche's discussions of art and aesthetics. For Nietzsche, Kant embodies some of the worst aspects in the history of philosophical aesthetics. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* Kant is accused of possessing the 'naiveté of a country parson' (*OGM* III §6) regarding aesthetic experience. In *The Antichrist* Nietzsche observes that 'Kant became an idiot,' adding that Kant represents a 'mistaken instinct in everything and anything, the counter-natural as instinct, German décadence as philosophy' (*A* §11). Elsewhere Kant is an exemplar of 'clumsy pedantry and petty bourgeois manners,' guilty of a 'a lack of taste' (*KSA* 11:26 [96]). In his diagnosis of 'depressive habits' he lists 'staying home à la Kant; overwork; insufficient nourishment of the brain' (*WP* §444).

Nietzsche's hostility towards Kant forms one of the many paradoxes in his thought on art. For as I have already shown previously, his writing on art is heavily dependent on Kant himself, including Kant's notions of artistic exemplariness or aesthetic ambiguity. As with Hegel, so with Kant; Nietzsche displays considerable ambivalence towards the 'good German of the old stamp' (*D* preface), for despite his considerable intellectual debt to Kant, Nietzsche presents a series of virulent denunciations of Kant, and specifically of the latter's aesthetic theory. Kant has not been without his defenders against the polemic of Nietzsche; as Heidegger has pointed out, for example, Nietzsche's interpretation, and hence criticism, of Kant is largely based on an image of Kant formed by Schopenhauer, which is itself a highly partial reading of Kantian aesthetics.[14] Others have put forward similar arguments, that the majority of Nietzsche's criticisms are more relevant to the aesthetics of Schopenhauer than to those of Kant himself.[15] It is not my intention to discuss those precise areas where Nietzsche misreads Kant's *Critique of Judgement,* for such a detailed and in-depth analysis misunderstands the nature of Nietzsche's critique; although the ostensible target is Kant, the name 'Kant' in many ways performs a metonymic function, standing as an abbreviated sign for what Nietzsche perceives as the tradition of aesthetics from Kant onwards. One can find a parallel in Nietzsche's criticism of Wagner; although it is motivated by disaf-

fection with the meaning of Wagner's oeuvre, Wagner stands as a symptom of the decadence of modernity. So too 'Kant' is for Nietzsche the exemplar of modern aesthetic thought, symptomatic of everything that is in need of overcoming.

Kant transformed the tradition of aesthetics from Wolff and Baumgarten; prior to his *Critique of Judgement* aesthetics as a discipline was subordinate to the more 'masculine' rigour of logic; aesthetic ideas were regarded simply as unclear logical ideas. In contrast Kant raised it to the core element within the architectonic of his critical project, giving aesthetic experience a cognitive significance previously denied it. Rightly considered the founder of modern aesthetics, Kant re-located the discipline at the heart of philosophical thinking and in many respects shaped the course of all subsequent enquiry into the subject up to the present day. By naming Kant as the target of his polemic, Nietzsche is in effect conducting a genealogy of aesthetics, bringing to prominence those elements within Kant which were to be central to subsequent thinking in the realm of the aesthetic. Hence by reading Kant through Schopenhauer, Nietzsche need not be seen as simply misreading him. Rather, he can be seen as focusing on precisely those aspects of Kant which were important to Schopenhauer, and hence to Wagner, as well as to the aesthetic of *l'art pour l'art*. Implicit in this, too, is an attempt to distance himself from his own earlier writing, which, as I demonstrated in the previous chapter, he recognised as still labouring under the burden of Kantian and idealist vocabulary.

If we wish to analyse the specific areas where Nietzsche chooses to take issue with Kant, a significant focus of debate is the notion of disinterestedness. Nietzsche forms a critique of the notion of disinterested aesthetic experience (and its concomitant notion of a disinterested aesthetic subject) in the name of physiology. Deriving aesthetic judgement from the physiology of the human organism, Nietzsche's position is hostile to any theory that separates questions of beauty from those of desire.[16] In the place of 'disinterestedness' Nietzsche posits aesthetic rapture, a specific case of the more general experience of pleasure occasioned by the discharge of will to power. Before I explore Nietzsche's position in greater detail, however, I shall first outline the idea he is attacking.

With regard to the notion of disinterestedness, it is necessary to distinguish between its initial formulation in Kant and subsequent reception by Schopenhauer or early romantics such as the Schlegel brothers or Schelling. The locus classicus where Kant links aesthetic experience and disinterestedness states simply, 'Taste is the faculty of estimating an object or a mode of representation by means of a delight or aversion apart from any interest.'[17] The argument that it is a delight 'apart from any interest' is slightly misleading, for Kant is concerned with a specific *type* of interest; at the core of his argument is the notion that the experience of the aesthetic object is not based on an interest in whether or not it actually exists. In other words, he is not claiming that we do have any interest per se in the beautiful object, for in a later section of the *Critique of Judgement* he indicates the presence of a kind of interest in the object, which he terms 'intellectual interest' (§42). This interest, however, does not focus on the *existence* of the object, which would be the province of desire, but rather on its purely formal properties. This aspect of the judgement of taste is central to Kant's project, since it is linked to his contentions, first, that the beauty of an object is not related to an end (the third moment of the Analytic of the Beautiful) and, second, that the beautiful object pleases apart from any concept of what it is or should be (the fourth moment). Both of these latter claims, together with the notion of disinterestedness, serve to dissociate the aesthetic object from considerations of its identity and possible functions. As a symbol of morality, beauty *does* engage the spectator's interest on one level, yet this 'intellectual' interest is to be distinguished from the interest in the object as a means to self-preservation or advancement. This distinction between 'practical' and 'intellectual' interest functions as the basis of the experience of the sublime experience in Kant; if the experience were *genuinely* threatening to the subject, its sublime quality would be displaced by the concern with self-preservation.[18]

For all its nuances, however, Kant's distinction between the aesthetic object (and this is increasingly equated with the work of art in writers after Kant) on the one hand and the realm of the practical (i.e., of desire) on the other is susceptible to a variety of forms of simplification and it is precisely such a simplifying that Schopenhauer undertakes when appropriating Kantian notions and fitting them into his own

philosophical schema in which desire, or the Will, has been transformed into a metaphysical principle. The subtle distinction between intellectual interest and desire is ignored in favour of a much more simple opposition in Schopenhauer between willing and non-willing. In Schopenhauer aesthetic experience is devoid of all volition or interest. Moreover it is given a metaphysical significance in his system that it does not possess in Kant. The aesthetic experience produces a suspension of desire, with two consequences. First, it facilitates a knowledge of the Idea, a curious Platonic importation. What Schopenhauer seems to be asserting here is that when caught within the dictates of the Will, the subject is so concerned with satisfying desires, impulses and needs that it attends only to immediate particulars. The higher cognition of a particular as the exemplar of a genus, consideration of its Idea, is engendered by the will-less aesthetic experience. Schopenhauer notes, 'we no longer consider the where, the when, the why, and the whither in things, but simply and solely the *what* . . . we . . . let our whole consciousness be filled by the calm contemplation of the natural object actually present' (*WWR* I §34). Second, it produces a state of resignation, since the principle of individuation to which willing is so intimately bound loses its force: 'The motives that were previously so powerful now lose their force, and instead of them, the complete knowledge of the real nature of the world, acting as quieter of the will, produces resignation, the giving up not merely of life, but of the whole will-to-live itself.'[19] The experience thus reveals a truth of both the subject and the objective nature of reality, and this is nowhere more the case than in music, which, Schopenhauer argues, is an objectification of the Will itself: 'in the melody, in the high, singing principal voice . . . I recognise the highest grade of the will's objectification.'[20] Such notions are alien to the rather more limited role for art and aesthetic experience envisaged by Kant, but they represent a logical development and simplification of his position.

A similar emphasis on the non-utilitarian in art underpins the aesthetic writings of the early German romantics.[21] For example, August Schlegel's *Lectures on Fine Literature and Art* pour scorn on the equation of beauty and utility by the English philosopher Lord Henry Home with the acerbic remark that 'The beautiful should also perform economic

services, and God is already supposed to have worried about the blossoming of English manufacturing at the time of the creation.'[22] This opposition between beauty and utility functions as the basis of a critique of the growing monetary economy in early-nineteenth-century Germany, and of the increasing commodification of art in, for example, the book market.[23] By virtue of the fact that it belongs to a sphere independent of the realm of utility and economics, the aesthetic object, in other words, the work of art, appeals to the romantics as a site of resistance to the encroachment of (conceptually bound) utilitarian values, an aesthetic theory which stands at the origin of the modernist resistance to the abstracting processes of modernity, and which finds its culmination, perhaps, in the stress on the formal autonomy of the work of art in the writings of, for example, Clive Bell, Roger Fry or Clement Greenberg.[24]

If we restrict our analysis of this development to the nineteenth century, that is, to the tradition known to Nietzsche, the idea of the autonomy of art is pursued to its most extreme conclusion in the formalist writings of the German musicologist Eduard Hanslick, in particular his study *On the Beautiful in Music,*[25] or the French critic Théophile Gautier, who, in order to empty art of its stifling Victorian moral content (and even the romantics had accorded art a moral purpose), transform it into an autonomous, self-referential sphere of activity.[26] Attempting to free art from morality, such writers have, for Nietzsche, trivialised art, and it is Kant he criticises for essentially proposing the idea of aesthetic experience without interest. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* he mocks the contemporary belief in disinterestedness, asserting that 'If our aestheticians never tire of claiming, in Kant's favour, that spellbound by beauty one can even view of undraped female statues "without interest," then one can laugh a little at their expense . . . in any case Pygmalion was not an "unaesthetic human,"' having already placed in opposition to Kant Stendhal's famous dictum that art contains 'une promesse de bonheur' (*OGM* III §6). Although the names of Kant and Schopenhauer figure most prominently, an early note from 1873 includes Hanslick in a list of those 'to be attacked' (*KSA* 7:19 [259]), a list which also includes neo-Kantian philosophers such as Kuno Fischer and Hermann Lotze. A later fragment lists Hanslick amongst 'the small,' in contrast to Wagner

(*KSA* 8:5 [134]).[27] In the section of *On the Genealogy of Morals* cited above, Nietzsche notes Schopenhauer's indebtedness to the same Kantian idea, challenging the notion of will-less aesthetic experience with the observation that far from displaying no interest in the aesthetic experience, Schopenhauer was greatly interested in it, indeed, positively craved it as a release from the blind mechanism of the Will. In Nietzsche's eyes Schopenhauer's subscription to the idea of a will-less aesthetic experience is self-defeating; the aesthetic is invested with a particular function or use value which enmeshes it within the system of means and ends, in short, the economy of desire, and thus brings it close to Stendhal's idea of 'arousal of will ("of interest") by beauty' (*OGM* III §6). Ultimately the ideal of the formalist aesthetic is one more manifestation of asceticism, and as Nietzsche points out in the same essay, asceticism is driven by will to power, albeit will to power that has been misdirected. Hence, although Nietzsche does not state it in such terms, the achievement of will-less aesthetic experience would be the result of an *exercise* of the will, rather than its suspension. The fundamental weakness in the entire notion of disinterested aesthetic experience leads Nietzsche to demand that 'the aesthetics of "contemplation devoid of all interest" which is used today as a seductive guise for the emasculation of art,' an aesthetics he equates with the Christian ethic of self-sacrifice, 'be questioned mercilessly and put on trial' (*BGE* §33).

In *Twilight of the Idols* he devotes a substantial passage to a critique of the modernism of *l'art pour l'art,* countering the desire of those to free art from morality and hence render it 'purposeless, goalless, senseless' with the following series of rhetorical questions: 'what does all art do? does it not praise? does it not glorify? does it not select out? does it not bring to prominence? With all this it strengthens or weakens certain judgements of value . . . is this incidental? a coincidence?' As he notes later in the same passage, 'The feeling of courage and freedom in the face of a mighty foe, in the face of sublime adversity, in the face of a problem that awakens terror, it is this victorious situation that the tragic artist chooses and glorifies' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §24). And for Nietzsche tragedy remains the exemplary artistic model until the end of his career. Elsewhere in *Twilight of the Idols* Nietzsche mounts a notable attack on Sainte-Beuve, the champion of Gautier, noting, 'Sainte-Beuve. –

Nothing manly, full of petty wrath against all manly spirits . . . at bottom a womanly person, with a woman's desire for revenge and a woman's sensuality' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §3).

Far from occupying a completely autonomous sphere, art, in Nietzsche's thought, constitutes the material expression of a certain relation towards the world. This might at first seem reminiscent of Hegel's notion of art as a sensual expression of the Idea, except that for Nietzsche art is a particular way of engaging with the world. In other words, it does not *symbolise* a particular conceptual engagement with the world, it *is* that engagement. Nietzsche says, 'Art is the great stimulant to life: how could one conceive of it as without purpose, as goalless, as *l'art pour l'art*?' (ibid.). Yet although the specific opposition to *l'art pour l'art* is a product of Nietzsche's mature thought, brought about by his linking of art and will to power, the development of his theory after *The Birth of Tragedy* can be traced without difficulty. Already in the first volume of *Human All Too Human* the notion of art as a means of coming to terms with the world, of rendering it bearable, is being transformed into that of art as an affirmation of the world. In the section entitled 'From the Soul of the Artists and Writers' he writes that art has 'taught us for thousands of years to look upon life in every shape with interest and desire and to bring our feelings to the point where we finally shout: "however it is, life is good" ' (*HAH* I §222). In the second book of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche offers a lengthy discussion of the origin of poetic metre and rhythm, which, though indebted to a notion first put forward by Wagner in *Opera and Drama,* belongs clearly within his general project of critiquing formalist aesthetics. Nietzsche claims that the use of rhythm in poetry originates in the ancient conviction that its use could enable humans to exercise some power over the gods. For it had long been recognised that music has 'the power to unload the affects, to purify the soul, to mollify the ferocia animi – and especially through the rhythmical in music,' and it was assumed that it would affect the gods in the same fashion. Hence poetry finds its origin in invocations to the gods, attempting 'to compel them through rhythm and exercise a power over them' (*GS* §84). One can compare Nietzsche's view of language here with the claim of his contemporary Stéphane Mallarmé that 'The pure work implies the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who

cedes the initiative to the words, which are mobilised by the shock of their inequality; they are lit up by reflecting off each other like a virtual trail of sparkling gems.'[28] The idea of the linguistic autonomy of the poem expressed here is the antithesis of all that Nietzsche regarded as fundamental about language and art, and the fact that it became a dominant notion in Nietzsche's own lifetime supports his belief in his own untimeliness.

The significance of Nietzsche's own view does not lie simply in his observation that rhythm has a certain power over the human affects, for he freely admits that Pythagoras (not to mention Plato) had already understood this, and he would not be saying anything very interesting. Instead, what deserves our attention is his claim, no matter how incorrect from an anthropological and historical point of view, that early humans used this awareness in order to try to control the gods, and hence by implication the natural environment. In other words, rhythm was utilised as a means of controlling the world, getting a purchase on it, and hence is intimately bound up to questions of means and ends, utility and desire. Although the idea of will to power has not yet been articulated in Nietzsche's work at this stage, art in the form of poetic rhythm is clearly motivated by will to power.[29] It is a claim supported in the next aphorism following his discussion of poetry, which discusses beauty. Here Nietzsche asserts that 'Artists are always elevating – they do not do anything else – and moreover all those situations and things which are reputed to make a person feel good or great or drunk or merry or well and wise. These *select* things . . . are the objects of the artist' (*HAH* I §223). The states of being which the artist promotes are states engendered by will to power, and the emphasis Nietzsche lays on the selectivity of the artist has important consequences later when he comes to articulate the relation between will to power and the aesthetic norm of Dionysian classicism.

Art as Will to Power

The notion of *l'art pour l'art,* stemming from the Kantian idea of disinterestedness, functions as the corollary to 'that dangerous old conceptual fable, which has posited a "pure will-less, painless, atemporal sub-

ject of cognition"' (*OGM* III §12). Here we see Nietzsche confirming the genealogy of *l'art pour l'art,* seeing it as a descendant of the Kantian conception of the disinterested aesthetic subject. Naturally, Nietzsche's understanding of selfhood rules out accepting either the Kantian aesthetic subject or the derivative notion of artistic autonomy. His grounding of all acts of cognition or interpretation in will to power and the perspectivism of human physiology cannot permit the formulation of aesthetic experience on Kantian lines. The physiology of art plays a crucial function in this regard, for it serves to bind the notion of art, artistic creativity and aesthetic experience firmly to desire and willing. In other words, the relation between art and will to power, which in the middle works is left for the reader to construct, is made explicit in his mature thinking through their common grounding in the physiological.

As I have indicated earlier, the notebooks of 1887 and 1888, together with late works such as *Twilight of the Idols* and the essays on Wagner, are abundant with references to beauty as a purely physiological phenomenon: the pleasure in beautiful objects is a sexual pleasure, artistic creativity is a process of procreation, 'all art . . . inflames desire' (*WP* §809), 'Art reminds us of states of animal vigour; on the one hand it is an excess and outflow of blooming corporeality into the world of pictures and desires; on the other a stimulation of animal functions through pictures of and desire for heightened life' (*WP* §802). Although sexuality is more commonly associated with Dionysus, Nietzsche is keen to emphasise that it is just as central to Apollo. As he notes, 'In the Dionysian intoxication there is sexuality and voluptuousness: they are not lacking in the Apollonian.' The main distinction between the two impulses is a 'difference of tempo,' where 'the extreme calm in certain sensations of intoxication . . . likes to be reflected in a vision of the calmest gestures' (*WP* §799). It is notable, too, that while Nietzsche frequently restricts himself to the traditional framework of aesthetics in discussing merely the role of *beauty,* he also explores the aesthetic function of ugliness in relation to sexuality and power. He continues, 'To what extent can even ugliness also have this power? Inasmuch as it still communicates something of the victorious energy of the artist who has become master over the ugly and the frightful; or inasmuch as it gently excites in us the pleasure of cruelty' (ibid.). On the one hand, 'ugliness

signifies the decadence of a type' (*WP* §800), but on the other, the confrontation with it can become a source of excitement, and hence one can see here an aesthetic counterpart to Nietzsche's emphasis on the necessity of resistance for will to power.

The link to will to power becomes clearer by recalling that the notion of interpretative will to power is not limited in Nietzsche to the activity of just *human* subjects attempting to construct a horizon of meaning. A crucial element of Nietzsche's thinking is the project of outlining the extent to which cognitive functions are shaped by the organic processes of the body. As Nietzsche says, 'It seems to me that what is generally attributed to the mind characterises the being of the organic: and in the highest functions of the mind I find merely a sublime type of organic function' (*KSA* 11:25 [356]). Additionally, however, interpretative will to power can be seen, for Nietzsche, to be functioning at even the lowest level of organic life. As early as the first volume of *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche discusses the manner in which the plant interprets its environment in order to enhance its own life (*HAH* I §18). As I have demonstrated before, Nietzsche views conscious interpretation as a merely a sophisticated variety of this basic organic interpretative will to power. Organisms, no matter how primitive, organise themselves and their environment, such that Nietzsche can claim that 'propagation amongst amoebae seems to be throwing off ballast, a pure advantage. The excretion of useless material' (*WP* §653).

On the basis of such an understanding of the organic as always already interpreting, organising in order to further will to power, it is clear that art, as a physiological activity, is motivated not only by desire, but also by interpretative desire for power. The beautiful is, quite simply, that which enhances the feeling of power, as that which best interprets and organises the world. In a note from early 1887, Nietzsche writes, '"Beauty" is for the artist something outside all orders of rank, because in beauty opposites are tamed; the highest sign of power, namely power over opposites; moreover, without tension: – that violence is no longer needed; that everything follows, obeys, so easily and so pleasantly – that is what delights the artist's will to power' (*WP* §803). Here we find cashed out in concrete terms *how* it is that the beautiful promotes, or delights will to power. It is because the beautiful represents a

supreme act of organisation and control over its elements, an act of mastery driven by will to mastery. Hence, too, Nietzsche's remarks on 'The artwork, where it appears without artist, e.g., as body, as organisation (Prussian officer corps, Jesuit order)' (*WP* §796). The organisational perfection of both of these bodies inspires the goal of the interpretative process to gain ever increasing control and organisation. One notes that in keeping with his general idea of will to power as subjectless process, so too here the mastery characteristic of beauty is not that of the artist but of the aesthetic process: 'art appears in man like a force of nature and disposes of him whether he will or no' (*WP* §798). Again the role of the ugly comes into consideration in this context, for the confrontation with ugliness is a supreme example of aesthetic will to power. Nietzsche notes, 'The ugly suggests ugly things; one can use one's states of health to test how variously an indisposition increases the capacity for imaging ugly things' (*WP* §809).

Nietzsche's emphasis on physiology and art might tempt one to interpret him as implying that artistic production is derived from a natural spontaneous expressivity. This impression is fortified by his repeated reference to the role of instinct in aesthetic judgement. A note from 1887 declares that 'Judgements concerning beauty and ugliness are short-sighted (– they are always opposed by the understanding –) but persuasive in the highest degree; they appeal to your instincts where they decide most quickly and pronounce their Yes and No before the understanding can speak' (*WP* §804). In particular, the opposition between understanding and aesthetic instinct seems to employ a familiar philosopheme, which fits easily into his stress on the physiological basis of art. However, this has to be contrasted with his assertion that 'Every mature art has a host of conventions as its basis – in so far as it is a language. Convention is the condition of great art, *not* an obstacle' (*WP* §809). This brief comment repeats an argument Nietzsche puts forward at greater length in *The Gay Science* on the necessity of unnaturalness. Beginning with recognition of the importance of artifice in Greek tragedy, Nietzsche asserts that

> deviation from nature is perhaps the most agreeable repast for human pride: for its sake man loves art as the expression of a lofty, heroic unnaturalness and

convention. We rightly reproach a dramatic poet if he does not transmute everything into reason and words . . . just as we are dissatisfied with the operatic composer who cannot find melodies for the highest sentiments but only a sentimental 'natural' stammering and screaming. At this point nature is *supposed to be* contradicted.

(*GS* §80)

At the root of this is the idea that art should consist in *transfiguration* rather than mimesis, and this motivates a criticism of Aristotle's interpretation of tragedy as the catharsis of fear and pity. In contrast, Nietzsche argues that tragedy's unnaturalness, the reduction of the actor to a 'solemn, stiff, masked bogey,' implies quite the opposite. The Greeks 'deprived passion itself of any deep background and dictated to it a law of beautiful speeches. Indeed, they did everything to counteract the elementary effect of images that might arouse fear and pity' (ibid.).

This reading of tragedy anticipates Nietzsche's later view of art as an *achievement* of will to power rather than a simple mimesis of suffering, and it also points towards his classicism, in which the essence of art is a kind of ordering and idealisation, albeit motivated by physiological impulses. This understanding of art as an exemplification of interpretative will to power is encapsulated in Nietzsche's preference for classicism and antipathy towards romanticism. The latter, a lack of organisation and discipline, is a product of feeble spirits unable to exercise control over either themselves or their material, whereas the classical (and by this he frequently means the neo-classicism of Poussin or of the eighteenth century rather than just classical antiquity) is the product of a strong organisational drive.[30]

In the second volume of *Human All Too Human* Nietzsche makes a distinction between classicism and romanticism with the idea of strength as a distinguishing criterion when he writes that 'Both classically and romantically minded spirits . . . contemplate a vision of the future: but the former do it on the basis of the strengths of their time, and the latter on the basis of its weakness' (*WS* §217). In the fifth book of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche offers a fuller distinction between an active and a reactive creative principle, once again on the basis of whether an enfeebled reactive desire for absolution motivates the artistic drive, or

whether it is instead animated by an active superabundant power. Nietzsche claims that 'Every art, every philosophy can be seen as a means to healing and help in the service of growing, struggling, life: they always presuppose suffering and sufferers. Yet there are two kinds of sufferers, on the one hand those who suffer from super-abundance of life . . . and on the other those who suffer from an impoverishment of life . . . who seek peace, calm . . . redemption from themselves through art' (*GS* §370). Art can serve as a means to revenge against life, and hence the mimesis of suffering goes only towards strengthening romantic pessimism, but it can also represent suffering in order to overcome it, subsequently to affirm suffering and the world in general, as is the case with Greek tragedy. Hence the artistic representation of suffering is an ambivalent praxis, which, like nihilism, can be employed in both an active and reactive sense. As active it can be the work of 'the forward striving spirit' (*WP* §848), where will to power interprets and gathers up ever more, where 'opposites are tamed,' and yet where the contingent nature of that interpretation is recognised and in addition celebrated. As reactive, it can be the product of the 'disinherited' spirit, whose faith in the 'tree of knowledge' (*BGE* §152) has been shattered, yet refuses to face up to the task of accepting responsibility for the creation of new values, either clinging to a residual faith in the notion of an autonomous, objective truth to the world, or seeking to annihilate all values. In these responses art is used either to confirm the belief in an objective 'order of things' or as a means to transcend the real.

Nietzsche's comment on 'False *intensification:* 1. In romanticism: this constant *Espressivo* is no sign of strength but of a feeling of deficiency' (*WP* §826) both exemplifies his equation of romanticism and weakness and indicates the link between his classicism and his critique of naturalness. Against the emphasis on expression and the 'cult of orgies of feeling,' he counterposes the argument that 'One has to tyrannise in order to produce any effect' (ibid.), and with this notion of tyrannising he is referring to the process of aesthetic ordering and control. In his later notes from 1887, Nietzsche explicitly equates the difference between active and reactive with the difference between the classical and romantic styles, with, once again, the function of will to power as organisation acting as the criterion for distinguishing the two. In a note from autumn

1887 he asks whether 'the opposition between active and reactive does not lie hidden behind the opposition of classical and romantic' (*WP* §847), and in a later note entitled 'Aesthetica' from the same notebook he writes, 'In order to be classical one must possess *all* the strong, apparently contradictory gifts and desires: but such that they go together beneath the one yoke' (*WP* §848). In contrast, one of Nietzsche's main criticisms of romanticism in his symptomatological analysis of modernity is its lack of organising power. In romanticism he observes 'the will to unity . . . but the inability to let it exercise tyranny in the most important thing, namely with regard to the work itself' (*WP* §849). It is a criticism which Nietzsche repeats in his attacks on Wagner in *The Case of Wagner,* diagnosing the latter's music as an 'anarchy of atoms . . . hostility and chaos' (*CW* §7), adding later that Wagner displays 'the decline of organisational power' (*CW* 'Second Postscript'). In other words, romanticism is a sign of enfeebled will to power, and this becomes manifest in other ways, too. For example, the romantic fascination with the exotic, including 'Victor Hugo's orientals, Wagner's *Edda* characters, Walter Scott's Englishmen of the thirteenth century' (*WP* §830), is the symptom of a 'weariness of will,' resulting in 'all the greater excesses in the desire to feel, imagine, and dream new things' (*WP* §829). This weakness of will has become endemic in contemporary art; for Nietzsche, in contrast, 'the highest feeling of power is concentrated in the classical type' (*WP* §799). In addition to his critique of the disintegration of style in the work specifically of Wagner, Nietzsche makes the more general point that 'We lack in music an aesthetic that would impose laws on musicians and give them a conscience; we lack, as a consequence, a genuine conflict over "principles." . . . [W]e no longer know on what basis to found the concepts "model," "mastery," "perfection,"' (*WP* §838). And yet Nietzsche's classicism is not to be regarded simply as a conservative call to order; his repeated emphases on ambiguity, polysemy and negation as signs of strength, together with his valorisation of Dionysus, are all evidence of this. To this extent his 'Dionysian classicism' displays an ambivalence towards the disintegration of style characteristic of modernity. His critique is focused less on the disruption of form than on its *uncontrolled* disruption, its degeneration into an-

archy, which he interprets as the expression of modern neurosis. It is the product of the 'bad freedom' of modernity:

> We have left the land and have embarked. We have burned our bridges behind us – indeed we have gone farther and destroyed the land behind us. Now little ship, look out! Beside you is the ocean: to be sure, it does not always roar, and at times it lies spread out like silk and gold and reveries of graciousness. But hours will come when you will realise that it is infinite and that there is nothing more awesome than infinity. Oh the poor bird that felt free and now strikes the walls of this cage! Woe, when you fell homesick for the land as if it had offered *more* freedom – and there is no longer any 'land.'
>
> (*GS* §124)

7

Art, Truth and Woman

The Raging Discordance

> Compared with the artist the appearance of the scientific man is actually a sign of a certain damming up and lowering of the level of life (– but also of strengthening, severity, hardness, will to power).
>
> (*WP* §816)

Despite his recurrent emphasis on affirmativity and his numerous criticisms of cultural pessimism, Nietzsche's aesthetic theory can, in many respects, be regarded as an aesthetics of negation. As such it exemplifies his emphasis on the *productive* function of the negative. His formulations frequently take on the character of reverse images of the inherited tradition of the philosophy of art. Hence, Nietzsche's physiological aesthetic emerges in opposition to the formalist notion of the autonomy of art. Similarly, Dionysian classicism is shaped in opposition to what Nietzsche perceived to be a disintegration of style characteristic of modernity. Lastly, he conceives of art in opposition to the scientific-metaphysical concern with *truth*. The object of Nietzsche's criticisms is a constellation of aesthetic notions which find their origins in Kant and Hegel. This is hardly surprising, for it has been suggested that the entire discourse of aesthetic theory up to the present is largely framed by Kant and Hegel, who constitute the two dominant poles of aesthetic thought.[1] On the one hand, Hegel sees art as inextricably linked to the historical evolution of consciousness, functioning as a material symbolic expression of that evolution. Art functions as vehicle of truth, the 'configuration as a concrete reality' of the Idea.[2] On the other hand, Kant explicitly dissociates the aesthetic experience from the contingencies of historical consciousness, arguing for an ahistorical aesthetic ex-

perience irreducible to conceptual cognition. Aesthetic experience functions as a site of resistance to logic and truth. Nietzsche diverges from both tendencies; he attacks Kant and the formalist tradition for holding a naive and unrealistic view of aesthetic production and reception, while Hegel's linear idea of time rules out the productive appropriation of the past central to the transformed relation to time Nietzsche regards as central to the overcoming of modernity. Nietzsche himself does not make the point, but Hegel's assertion that art, as the *highest* cultural activity, belongs to the past is one more example of the aesthetic impoverishment of modernity, in which art is relegated to the margins of social life.

Undoubtedly the most important aspect of the legacy of Hegel, for Nietzsche's aesthetic thought, is his notion of art as the sensuous embodiment of truth. Of course, this claim has to be qualified. Hegel argues that only in Greek and Roman culture was art the perfect vehicle of truth, whereas in the succeeding 'romantic' epoch its place is usurped by philosophy. The question of transcendence is significant too, for Hegel and, even more, romantic philosophers such as Schelling bestow on art the status of a *transcendent* revelation of truth. For Hegel this conception of art is at least restricted, since the congruence of the two is, in his system, historically limited. In the *System of Transcendental Idealism,* however, Schelling makes a much bolder claim, since art is at all times a moment of revelation. Schelling argues that 'Art is paramount to the philosopher, precisely because it opens to him, as it were, the holy of holies, where burns in eternal and original unity, as if in a single flame, that which in nature and history is rent asunder, and in life and action, no less than in thought, must forever fly apart.'[3]

Such a notion appears to be the complete antithesis of Nietzsche's own writing on art, but a slightly more careful reading indicates a more complex and nuanced relation between Nietzsche and romanticism. For Schelling it is the semantic indeterminacy of the aesthetic object, a notion derived from Kant, which leads him to posit art as a revelation of the absolute. Philosophy itself, reliant on the limitations of conceptual logic, cannot articulate this. This position is paralleled in Friedrich Schlegel's concept of 'Transcendental Poetry,' in which poetic irony, through a perpetual process of self-reflection, tends *towards* the infinite.

It does not manage to *reach* the infinite, but the reflexivity of the ironic work of art nevertheless *symbolises* the absolute.[4] Beginning with the same recognition of the insufficiency of conceptual logic, Nietzsche also contrasts artistic with conceptual logic. He writes of the 'free ordering, placing, disposing, giving form in the moment of "inspiration"' according to laws that 'defy all formulation through concepts' (*BGE* §188). However, he is leading towards a completely different conclusion, namely, that the reason discursive concepts cannot convey the real is because it does not exist. Nietzsche is thus forced into taking a *via negativa;* the dominant tropes on which his critique of metaphysics relies are often those of lack, non-being. Dionysian wisdom consists in the confrontation with the *abyss* of meaning. Thus Nietzsche also valorises art's semantic indeterminacy, but for different reasons. Although art counters what Novalis had referred to as 'petrifying and petrified reason,'[5] it is not promoted in the name of a higher transcendent truth, but in the name of the project of preventing cultural ossification. In drawing on romantic notions of indeterminacy, Nietzsche's philosophy of art can thus be seen as an aesthetic of negation in a further way, in addition to those already indicated. Art consists of the negation of meaning – an idea I outlined previously, and Nietzsche thus represents a position which would subsequently culminate in the negative aesthetics of Adorno and the linguistic deconstruction of Jacques Derrida.[6]

Art presents an exemplary case of self-overcoming, which Nietzsche sees as central to the 'accomplished nihilism' that will counter the individual and social formations of modernity. In this chapter, therefore, I shall explore the question of truth and untruth in Nietzsche's aesthetic theory. In particular, I shall explore the ways in which 'truth' figures in Nietzsche's critique of both romanticism and realism. Intimately connected with this theme is the gendering both of art and of the question of truth in Nietzsche's thinking in general. Since the publication of Derrida's *Spurs* it has been almost impossible to think of the problem of truth in Nietzsche without also bringing into consideration the question of woman.[7] In particular, Derrida was the first to bring to prominence the ways in which the figure of woman shapes the notion of truth in Nietzsche. In terms of the philosophy of art, the question of woman is of particular significance, given that Nietzsche repeatedly asserts that

his revisiting of aesthetic theory involves a masculinisation of aesthetics, putting aside the 'feminine' aesthetics of the spectator. The gendering of art can be traced back to Nietzsche's earliest criticisms of Wagner, which take to task the composer's reliance on hysteria, leading to a 'feminising' of the audience. Inasmuch as woman functions as a figure of truth, this also impinges on the relation between art and truth. In this chapter, therefore, I shall discuss the two central themes I introduced above: first, the relation of art and truth and, second, the effect of Nietzsche's reorientation of aesthetics towards an aesthetics of production.

The Truth of Art

In a fragment from 1886, Nietzsche makes the following comment concerning patterns of thinking in aesthetics hitherto:

> NB
> 1) Attempt to bring Aesthetics closer to unegoistic Ethics (as a preparation for it) through the elimination of the "I."
> 2) Attempt to bring it closer to knowledge (pure subject, "pure reflection of the object")
> – against this: the object, when viewed aesthetically, falsified through and through
> "pure, will-less, painless timeless subject of knowing"
> – by no means "knowledge"!
>
> (*KSA* 12:5[99])

The object of Nietzsche's criticism in this note is Schopenhauer's interpretation of Kant. As I have already argued, the notion of disinterestedness, which in Kant, though a prerequisite of any aesthetic judgement, laid no claim to a truth content, becomes in Schopenhauer a means to overcome the limitations of the principle of sufficient reason. In other words, Will-less aesthetic contemplation offers a disclosure of the noumenal reality of the world beyond the reach of everyday, rational cognition. Schopenhauer has thus overturned the Platonic notion of art, in which art, as the mere imitation of the material world, itself a poor copy of the true world of the forms, stands at two removes from reality. Art is accused by Plato of being illusory and deceptive and hence

at one point banished from the ideal state. In this overturning of Platonism, Schopenhauer goes much further than either Kant or the early romantics were prepared to in their delineation of the capacities and limits of aesthetic judgement. To be sure, for Friedrich Schlegel or Schelling the beautiful can *symbolise* the absolute, and even for Kant, the beautiful is a symbol of the *good,* in which the semantic indeterminacy of the aesthetic object allows the imagination unrestricted freedom. Additionally, Kant insists that the judgement of taste, though subjective, is also universal, thereby creating a parallelism between knowing and judging. However, such assertions are far less ambitious than the claims made on behalf of the aesthetic state and the aesthetic object by Schopenhauer. Music counts as a direct reflection of the Will. As Schopenhauer notes, 'music is by no means like the other arts, namely a copy of the Ideas, but a *copy of the Will itself;* the objectivity of which are the Ideas. For this reason the effect of music is so very much more powerful and penetrating than is that of the other arts, for these others speak only of the shadow, but music of the essence' (*WWR* I §52). This stands in opposition to the romantic notion that art symbolises the absolute only *indirectly* through its temporal self-reflective unfolding.[8] For according to this latter idea, the revelation of the absolute is never direct but is mediated by time. In contrast, Schopenhauer's theory gives no room to ideas of a mediated presentation of the Will.

This particular development of Kant's aesthetics is not, however, merely limited to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Heidegger too, though critical of Schopenhauer, interprets Kant's theory of beauty as in some sense world-disclosive. In the first volume of *Nietzsche* he writes, 'in order to find something beautiful, we must let what encounters us, purely as it is itself, come before us in its own stature and worth. . . . Comportment toward the beautiful as such, says Kant, is *unconstrained favouring.* We must release what encounters us as such to its way to be; we must allow and grant it what belongs to it and what it brings to us.'[9] This reading of Kant harmonises with the alethic function Heidegger himself allots to art, but is just as much an appropriation as that undertaken by Schopenhauer. In an important sense Nietzsche stands in this tradition; the relation of art and truth are central concerns in the evaluation of art. As the 'counter-movement' to

metaphysics, art is accorded a higher worth than the obsession with conceptual 'truth' of metaphysical culture. Yet this similarity has to be qualified by the completely different motivation underpinning Nietzsche's valorisation of art.

According to Heidegger's analysis of 'the raging discord between art and truth,' the difference between art and truth consists in their relation to the problem of becoming and being. Returning repeatedly to Nietzsche's comment that 'to stamp becoming with the mark of being – that is the supreme will to power' (*WP* §617), Heidegger characterises Nietzsche's understanding of truth as a function of the desire for permanence. As such, Heidegger notes, 'truth is any given fixed apparition that allows life to rest firmly on a particular perspective and to preserve itself, as such fixation, "truth" is an immobilising of life, and hence its inhibition and dissolution.'[10] In contrast, art allows reality (in other words, becoming) to reveal itself *as* becoming, without being fixed in one perspective: 'in order for the real to *remain* real, it must on the other hand simultaneously transfigure itself by going out beyond itself, surpassing itself in the scintillation of what is created in art.'[11] Consequently, art consists of a dynamic process of perpetual self-overcoming which thereby reveals the 'reality' of the world as becoming.

Heidegger's interpretation, though persuasive, runs the risk of assimilating Nietzsche to the early romantic project, in which the self-overcoming of the Nietzschean artwork parallels the perpetual self-reflective irony of romantic transcendental poetry. I have already suggested reasons why the superficial resemblance of the two remains *merely* a superficial resemblance masking other, far more important differences. In his analysis of the notion of 'truth' in Nietzsche, Heidegger seems to be imputing to Nietzsche *two* notions of truth. The first, which we might term 'truth,' is the idea of truth as the construct of a particular perspective. In Nietzsche's terms it is the kind of 'falsehood' without which (human) life would not be possible. The second, undeclared notion, which I shall capitalise as 'Truth,' assumes there to be a higher, objective reality, transcending the limitations of any particular perspective. In Heidegger's reading, Nietzsche regards art as worth more than 'truth' because it reveals the higher 'Truth' of reality, namely, becoming as the foundation of the world.

According to Heidegger's reading, Nietzsche views art as world-disclosive in a manner similar to Schopenhauer and the romantics, for it is not limited to the fixed representation of beings from a particular perspective. Its fluidity is the mirror of fundamental becoming. However, sensitivity to Nietzsche's anti-foundationalism makes such a reading problematic. 'Truth' cannot have any place in Nietzsche's project as I have outlined it, except as a target for polemic. As we have seen, Nietzsche's polemic has two kinds of misunderstanding as its target. The first misunderstanding is when 'truth' is taken to be identical to 'Truth,' and, broadly speaking, it is the realist assumptions of the sciences together with that brand of 'dogmatic' metaphysics that even Kant had criticised which make this mistake. The second misconception arises when 'truth' is accepted to be a peculiarly human construct but yet is seen as nevertheless concealing the higher 'Truth,' and Nietzsche's target in this regard is the dualism of Kant and the Idealists. Heidegger is attempting to assimilate Nietzsche's thinking to this view, despite Nietzsche's objection to any such form of dualist thinking.[12]

At first sight it might seem plausible to read an early work such as *The Birth of Tragedy* as supporting such dualist tendencies, with its appropriation of Kantian and Schopenhauerian vocabulary. However, as I have pointed out, there are also strong reasons for emphasising the thematic *continuity* between Nietzsche's early and later work, rather than neatly dividing his work into distinct 'periods.' Already in *The Birth of Tragedy* and the various jottings from the same period, Nietzsche distances himself from the Schopenhauerian idea that Dionysian music is an unmediated presentation of the primal chaos. Indeed, as I have noted before, the idea of 'reality' as a Dionysian abyss of meaning is for Nietzsche only a 'form of appearing' and thus always already enmeshed within the web of discursive meaning. In Nietzsche's other writings concerning art, the lingering ambiguities of *The Birth of Tragedy* have all been erased. The pages of both volumes of *Human All Too Human,* for example, are strewn with aphorisms that strive to dissociate art from truth. Moreover Nietzsche is not attempting to pit art against metaphysical 'truth' in the name of some higher, transcendent 'Truth.' Rather, he seeks to avoid any and every suggestion that art discloses some prior state of affairs, whether that is imagined as the merely empirical world or as a noume-

nal realm normally concealed from the limited categories of conceptual thinking. Nietzsche argues that we should recognise the importance of play, fantasy and simple deception in understanding art. In one aphorism entitled 'The artist's sense of truth,' Nietzsche writes, 'The artist has, with regard to the cognition of truths, a weaker ethic than the thinker . . . he . . . considers the continuation of his style of creation more important than scientific devotion to the true, in any form' (*HAH* I §146). This idea of the 'weak ethic' of the artist is confirmed at the end of Nietzsche's career when he notes that 'falsity, indifference to truth and utility may be signs of youth, of "childishness" in an artist,' which becomes manifest in their 'lack of dignity; buffoon and god side by side; saint and scoundrel' (*WP* §816). Consequently, writers such as 'Byron, Musset, Poe, Leopardi, Kleist, Gogol . . . are and perhaps must be men of fleeting moments, enthusiastic, sensual, childish, frivolous' (*BGE* §269). Art is thus an antidote to scientific sobriety.

'Art renders the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of impure thinking' (*HAH* I §146), a conclusion which not only repeats the understanding of tragedy in *The Birth of Tragedy* but modifies it by explicitly equating such 'rendering bearable' with 'falsifying.' Far from disclosing any form of truth, art functions precisely through its capacity to deceive, such that we learn 'to look upon life in every shape and form with interest and desire, to carry our feelings so far that we finally exclaim "however it is, life is good"' (*HAH* I §222). In one fragment from early 1884, 'On the origin of art,' Nietzsche argues that art arises where 'the capacity to lie and to dissimulate has been developed the longest,' in the 'Inability to distinguish between "true" and "appearance"' (*KSA* 11:25 [386]). It is this awareness of the deceptive nature of art which led the Greeks, the last truly aesthetic culture, to admire Odysseus' 'ability to tell lies.' As Nietzsche concludes, 'The most remarkable thing about it is that the antithesis of appearance and being is not felt at all and is thus of no significance morally. Have there ever been such consummate actors!' (*GS* §306). The erasure of the opposition between being and appearance is of crucial importance here, for it goes to the heart of Nietzsche's critique of metaphysical dualism; the Greeks, and art in general, make no such distinction, and thus the work of art does not seek higher truths *behind* mere surface appearing. To be

sure, as Nietzsche recognises in *Human All Too Human,* certain works of art displayed a concern with the truth of the 'beyond.' However, these are interpreted as a specific product of contemporary nihilism, and as such they constitute a corruption of art. In contrast, 'The poet sees in the liar his foster brother, whom he did out of milk' (*GS* §222). Again the Greeks serve as the model. At the conclusion of the preface to *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes, 'Oh those Greeks. They knew how to live. What is required for that is to stop courageously at the surface, the fold, the skin, to adore appearance, to believe in forms, tones, words, in the whole Olympus of appearance. Those Greeks were superficial – *out of profundity!* . . . Are we not in this respect Greeks? Adorers of forms, of tones, of words? And for this very reason – artists?' (*GS* preface §4). A similar point is made later on when Nietzsche refers to art as 'the *good* will to appearance,' which consequently functions as 'a counterforce against our honesty' (*GS* §107).

The grounds for Nietzsche's positive attitude towards the artistic lack of truth lie in art's role in cultural reform. In this aphorism he repeats the assertion he had first made in *The Birth of Tragedy,* that 'as an aesthetic phenomenon existence is still bearable for us' (ibid.), but now it is for a slightly different reason. Whereas in *The Birth of Tragedy* art renders life bearable through the transfiguration of suffering, in *The Gay Science* it does so because it cures the craving for truthfulness. And in Nietzsche's thinking it is the desire for truth that inevitably leads to nihilism. As Nietzsche writes, 'If we had not welcomed the arts and invented this kind of cult of the untrue, then the realisation of general untruth and mendaciousness that now comes to us through science – the realisation that delusion and error are conditions of human knowledge and sensation – would be utterly unbearable.' Part of the ability of art to overcome truthfulness is its creation of an 'artistic distance,' which enables us not to take ourselves too seriously. As Nietzsche says, 'Precisely because we are at bottom grave and serious human beings . . . we need all exuberant, floating, dancing, mocking, childish and blissful art, lest we lose the freedom above things' (*GS* §107).

In drawing on this motif of distance Nietzsche is mobilising the idea of reflection, which, as I have outlined, becomes central to the early romantic concept of poetic irony. More importantly, the motif of distance

also brings into play the question of woman and art. In an earlier aphorism from the same book of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche writes his celebrated account of 'Women and their action at a distance' (*GS* §60), in which he concludes that 'the magic and the most powerful effect of women is, in philosophical language, action at a distance, *actio in distans*' (ibid.). Art and woman, therefore, are intimately linked through their reliance on distance; art through its wilful playing *above* things, woman through her veiling dissimulation.[13] In addition, like the artist and the sceptic, women have no sympathies with the metaphysical search for truth: 'they consider the superficiality of existence to be its essence, and all virtue and profundity is for them merely a veiling of this "truth"' (*GS* §64). As Nietzsche later states in *Beyond Good and Evil,* 'nothing has been more alien, repugnant and hostile to woman than truth – her great art is the lie, her highest concern is mere appearance and beauty' (*BGE* §232). Hence, too, the antithesis of woman and science. Nietzsche argues that 'When a woman has scholarly inclinations there is usually something wrong with her sexually' (*BGE* §144), a claim which complements his exhortation: 'Reflect on the whole history of women: do they not *have* to be first of all and above all else actresses? . . . Woman is so artistic' (*GS* §361).

Despite such motivic similarities, Nietzsche's use of the configuration of woman, art and truth is problematic.[14] On numerous occasions he explicitly dissociates woman from 'proper' artistic creativity. One note from 1887 poses the rhetorical question 'Would any link at all be missing in the chain of art and science if woman, if the works of women, were missing?' (*WP* §817). Woman is always spoken for from the perspective of man; she is an enigma for Nietzsche because she is not permitted to speak for herself. Moreover, Nietzsche's attitude is itself contradictory. If, on the one hand, he draws a parallel between art and woman, on the other he also talks of romanticism as feminine and enfeebled, the effects of Wagnerian theatre as feminising the audience, and, most strikingly, the consummately artistic culture of the Greeks as essentially masculine. In *Human All Too Human* he notes that in classical Greece 'the women had no other task than to bring forth handsome powerful bodies in which the character of the father lived on as uninterruptedly as possible' (*HAH* §259). The historical accuracy of Nietz-

sche's observation is not in question; its consistency in terms of his comments on the shared suspicion between the Greeks and woman of anything but surface most definitely is, however. Furthermore, this is not an individual aberration. Elsewhere he speaks of the sickly 'feminine dissatisfaction and romanticism' that are 'superabundant' in Europe (*GS* §24), while the romantic composer Robert Schumann is dismissed as 'a noble tender-heart who wallowed in all sorts of anonymous bliss and woe, a kind of girl' (*BGE* §245). A contrast is made in *Daybreak* between the masculine virtues of Greek tragedy and the implicitly feminine qualities of contemporary music, when he speculates

> For music, too, there may perhaps again come a better time . . . when artists have to make it appeal to men strong in themselves, severe, dominated by the dark seriousness of their own passion: but of what use is music to the little souls of this vanishing age, souls too easily moved, undeveloped, half-selves, inquisitive, lusting after everything.
>
> (*D* §172)

Wagner, especially, is responsible for the feminising of modernity. Nietzsche notes that 'he appealed to "beautiful things" and "heaving bosoms" like all artists of the theatre – and with all this he won over the women and even those in need of culture: but what is music to women and those in need of culture!' (*WP* §838). Amongst the spectators of Wagnerian theatre 'one is common people, audience, herd, woman, Pharisee, voting cattle, democrat, neighbour, fellow man' (*GS* §368), a complaint Nietzsche repeats when he observes amongst the Wagnerian audience 'the eternal feminine . . . in short the common people' (*CW* §6). Nietzsche is of course making use of a widespread equation between the hysterical mass audience and woman, but within his thought it is doubly problematic.[15] In addition to his troubling use of a misogynistic notion of woman, Nietzsche is caught in the contradiction that art is feminine in its disregard for truth, but at the same time the debased metaphysical art of modernity is also feminine on account of its neurotic hysteria and lack of severity. In mitigation, it is also the case that Nietzsche is critical of misogyny. In *Daybreak,* for example, he notes that '"Woman is our enemy" – out of the man who says that to other men there speaks an immoderate drive which hates not only itself but its

means of satisfaction as well' (*D* §346). Consequently misogyny is read as a specific example of the self-hatred of modernity. The difficulties in Nietzsche's account of woman, truth and art may thus constitute one more case of his general reliance on contradiction, paradox and irony.

In emphasising the untruth of artistic practice, Nietzsche is paradoxically employing a philosopheme which originates in Plato. He is not, however, criticising the romantic belief in art as a vehicle of truth in order to reinstate a Platonic distinction between the true and its copy. Rather, his use of the Platonic equation of art and falsity is intended not to serve to discredit art, but to add weight to his general argument that brings into question the belief in truthfulness per se. Art is not mendacious because of some deficiency in art, but because there is no truth of which it could be the mimesis. It is against the background of his frequent assertions that art is a form of falsehood, a rhetorical strategy to aggravate the discord between art and truth, that one should also read Nietzsche's criticism of realism and its positivist assumptions. It is significant that in his middle works, supposedly more sympathetic to the sciences, Nietzsche is critical of the realist movement in the arts, which would function as an artistic analogue to the scientific positivism of the nineteenth century. Amongst the verses of 'Jest, Cunning and Revenge' preceding the main text of *The Gay Science* he writes the following:

> The realistic painter
> "Nature is true and complete!" – How does he begin:
> When would Nature ever be represented in his picture?
> Infinite is the smallest portion of the world! –
> In the end he paints of it what he likes.
> And what does he like? Whatever he can paint!
>
> (*GS* 'Jest, Cunning and Revenge' §55)

On the basis of this admittedly charmless verse, we can observe that Nietzsche's work of the so-called middle period consists of more than a mere overturning of the super-sensualism of Plato into a purely sensualist positivism. For not only does he challenge the idea that nature can simply be 'reproduced' in its entirety through art, but he is also challenging the idea of nature as a simple given. Referring implicitly to perspectivism, nature is instead seen as an infinity that cannot be depicted

as an empirical totality. This criticism is repeated in notes from 1884, where the object this time is Flaubert and photography. Here Nietzsche observes that 'The "will-to-be-objective" e.g. in Flaubert is a modern misunderstanding. . . . Gentlemen, there is no "thing-in-itself"! What they achieve is scientism or photography, i.e. description without perspective, a type of Chinese painting, pure foreground and everything full to bursting' (*KSA* 11:25 [164]). His unpublished notes from the mid- and late 1880s include a variety of references to authors such as Zola, the Goncourt brothers, Flaubert, all of which are critical of the realist and naturalist project.

One note from early 1884 complains of 'The lack of powerful souls,' of which an example is 'Objectivity as a modern means to lose oneself through low self-estimation (as in Flaubert)' (*KSA* 11:25 [216]). This criticism reiterates a point made in the previous note cited, in which Nietzsche argues that

> Greatness of form, undistracted by individual stimuli, is the expression of greatness of character. . . . It is an act of self-hatred on the part of the moderns when, like Schopenhauer, they would like to 'lose themselves' in art – to take refuge in the object, to 'deny themselves.'
>
> (*KSA* 11:25 [164])[16]

Through the espousal of a notion of authorial self-erasure Flaubert counts for Nietzsche as an example again of Kantian disinterest (*KSA* 11:26 [389]). The attempt at self-transcendence on the part of the author or painter is, quite simply, a delusion. The desire by the author to efface himself, to submerse himself completely in the objective world being described, is to ignore the role of the author in constituting that world, in having access to only certain perspectives on the world and not others.

As if continuing his criticism of the same delusion, Nietzsche writes some three years later, 'It is not possible to remain *objective* or to suspend the interpretative, additive, supplementing, poetising power (– which latter forges the chain that affirms the beautiful)' (*WP* §804). Naturalism is driven by the same will to truth that motivates metaphysics and thus, alongside romanticism, is to be seen as a *symptom* of the modern condition. One fragment on the 'Will to Truth' (*WP* §455)

which explores the 'longing for belief' also includes contemporary naturalism; Nietzsche asks, 'what does the will-to-truth mean in the Goncourts? amongst the naturalists?' The context of these rhetorical questions suggests the answers to be supplied. The Goncourt brothers count amongst the 'Modern pessimists as décadents' (*KSA* 13:14 [222]), alongside Schopenhauer, Baudelaire, Leopardi and Philip Mainländer.[17] A fragment from 1887 develops this at much greater length. Beginning with the title 'The descriptive, the picturesque as symptoms of nihilism in the art and in psychology,' Nietzsche comments, 'Never observe in order to observe. That produces a false optic, a squinting, something forced and exaggerated' (*KSA* 12:9 [110]). Later he adds '"Nature" in the artistic sense is never "true"; it exaggerates, it consumes, it leaves gaps. The "study after nature" is a sign of submission, of weakness, a kind of fatalism unworthy of the artist. To see what *is* – that belongs to another specific kind of spirit, those who are factual, who make sure: if this sense is developed to the full, one is inartistic' (ibid.). A similar diagnosis is presented in *Nietzsche contra Wagner,* where Nietzsche singles out Flaubert for criticism:

> With regard to artists of every kind I now make use of this principal distinction: has hatred towards life or the superabundance of life been creative here? In Goethe, for example, superabundance became creative, in Flaubert hatred: Flaubert, a repeat version of Pascal, but in the form of an artist, with the instinctual judgement on the basis that: 'Flaubert est toujours haïssable, l'homme n'est rien, l'oeuvre est tout' . . . he tortured himself whenever he wrote just as Pascal tortured himself when he thought – both had unegoistic sensibilities . . . 'selflessness' – the principle of décadence, the will to termination in art as in morality.
>
> (*NCW* 'We Antipodeans')

Therefore, although realism and romanticism appear to be opposed, for Nietzsche they are both symptoms of the same nihilist problem, both seek the erasure of the artist in the name of either a transcendental truth or the objective truth of factual observation. Clearly, when Nietzsche claims that 'Aesthetics is indeed nothing but applied physiology' (*NCW* 'Where I Raise Objections'), or argues in a fragment from 1887 that 'The desire for art and beauty is an indirect desire for the ecstasies

of the sexual drive, which it communicates to the cerebrum' (*WP* §805), he is consolidating on his earlier goal of driving a wedge between art and truth. As I suggested in the previous chapter, by describing art in terms of physiology, Nietzsche is bringing it within the broader compass of his project of immanence, a wider strategy which embraces both Nietzsche's physiologically based perspectivism and his doctrine of Eternal Return. Art 'discloses' neither the truth of the factual, 'objective' world nor that of some super-sensuous realm. In fact, it 'discloses' nothing at all. Art *creates* a world. It carries out a selective, world-constitutive, operation in a manner analogous to the interpretative process of will to power, an insight which causes Nietzsche to speak of the 'states in which we plant a transfiguration and plenitude into things . . . until they reflect back our own plenitude and joy in life' (*WP* §801). Beauty and art are less a matter of truth than one of strength. As Nietzsche says, 'it is a question of power (of an individual or of a people), *whether* and *where* [the] judgement "beautiful" is given . . . the feeling of power even passes the judgement "beautiful" on things and states of affairs which the impotent instinct can only estimate as being hateful, as "ugly"' (*WP* §852). With this assertion of the unity of the question of art and that of power we see, too, the unity of Nietzsche's critique of disinterestedness in the name of physiology, and the critique of artistic truth in the name of lying. For both features reveal the status of art as a form of interpretative will to power.

Nietzsche's 'Masculine' Aesthetics of the Artist

In the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals* Nietzsche remarks of Kant that 'like all philosophers, instead of gauging the aesthetic problem on the basis of the experience of the artist (the creator) [he] pondered art and the beautiful solely from the point of view of the spectator, and thereby imperceptibly let the "spectator" into the concept "beautiful" itself' (*OGM* III §6). Nietzsche here is making two related claims. The first is that Kant neglects the artist, while the second is that consequently questions of 'beauty,' 'sublimity' and even 'ugliness' have meaning only when related to the passive experience of the aesthetic viewer, listener, reader and others. As interpretations of Kant the first is

partially incorrect, while the second is only partially correct. With regard to the first, Nietzsche's sketchy knowledge is revealed through his neglect of the extensive passages in the *Critique of Judgement* that Kant devotes to the creativity of the artist.[18] If his criticism is simply that Kant's talk of 'genius' merely perpetuates the cult of genius, a concept, which Gadamer, too, contends is 'basically conceived from the position of the spectator,'[19] then he is incorrect here as well. Far from submitting to the contemporary cult of the genius inherited from the *Sturm und Drang* movement of the 1770s and 1780s, Kant is attempting to counterbalance such notions by stressing the extent to which creative genius (which he prefers to term merely a "talent") is guided by technique and rules of artistic production. Hence his disdain for what he terms 'original nonsense,' in other words, artistic creativity determined solely by the inner subjective feeling of the artist.[20] Nietzsche's criticism is therefore rather misleading. Although the larger part of Kant's account of aesthetic experience analyses the subjective perception of the spectator, his discussion of artistic production is also a central element of his argument. However, just as 'Kant' stands as the target of Nietzsche's critique of formalist aesthetics in general, so here too the object of Nietzsche's comments is the aesthetic tradition stemming from Kant and reaching its culmination, for Nietzsche, in Schopenhauer.

With regard to Nietzsche's second criticism, he is partially correct when he sees the Kantian spectator as the determining ground of any judgement of beauty. I say *partially* correct because Kant resists any conclusion that taste is just a matter of subjective preferences through his recourse to the notion of subjective universality, and in this he is working against the tradition of eighteenth-century aesthetic criticism, in which personal, subjective responses *are* the sole basis of passing judgement.[21] In addition, Kant suggests that certain kinds of formal, objective qualities, for example, the use of ornamentation or colour, may be inappropriate objects of any judgement of taste, with the implication that the aesthetic judgement consists of a complex relation between subjective and non-subjective elements. Furthermore, Nietzsche is only partially correct since the "subjectification" of aesthetics in Kant does not occur "imperceptibly" but quite consciously, since it occupies a central place in the architectonic of his critical project.

One can therefore defend Kant against Nietzsche's criticisms, but perhaps a more important issue is to explore why Nietzsche considers the putative 'subjective turn' in Kant's aesthetic theory so problematic. In other words, what is the virtue for Nietzsche of an aesthetic of the artist over and against the 'womanly aesthetics' of the spectator, of the recipient? Nietzsche writes that we 'should not demand of the artist who gives, that he become a woman – that he "receives"' (*WP* §811). However, given Nietzsche's assault on notions of subjectivity, one may well ask why we should we be interested in the artist in any case. In answer to this I would argue that Nietzsche's critique of Kant is motivated less by an interest in countering an imbalance of perspectives in Kant, and more by his wider strategic aim to dissociate art and truth. In practice, Nietzsche devotes considerable space and time to the exploration of the constitutive role of the spectator in the determination of the beautiful. Without being reducible to the Kantian 'subjectivist' aesthetic, Nietzsche's physiology of beauty presents many parallels with Kant's account of aesthetic judgement; in particular one can see Nietzsche's notion of 'aesthetic rapture' as a physiological inflection of the Kantian aesthetic state. Nietzsche's dissatisfaction with the 'womanly aesthetics' practised hitherto is thus not guided by an objection to the orientation of aesthetics per se, but rather by a rejection of the way in which such a 'passive' aesthetics serves to fortify the delusory belief in art as a truth-disclosive praxis. It is motivated by a desire to counter the reification of art embedded in the aesthetic tradition. Although I have argued, against Nietzsche, that Kant in fact devotes considerable attention to the genesis of the work of art, it has also to be conceded that Nietzsche is correct when he asserts that the *experience* of the artist is neglected. Kant devotes adequate space to discussing the artist's use of rules and precedents, yet the account of aesthetic experience itself is discussed exclusively with reference to the reaction of the spectator to the reified aesthetic object, whether it is an object in nature or the finished product of human artifice. In other words, the cognitive 'quickening' which, for Kant, is the central element of aesthetic experience is induced by the finished aesthetic object that, in the case of art, presents the world in a certain way.

In the case of beauty as the symbol of morality in Kant, transcenden-

tal poetry as the symbol of the absolute in Friedrich Schlegel or music as the unmediated image of the Will in Schopenhauer, the aesthetic object is seen as a specific *mode* of representation, which facilitates a cognition that exceeds the normal bounds of conceptual experience. Thus any orientation toward the experience of the spectator cannot but help tend to view beauty as a form of revelation or disclosure, occasioned by a specific object. This doctrine diverges considerably from Nietzsche's own understanding of the understanding of art and the aesthetic, especially in respect of his emphasis on the aesthetic as a temporal process. Of course, Nietzsche does not deny the power of the aesthetic object over the spectator; his tirades against Wagner are motivated by the recognition of the power of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* over the audience. Like Kant he emphasises the 'quickening' effect of such experience (though it is more physiological than cognitive), claiming, for example, that art 'works tonically, increases strength, inflames desire' (*WP* §809). Similarly, in *Human All Too Human* he describes the manner in which art brings about a restructuring of experience, claiming that it aims 'to alter one's sensibilities, partly by modifying our judgements on our experiences . . . partly by arousing a desire for pain, for emotion in general' (*HAH* I §108), and a significant portion of his critique of Wagner focuses on the way in which the emotional hysteria of his operas appeals to and exacerbates the degraded sensibilities of the modern audience. Nevertheless, Nietzsche attaches more importance to the analysis of the artist's experience for two important reasons.

First, in contrast to Kant, Nietzsche tends to equate aesthetics with the philosophy of *art* rather than of beauty. The aesthetic object becomes the work of art, and Nietzsche is less interested in the finished artwork than in the way it functions as a sign or symptom of varying attitudes towards the world. Art is conceived of primarily as an *activity* rather than as an assembly of objects that can be collectively termed 'works' of art. Of course, I am not pretending that Nietzsche ceases to refer to works of art, or asserting that he denies their existence as objects. Such a claim would be absurd since he discusses individual works throughout his career, from Boccaccio's *Decameron*[22] to Wagner's *Parsifal*[23] and Cervantes's *Don Quixote*.[24] What I am arguing, though, is that the significance of works of art lies less in the effect they have on the

spectator, reader or listener qua static, finished totalities, than in their shaping of human affectivity as dynamic creations or achievements of the artist. In other words, they count less as self-contained totalities (and here we see another manner in which Nietzsche departs from Kant and from Formalist aesthetics) than as the products of a particular impulse, in short, as the achievements of interpretative will to power sublimated into the aesthetic drive. As he states in *Human All Too Human,* 'so-called art proper, that of artworks, is just an appendage,' and he continues, 'we usually start with art where we should end with it, cling hold of it by its tail, and believe that the art of the artwork is true art out of which life is to be improved and transformed – fools that we are' (*HAH* II §174). Attention solely to artworks overlooks the central importance of the aesthetic basis of interpretative will to power in general and the cultivation of the Übermensch in particular.

In dealing with the meaning of the term 'art' in Nietzsche an added confusion occurs in Nietzsche's willingness to use the word to describe not only the products of the aesthetic drive but also those objects which are socially understood as art, artworks, but which Nietzsche regards as degraded. The most obvious example is opera, which he considers in *The Birth of Tragedy* to be essentially inartistic (cf. *BT* §19ff.). As I noted previously, Nietzsche had come to recognise by the time of writing *Human All Too Human* that modernity was not as much incapable of producing art per se, as it was incapable of producing *good* art. Hence, contrary to the argument of *The Birth of Tragedy,* modernity is not marked by a complete lack of aesthetic sensibility but rather by a degraded aesthetic sense. I cited earlier the curious discussion of 'The Beyond in Art,' which notes the existence of art forms which promote a sense of the transcendent, then concludes 'A stirring saga will emerge from this, that there once existed such an art, such an artistic belief' (*HAH* I § 220). Nietzsche's conclusion suggests that he terms these works 'art' out of deference to the common understanding of the word rather than out of any approval of their content.[25] For Nietzsche, therefore, art and the power of formal organisation that characterises the work of art count less for themselves than for their significance as manifestation of will to power pervading all life processes. Hence, he is trying to bridge the gap which he sees as having sprung up, separating art from life, the

beautiful from the interests it serves, a gap which originates in the sundering of interest in artistic form from the more general interest in furthering interpretative will to power. Nietzsche's examination of the question of art *primarily* from the position of the artist, with its emphasis on the process of creating, therefore shifts attention away from the idea of art as revealing or as disclosing a pre-existent truth, and towards the recognition of art as a world-constitutive activity.

In his later writing, and especially in the unpublished notes of the late 1880s, the question of beauty and the question of art become synonymous, the numerous passages entitled 'Aesthetica' invariably turning to the issue of art. This is not because Nietzsche is conforming to the traditional identification of art and beauty, but because he sees the activity of perceiving beauty and that of producing art as joined at their root by a shared way of seeing the world. Of beauty he writes, 'In beauty man sets himself up as the measure of perfection,' adding later that 'His feeling of power, his will to power, his courage, his pride – that falls with the ugly, that grows with the beautiful' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §19). Of art he claims that it is a 'compulsion-to-transform to perfection,' adding further that 'Man enjoys himself in art as perfection' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §9). As will to power, art represents a mode of seeing-as, of seeing the world *as* perfect, *as* simplified, *as* organised in a certain way. It is driven by a compulsion to transform the world, and as such Nietzsche is interested more in the figure that puts this seeing-as into artistic praxis, namely the artist himself. Although Nietzsche can admire the artistic qualities of something as impersonal as the Jesuit order or the Prussian officer corps, it is also the case that on the whole, art is dependent in Nietzsche on a specific kind of individual. The work of art is only the culmination of a process, and the process is more important than the material product; this perception again reflects Nietzsche's wider position, in which the process of interpretation cannot be allowed to congeal into a set specific result or perspective.

So is Nietzsche claiming that the artist is merely attempting to express in material terms a pre-determined idea of the world, like the Platonic craftsman who always works with the Form of his object in mind? No, because the artist figure, important though he is, is in many respects a cipher. Nietzsche writes that 'The phenomenon "artist" is still

the most transparent: – to see through it to the basic instincts of power, nature etc. Religion and morality too!' (*WP* §797). Here, too, the origins of artistic creativity are located firmly within the realm of the physiological. This is not necessarily because Nietzsche seeks to deny the importance of the conscious activity of the artist, but in order to rule out any idealist notion of artistic vision and to counteract the cult of genius, of course, more specifically the cult of *Wagner's* genius. Hence one sees a link with Nietzsche's discussion of Wagner as a medical case. The 'case' of Wagner thus gains its meaning from both Nietzsche's attempt to perceive culture as a whole in terms of physiology and his attempt to resist any idealist, genius-oriented notions of artistic creativity. As Nietzsche writes in *Nietzsche contra Wagner,* 'My objections to Wagner are physiological objections. Why should I still disguise them with aesthetic formulations?' (*NCW* 'Where I Raise Objections'). The artistic vision, the 'making perfect' so characteristic of artistic praxis, is not guided by some transcendent ideal, but rather should be seen in terms of a *transfigurative immanence* that opposes any tendency to 'desensualisation.' In a note from 1885, Nietzsche writes, 'As regards the main thing I agree more with the artists than with any philosophers hitherto: they have not lost the great track life goes along, they have loved the things "of this world" . . . it is a sign of having turned out well when one, like Goethe, clings with ever more joy and warm-heartedness to "the things of the world"' (*WP* §820). Nietzsche's physiology of the artist thus fortifies the notion of art as being concerned with the things 'of the world' by its refusal to seek for the source of the work of art beyond the immediately apparent.

If we turn to the second aspect, namely the idea of art as world-*making* rather than world-disclosing, the connection with the broader framework of transfigurative immanence should be all too transparent. The combination of Nietzsche's perspectivism and his resistance to ideas of transcendence, in short, his 'immanent perspectivism' to borrow Nehemas's phrase,[26] rules out both forms of world-disclosure discussed so far. His immanent *perspectivism* rules out any view of art as mimetically disclosive of the world. At best, one could say that it discloses a particular perspective of the world, but then one is forced to admit the work represents a choice of a certain perspective over anoth-

er, which of course undermines the realist ideal of a work completely immersed in the objective world 'as it really is.' His *immanent* perspectivism therefore compels us to rule out talk of art either as a revelation of some higher, super-sensuous truth or as a reproduction of the objective visible world (as if such a thing existed). At the same time his immanent perspectivism draws us inevitably towards a notion of art as world making. As a perspectival practice art represents a fictive world in various selected ways. As a process of transfigurative immanence art forces us to conclude that since there is no 'real,' determinable world to which each perspective can be related, each is the *construction* of a particular world. The physiology of art further strengthens this idea by relating the demands for any particular world to immanent needs, that is, those of the organism, rather than to transcendent truth values.

There is, in addition, one further reason why Nietzsche calls for a turn to the 'masculine' aesthetics of the artist, and it is one suggested by Derrida. For what is significant about Nietzsche's call is not just his plea for a re-orientation to the aesthetics of the artist, but also the fact that he couches it in such gender-specific terms. The artist adopts, so Nietzsche has argued, a masculine standpoint of giving, whereas, by implication, that of the woman, the feminine position, is one of passive acceptance. As Derrida has pointed out, Nietzsche is here 'dealing with a very old philosopheme of *production*,'[27] whereby masculinity has always been regarded as the productive gender against the sterility of the feminine. It is notable, too, that Nietzsche sees the relation between the sexes as based on the process of giving and taking we have seen elucidated above, from his claim that the foundation of all love is desire for appropriation (*GS* §14), to his comparison of feminine and masculine love, where the former is characterised as a desire 'to be taken, to be accepted as a possession' and the latter as a desire to possess: 'the woman gives herself away, the man appropriates' (*GS* §363).

In this move to the (masculine) aesthetics of the artist, Nietzsche is undertaking a number of things. First, he is drawing attention to the long tradition within metaphysics of comparing the relation of certain oppositional pairs to that between the sexes. Within the sphere of aesthetics one can point out the tradition, in the eighteenth century, of seeing aesthetics as a *feminine* discipline in contrast to the masculine

rigours of logic. In addition, the sublime and the beautiful were distinguished in terms of gender.[28] If we follow this Nietzschean thematic a little further it becomes clear that his turn to the 'masculine' aesthetics of the artist is not necessarily an attempt to assimilate or repeat the tradition, because it is in the name of this new attention to 'masculine' art that Nietzsche is criticising traditional aesthetics. In this regard it is worth noting that in the aphorism on love from *The Gay Science* cited earlier, the relation between the two sexes, while still based on the paradigm of appropriation and giving, has inverted the usual relation, inasmuch as it is the woman who gives herself, and the man who receives, or even reaches out and seizes for himself, a relation repeated in *Beyond Good and Evil,* where Nietzsche writes that 'Man . . . has to conceive of woman as possession, as property which can be locked away' (*BGE* §238). This inversion would not be so significant except for the fact that, as I indicated earlier, Nietzsche also sees woman as closer to the artistic temperament than man ('woman is so artistic').

Nietzsche's use of well-established aesthetic philosophemes thus consists of more than merely replicating the inherited aesthetic discourse. Rather, by deliberately playing with such inherited philosophemes he should be seen as bringing together, on another level, the aesthetic and the erotic, a move we have already seen previously in his claim that aesthetic and sexual pleasure are synonymous, or that 'making music is another way of making children' (*WP* §800). The intertwining of erotics and aesthetics serves, as a strategy, further to dissociate the question of art from the metaphysical understanding of truth, which in turn adds force to the severance of art as Nietzsche understands it from the idea of art as revelation of truth, either positivist or transcendent.

Second, Nietzsche's turn to the masculine aesthetic of the artist explicitly pits the artist against truthfulness inasmuch as the latter is frequently described as a woman in Nietzsche. It is a further example of Nietzsche exacerbating the discord between truth and art by occasionally casting their relation in the terms of the opposition of the genders. It is an opposition which points towards a third problem, which I can only briefly discuss here. What paradoxically unites the masculine aesthetic of the artist with the woman is their common pre-disposition to

giving. Nietzsche writes that we 'should not demand of the artist who gives, that he become a woman – that he "receives"' (*WP* §811). Yet as I have already suggested, he seems less concerned with the femininity of aesthetics than with its passivity, for which the woman, on this occasion, stands as a cipher, following the traditional discourse of production. It is moreover this aspect of the problem which I shall be dealing with.

As Derrida points out, Nietzsche's use of the metaphors of appropriation and donation is far from being one of pure contingency, for the metaphysical conception of truth has always been based on the paradigm of appropriation. Truth is always something to be 'attained' or 'grasped.' This notion of truth as something to be possessed, of appropriation as prior to truth, is a recurrent feature of metaphysical thinking and contrasts with Nietzsche's metaphor of truth as a woman, who, hiding behind a veil of dissimulation, always resists that masculine desire to be her master and possessor. It is a desire for mastery that will never be satisfied (and here we see a parallel with the inability of will to power to exhaust its possibilities), for, as Nietzsche says, 'Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists, have been inexpert about women? That the gruesome earnestness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have hitherto usually approached truth were awkward and very improper means for winning over a woman for oneself?' (*BGE* preface). With this speculation Nietzsche is not merely engaging in a whimsical play with ideas that are also related to his claim that, spawned by the ascetic ideal, metaphysicians avoid women and the body (and that Socrates only married out of a wicked sense of irony). He is also challenging once more the ideology of the given, the notion of truth as something waiting to be appropriated, which brings us back to his turn to the aesthetics of the artist as he who gives. By stressing the idea of the artist who gives, like the woman who gives herself, Nietzsche is aiming to dissociate aesthetics even further from metaphysics by overturning the topos of artistic representation as appropriation; with this, of course, Nietzsche is also moving further away from the notion of art as either concealing or revealing the truth. For art is closely bound up with the philosopheme of production, one which brings us into proximity with Nietzsche's theory of interpreta-

tion as a transformational activity. Significantly, the topos of gift-giving plays a notable role in Nietzsche, and it again contradicts the metaphysical model of truth as possession.[29] As Zarathustra declares, 'I love him whose soul squanders itself, who neither wants nor returns thanks; for he always gives' (Z prologue §4) However, it is important to recognise that this is not only an economic metaphor of exchange and expenditure, but also one of production and creation. Nietzsche notes, 'It's more than a matter of giving: it's one of creating, one of violence' (*KSA* 10:16 [40]). It is moreover within Nietzsche's discussion of aesthetics that, I would argue, this process occurs, and it reminds us of the central place which the question of art occupies in Nietzsche's critical assault on metaphysics. It is within the turn to the aesthetics of the artist that the various themes of appropriation, giving, woman, dissimulation, truth and creation are brought into a meaningful relation. The inconsistencies in Nietzsche's twisting and turning from the feminine to the masculine in his confrontation with the aesthetic tradition stems from the fact that he is always using such terms *strategically,* in which whenever one term is not sufficient, it is discarded and replaced by another.

8

Overcoming Nihilism

Art, Modernity and Beyond

A central element in my account of Nietzsche's aesthetic theory has been the intimate connection between his thoughts on art in general and his concern with the crisis of nihilism. Despite his references to figures from the entire history of art, from Aeschylus, Simonides and Euripides through to Raphael, Michelangelo, Beethoven and Schubert, his concern with the question of art is primarily motivated by the pressing issue of modernity. In this respect, as I have suggested previously, Nietzsche's thought represents the latest staging of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes;* his writing is dominated by the overwhelming sense that contemporary artistic practice is decadent, and that this decadence is all the more deplorable given that he accords to art the *potential* for functioning as the counter-movement to general nihilism. The most problematic case is, of course, Richard Wagner, but other figures loom prominently in Nietzsche's list of decadents, such as Zola, Delacroix, Flaubert, Berlioz and Victor Hugo. However, Nietzsche's sense of the need for aesthetic reform stems from a wider sense of cultural crisis; aesthetic renewal is necessary not only because the inherited forms of aesthetic practice bear no meaningful relation to contemporary culture, but also because modernity is to be overcome. Hence Nietzsche seems to continue the tradition stemming from Schiller, in which aesthetic reform opens the way to cultural revolution. There is an important difference, however. For Schiller, and for the early romantics such as Novalis and the Schlegel brothers, aesthetic and cultural innovation was to take place in the name of a transcendent value. There always remains an exterior norm of which art can function as the preeminent

cultural expression. For Nietzsche the crisis is of a different order; it stems not only from the questionable worth of contemporary cultural practices and institutions, but also from the recognition that the possibility of adhering to external norms has vanished. If the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* and its German inflection represent the *advent* of a consciousness of modernity, then in Nietzsche one can see its intensification and culmination. As I noted earlier, Nietzsche's thought is organised around the central problem of modernity, namely, interrogation of the means by which modernity may derive its normativity from itself. Historically, the most prominent way in which this issue emerged was in the aesthetic sphere, where the appropriation of classical culture was linked to a notion of cultural 'rebirth' in the Renaissance, a sense of renewal that eventually led to a questioning of the legitimacy of that classical inheritance. In Nietzsche's own time, of course, aesthetic modernism in the form of an avant-garde was only in its infancy. While the birth of a 'modern' cultural sensibility (in which the relation between the present and the past becomes a *problem*) can be traced back to the late seventeenth century, it was only in the latter half of the nineteenth century that the 'new,' a sense of truth to present times, became a *defining* value within artistic practice. Materialist accounts have often linked the birth of the avant-garde with the rise of consumer culture. The avant-garde has been interpreted as a reaction to mass popular culture, while the logic of artistic innovation mirrors the rise of novelty as a central value in the consumer culture of the nineteenth century. Certainly, for Nietzsche, there was a clear link between the two; his various criticisms of Wagner return repeatedly to the composer's purported error of having transformed art into popular theatre.

Charles Baudelaire is often thought of as the first figure for whom modernity was experienced as an acute problem. Indeed, the meaning of 'modernity' has been interpreted entirely through the prism of Baudelaire.[1] Nietzsche was also interested in Baudelaire, seeing in him a symptom of the decadent modern soul that had lapsed into nihilistic pessimism.[2] Yet while Baudelaire stands as one well-known manifestation of the decadence of modernity, the exemplary case is to be found in Richard Wagner. The increasing unravelling of musical structure, the

reliance on spectacle, the dissolution of resolving cadence through the use of a perpetually modulating 'endless melody' are all, as hallmarks of Wagner's music, symptomatic of the passive will to destruction that, for Nietzsche, was the consequence of the implosion of metaphysical culture.

Wagner's music represents the culmination of romanticism in music and also the moment of its unravelling. The chromatic undermining of tonality in his work looks forward to its complete destruction in the work of Schoenberg. The work of Wagner is of especial interest, for in addition to the fascination he exerted over Nietzsche, his role as a symptom of modernity was also recognised by Adorno.[3] As I noted earlier, there is an important affinity between Adorno and Nietzsche; in particular, I have suggested that Adorno's 'negative dialectic' can be used to characterise the logic of interpretation and will to power in Nietzsche.[4] This affinity is thus continued in their analyses of Wagner, which exhibit instructive parallels. At the same time, the comparison between Nietzsche and Adorno raises a number of other important questions. Adorno is most frequently regarded as the arch-modernist, defending modernism and the autonomous work of art as the necessary and only viable possibility for the work of art in the age of mass culture. In contrast, Nietzsche's rhetoric is constantly targeted at the modernism of Wagner, and its incipient forms in romanticism and realism, as microcosms of the larger problem of nihilism. The equation of Nietzsche with anti-modernism is not a new one, and more recently his critique of modernity has also been interpreted as an early case of *post*-modernism.[5] However, such easy categorisation is all too simple, most immediately because the opposition of modern and post-modern is itself highly problematic. In this final chapter I shall therefore explore Nietzsche's place within the landscape of aesthetic debate concerning modernism and its limits. I shall make frequent reference to Adorno, not only because his work (still) presents one of the most powerful examples of modernist theorising, but also because of its frequent proximity to Nietzsche. I shall start by summarising the nature of Nietzsche's complaint against romanticism and realism as outgrowths of nihilism.

Realism, Romanticism, Nihilism

For Nietzsche nihilism arises when 'the highest values devalue themselves' (*WP* §2). The expectation of absolute values is disappointed, leading to a refusal to accept the legitimacy of *any* values. Consequently, as Nietzsche notes in the opening of *The Antichrist,* modern man is plunged into a state of neurosis: '"I know neither my way in nor out; I am everything that knows neither in nor out" laments the modern human' (*A* §1). Nihilism is characterised for Nietzsche by loss and confusion, a feeling that threatens to plunge Western society into an abyss of passivity. Yet nihilism is also 'ambiguous' (*WP* §22), and the responses to the crisis of modernity are various.

I have already commented in previous chapters on the distinction made by Nietzsche between active and reactive nihilism. Reactive nihilism is the pessimism of the weak, in other words, those who still cling to the *ideal* of some transcendent, unchanging truth, and who condemn all existence for not meeting that expectation. The sense of mourning at the loss of such certain truths is accompanied by the conviction of the worthlessness of all existence, since it cannot be justified by some higher authority. It produces the desire for revenge, for destruction. Here one is reminded of Nietzsche's typological classification of romanticism in *The Gay Science* as a destructive condition characterised by precisely that feeling of lack: 'The longing for destruction, change, becoming can be the expression of a superabundant power pregnant with the future (my term for that, as is known, is "Dionysian"); but it can also be the hate of the ill-constituted, the disinherited, the underprivileged, who destroys, has to destroy, because that which is permanent, indeed all permanence, all being itself, provokes it and arouses indignation' (*GS* §370).

One notes here that although superficially such reactive nihilism seems to have turned against the order and hierarchy of tradition, it is in fact still bound closely to it, and to metaphysics in general, by the spirit of *ressentiment,* by the desire to wreak revenge. It is merely a modern form of the same spirit of ressentiment which, Nietzsche believes, motivated Christianity. In *On the Genealogy of Morals* he cites the obvious relish Thomas Aquinas takes in imagining the future sufferings of those

non-believers: '"Beati in regno coelesti" he says, meek as a lamb, "videbunt poenas damnatorum, ut beatitudo illis magis complaceat" [the blessed in the kingdom of heaven will see the punishments of the damned in order that their bliss will be more delightful for them]' (*OGM* I §15). In the case of metaphysics the mark is the constant rancour of philosophers against the inconstant and that which resists logical analysis. In reactive nihilism, and Nietzsche regards the growing anarchist movement of his own time as an example of this (*GS* §370), energies are turned against cultural order and tradition. As early as 1873 Nietzsche complains of 'Bakunin, who, in his hatred for the present, intends to destroy history and the past' (*KSA* 7:26[14]). This spirit of revenge uniting the two marks them out as partners in a self-consuming dialectic. Against this can be set active nihilism, whose character is now a little clearer on the basis of the analyses of interpretation and temporality in the preceding chapters. Active nihilism rests on recognition of the perspectivism of interpretation, acceptance of the contingency of knowledge and recognition that 'knowledge' is interpretative will to power. And of course the crucial element in this is the absence of nostalgia for anything metaphysics might regard as 'true knowledge.'

The advent of nihilism has its aesthetic dimensions, and before examining these it is necessary to recall that art, for Nietzsche, is constituted less by artworks and more by the state of artistic creativity. The reason is straightforward. As Nietzsche notes, 'For art to exist, for any sort of aesthetic activity or perception to exist, a certain physiological precondition is indispensable: intoxication. Intoxication must first have heightened the excitability of the entire machine: no art results before that happens' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §8). At the same time, however, 'art' also designates both those objects Nietzsche considers products of genuine aesthetic intoxication as well as the debased, 'unaesthetic' artworks of modern society. In his work on modernity the opposition of classical and romantic functions as an aesthetic metaphor for the active/reactive dichotomy of nihilism. However, it is also rather more than merely a metaphor. The manner in which the problem of modernity is confronted in art can be regarded as central to understanding the crisis facing contemporary society, and the classical artistic response, in the form of

Dionysian classicism, should be understood as providing the key to the overcoming of reactive nihilism in all other spheres of social being. Nietzsche thus uses Dionysian classicism as a model, in order to suggest an aesthetic practice that would counter the problems of modernity. It is a practice that diverges considerably, however, from the actual artistic responses of modernism which for Nietzsche consisted of romanticism and realism.

One of the principal features of romanticism, for Nietzsche, is its status as a neurotic condition. I have indicated previously how Nietzsche describes the decadence of modernity in medical terms, as a neurosis in need of a cure, and his description of romanticism is no different. He quotes with approval a passage from the Goncourt brothers' novel *Manette Salomon,* which observes that Delacroix 'is the . . . image of the décadence of our time, the spoilt one, confusion . . . the passions, the nerves, the *faiblesses* of our time, modern torment,' adding a further comment at the end that 'Delacroix [is] a kind of Wagner' (*KSA* 11:25 [141]). A second note in the Nachlass quotes another passage from the same novel, half translated and half in French, once again with regard to Delacroix; 'Delacroix – he promised everything, announced everything. His pictures? Aborted masterpieces; the person who, *après tout,* will arouse the passions *comme tout grand incomplet,* a feverish life in all he creates, *une agitation de lunettes, un dessin fou*' (*KSA* 11:25 [142]). For all his admiration for Beethoven, Nietzsche is also aware of the composer's shortcomings: 'merely imagine Beethoven as he appears beside Goethe – say at their meeting at Teplitz: as semi-barbarism beside culture, as the people beside nobility' (*GS* §103). This reservation about Beethoven appears in other works, too, such as *Daybreak,* where Nietzsche compares, by juxtaposition, the 'coarse, obstinate, impatient tone' of Beethoven's music with the 'convulsive and importunate restlessness' of Wagner (*D* §218). Beethoven is 'the first great romantic, in the sense of the *French* conception of romanticism, as Wagner is the last great romantic – both instinctive opponents of classical taste, of severe style – to say nothing of "grand" style' (*WP* §842). In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche devotes a lengthy aphorism to the discussion of Richard Wagner and French Wagnerianism. He writes,

all of them fanatics of expression 'at any price' – I emphasise Delacroix, the most closely related to Wagner – all of them great discoverers in the realm of the sublime . . . even greater discoverers as regards effects, display . . . born enemies of logic and straight lines, lusting after the alien, the exotic, the monstrous, the crooked, the contradictory; Tantaluses of the will as human beings, successful plebeians who knew themselves to be incapable of a respectable tempo, a lento in their work and creativity . . . unbridled workers, near self-destroyers in their work, antinomians and rebels against custom, ambitious and insatiable without balance and enjoyment, all of them eventually breaking down and sinking down before the cross (and that with right and reason: for who of them would have been sufficiently profound and original for a philosophy of the Antichrist?)

(*BGE* §256)

In his final analyses of Wagner he goes even further. Wagner does not aim merely to rebel against tradition and custom, rather he panders to the weak: 'Revenge against life itself – the most voluptuous kind of rapture for such impoverished ones!. . . . Wagner just as much as Schopenhauer answers the double requirement of these latter – they deny life, they defame it, thus they are my antipodes' (*NCW* 'We Antipodeans'). In *The Case of Wagner* Nietzsche once again uses medical imagery, asking, 'Is Wagner even a human? Is he not rather a disease? He makes everything he touches sickly – he has made music sickly' (*CW* §5).

What is significant about all these discussions is the diagnosis of romanticism as a neurotic condition permeated by confusion. Most especially in the passages on Delacroix, one can see how the reaction against the bankruptcy of traditional cultural norms has led to the unleashing of self-destructive energies. It is a confusion accompanied by prolonged introspection, with the emphasis constantly on subjective expression 'at any price.' The extreme self-absorption that Nietzsche mentions here parallels the birth of asceticism he outlines in *On the Genealogy of Morals;* asceticism was seen to be a dangerous cultural manifestation because it represents a turning of energies, more specifically will to power, against themselves, rather than directing them outwards; it constitutes a fetishism of the process which first generated subjectivity. Here again the ambiguity of nihilism becomes apparent, for the ascetic spirit that

informs the pessimistic neurosis of modernity represents the triumph of a particular direction in will to power, rather than its lack.

The state of repressive self-absorption characteristic of romanticism occurs in Nietzsche's more general description of the modern subject in *The Antichrist*. For Nietzsche it seems from the fact that while the logic of metaphysics, and hence the entire edifice of Western culture, is in the process of collapsing, the transcendent foundation of their authority still remains as an object of desire. All romantics eventually sink down 'before the Cross,' an indication that they too are caught up in the reactive moment of the dialectic of nihilism. His interpretation suggests that behind their antinomian production there still lies the hope for redemption through some form of restoration of transcendent values, a hope whose lack of fulfilment leads inevitably to despair. The example of Wagner is of importance here, in particular *Parsifal,* which for Nietzsche signifies the composer's ultimate weakness: 'For *Parsifal* is a work of spite, of vengefulness, of secret poison against the preconditions of life, a bad work. The sermon on poverty remains a stimulant to the unnatural. I despise everyone who does not feel *Parsifal* as an assassination of morality' (*NCW* 'Wagner as the Apostle of Chastity').

I have noted earlier one of Nietzsche's criticisms of realism, namely, that it was founded on the same errors as metaphysics in general, in its belief in truthfulness. In addition, in many respects it constitutes the partner to romanticism in the dialectic of reactive nihilism. Nietzsche explicitly refers to Flaubert in *Twilight of the Idols* in such terms: 'On ne peut penser et écrire qu'assis (G. Flaubert). With that I have you, nihilist! The posterior is a sin against the holy spirit. It is only ideas gained from walking that have any worth' (*TI* 'Maxims and Arrows' §34). The self-erasure of the author in the name of objectivity is a central element in the nihilist orientation of realism. Nietzsche is quite clear about the impossibility of the author's transcending his own subjective perspective: 'People have regarded as "impersonal" what was the expression of the most powerful persons. . . . But the gentlemen would love to hide and be rid of themselves, e.g. Flaubert' (*KSA* 11:25 [117]). Moreover he interprets such putative self-transcendence on the part of the artist as an expression of decadence, a denigration of the self which mirrors the romantic denigration of the objective. Like Flaubert, Zola counts as a

prime case of such decadence. With his 'delight in stinking' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §1) Zola is ranked alongside Victor Hugo, Kant, Liszt and others as one of the 'impossibles.' Significantly, Zola is accused of producing the same type of disorientation as romanticism, and Nietzsche thus mentions him alongside Wagner: 'a wild multiplicity, an overwhelming mass, before which the senses become confused; brutality in colour, material, desires. Examples: Zola, Wagner' (*WP* §827). Like Wagner, Hugo and Hyppolyte Taine, Zola is guilty of an 'inability to tyrannize over oneself concerning the main thing – namely in regard to the work itself (omitting, shortening, clarifying, simplifying)' (*WP* §849).

Akin to romanticism, realism also turns out to be a reactive response to the loss of tradition and the legitimacy of traditional values. This time, however, unlike romanticism, it does not resort to a destructive and self-destructive ressentiment against the world, but rather takes refuge in an 'objective' order of things, at the same time wiping out the subject that might put the legitimacy of that order in doubt once again. It is a rejection of tradition in the name of a higher objective truth, uncritically re-inscribing those values which sustained tradition into a new scheme of values, a phenomenon to which I alluded in the previous chapter. The intimate connection between realism and romanticism becomes apparent again in the operas of Wagner, in which redemption is achieved through the negation of consciousness. Hence, as I have mentioned previously, in *Tristan and Isolde* the lovers' redemption is achieved through their death, while in *Parsifal* the eponymous hero achieves the redemptive healing of Amfortas's wound by accident. Paradoxically, therefore, self-denial functions as the basis for both the romanticism of Wagner and the realism of Flaubert or Zola.

I have already explored the criticisms by Nietzsche of Wagner's compositional technique. However, they require revisiting in the context of the current discussion. Nietzsche's hostility focuses primarily on Wagner's use of the minimal *leitmotif* in the unfolding of 'endless melody.' The term suggests, and is often thought of as, a continuously flowing melodic structure in which caesuras and cadences are minimised, but this is a slightly misleading definition. Rather, it is based on the notion that every element of the melody is of equal significance. The structure of the melodic period, in which certain elements have priority over

others, and in which much of the material consist of ornamentation and 'filling out,' is shrunken to minimal motifs. Wagner's use of the *leitmotif* as the basis of the new musical form, endlessly developed and repeated, leads to the dissolution of traditional musical structure. As Carl Dahlhaus has noted,

> Differentiation between regular and irregular syntax almost ceases to be of any formal importance . . . one could very well make an analogy with the 'emancipation of dissonance' and speak of the emancipation of the metrically irregular phrase – which hereupon ceases to be irregular: whereas irregularity was previously an exception to a norm of regularity, a license, the purpose of which was understandable only be reference to that norm, emancipated irregularity exists in its own right. The 'emancipation' does not mean that there is no longer any difference between consonance and dissonance . . . only that the difference is no longer an integral part of the musical structure.[6]

The reference to dissonance, although intended merely as an analogy, is important, for Wagner's music is characterised by a chromatic tonality which stretches tonal structure to the limit. And this is a consequence of the dissolution of inherited melodic structure. If the tonal structure of melody is no longer governed by the hierarchies of the melodic period, then tonality itself loses its function in the punctuation of melodic form. There thus arises what is often referred to as the 'wandering tonality' of Wagnerian music drama, which prefigures the complete emancipation of dissonance in the music of Arnold Schoenberg.

Although technically and theoretically inaccurate, the notion that endless melody comprises a continuously flowing melody nevertheless contains a certain truth about the phenomenology of musical listening, for it gives rise to the *perception* that the melody, unpunctuated by periodic structures or harmonic cadences, flows continuously. This perception lies at the root of Nietzsche's criticism of Wagner's music. Having referred to Wagner as 'the expression of physiological degeneration,' Nietzsche adds further, 'life no longer inhabits the whole . . . the whole is no longer a whole. Yet that is an analogy for every decadent style . . . in moral terms, "freedom of the individual" – when broadened into a political theory, "equal rights for all"' (*CW* §7). Nietzsche's comments on the loss of structure are ostensibly aimed at the *leitmotif,* but his em-

phasis on the political and social ramifications of 'endless melody' are also undoubtedly references to Wagner's own revolutionary ideals. Nietzsche's critique thus focuses on the fact that in 'endless melody' larger structures are dissolved in the promotion of the micro-structure of the motif, a technique he views as chaotic, and which could lead to dangerous social consequences. In the same passage Nietzsche adds that the result is 'Paralysis, toil, petrifaction or hostility and chaos everywhere: both confront one, the higher the organisational form one ascends to' (ibid.). It is apparent that Nietzsche's opposition stems both from aesthetic and political reasons; his opposition to the dissolving of traditional musical hierarchies is not only derived from his classical preference, but also from his opposition to democratic politics. Nietzsche is therefore relying on a conservative view which regards a complete dissolution of structure as leading to chaos, even though Wagner's music constitutes only the *inception* of a process that finds its culmination in Schoenberg's twelve-tone music. Adorno later commented that 'the fact that Nietzsche found Wagner formless shows that even he still heard him with the ears of the Biedermeier listener,'[7] and this impression is fortified by Nietzsche's taste for composers such as Mendelssohn and Bizet, his preference for Mozart over Beethoven, his dislike of Liszt or his inability to understand the 'undeniable liking for Brahms that is instilled here and there' (*CW* 'Second Postscript').[8]

Nietzsche, Adorno and Modernism

For all its cogency with regard to the question of romanticism and realism, Nietzsche's aesthetic theory regresses into conservative reaction when faced with the actual details of Wagner's music. For Nietzsche the decadence of Wagner and his status as a symptom of enfeebled will to power derive from the structural and tonal dissonance of his work, which count as the aesthetic symbols of the crisis of modernity. In this regard, for all his recognition that he too is a modern, Nietzsche is deeply anti-modern, a fact he himself declares: 'I am just as much a child of this time as Wagner, I mean a decadent: only I understood the fact and fought against it' (*CW* foreword). Faced with Wagner's use of dissonance and chromaticism, a practice that would, in principle, com-

bat the cultural congealing Nietzsche was so keen to undermine, he retreats into the safe world of Bizet's *Carmen*.[9] Nietzsche's response to Wagner alone therefore poses difficult questions for the widespread interpretation of Nietzsche as the exemplary thinker of pure dissonance. At the same time, however, one has to be cautious in simply labelling Nietzsche's anti-modernism as a reactionary conservatism. His criticism of antiquarian history, for example, makes it difficult to see him as attempting to reinstate tradition in the face of its dissolution. Second, elements of Nietzsche's critique of Wagner are echoed by the musical aesthetics of Adorno, and the latter is often interpreted as the arch defender of modernism.[10] Nietzsche thus occupies a more complex position than the outline of his response to Wagner initially suggests.

Although he chides Nietzsche for his conservative response to Wagner, Adorno's own remarks focus on similar aspects of the Wagnerian music drama, and in strikingly similar ways. Where Nietzsche had criticised Wagner's theatricality, Adorno takes issue with his reliance on phantasmagoria; where Nietzsche's putatively Biedermeier taste rebels against the formlessness of the 'endless melody,' Adorno questions the 'inexorable progression that fails to create any new quality and constantly flows into the already known.'[11] Like Nietzsche, Adorno sees dissonance and the concomitant dominance of ambiguity as central to Wagner's work, but he also considers the function of repetition. It is in the context of Wagner's reliance on the repetitious use of the *leitmotif* that Adorno makes possibly his best-known remark about Wagner, namely, that it is music 'intended for the forgetful' (*ISW*, p. 31). Most immediately, Adorno's comment refers to the way that the logic of the commodity has inscribed itself in Wagner's music, in which the *leitmotif* functions like an advertisement. However, while Wagner's music is the first to reflect the prevailing commodity culture of modernity, repetition also enacts an extraordinary regression, in that time comes to a standstill. And this sense of time being brought to a halt is fortified by the collapse of musical syntax. One is reminded of Nietzsche's criticism that in Wagner all sense of rhythm and hence time collapses, and so too for Adorno, 'the absence of any real harmonic progression becomes the phantasmagorical emblem for time standing still . . . in the memory of

a pristine age where time is guaranteed only by the stars' (p. 87). The apparent modernity of Wagner is thus transformed into a regressive archaism, in which a timeless mythic reality is substituted for historical actuality. As Adorno later states, Wagner 'refused to jeopardize the spell of opera by immersing it in the sober factuality of concrete social conditions' (p. 115). While his political motivation is entirely different, Adorno's comments on Wagner's banishing of history recalls Nietzsche's assault on romanticism as the latest aesthetic expression of a metaphysics that views everything *sub specie aeternae*. In addition, it echoes Nietzsche's early criticism of monumental history, which, in its appropriation of history, tends towards an unhistorical mythification of the past devoid of historical objectivity.

The archaic appears too in Wagner's reliance on gesture, in other words, his reduction of melody to the minimal expressive utterance. Adorno interprets this as a regression to the most primal elements of music, thus overturning the entire tradition: 'It is no doubt true that all music has its roots in gesture of this kind and harbours it within itself. In the West, however, it has been sublimated and interiorized into expression, while at the same time the principle of construction subjects the overall flow of the music to a process of logical synthesis; great music strives for a balance of the two elements. Wagner's position lies athwart this tradition' (*ISW*, p. 35). Yet while the dominance of gesture might indicate the primacy of the spontaneous, self-expressive subject, Wagnerian gesture is for Adorno precisely the opposite: reflex imitations of an external alienated reality.

At the root of Adorno's remarks is the criticism that Wagner's practice is undialectical. Perhaps unexpectedly, but in keeping with my general reading, this is reminiscent of Nietzsche the secret dialectician. In the same way that Nietzsche finds in the syntactically unstructured endless melody an expression of enfeebled will to power, so for Adorno the undialectical dissolution of musical syntax and tonal hierarchy in Wagner paradoxically leads to an ahistorical subjectless archaism. Nietzsche's critique of unmeditated expressiveness is motivated not only by his suspicion of its claim to authenticity and truth, but also by the conviction that 'The value of a thing sometimes lies not in what one attains

with it, but in what one pays for it – what it *costs* us' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §38). The artistic expressiveness of modernity has not been accomplished against a process of negation.

Although Wagner is (rightly) seen as the exemplar of romanticism, his music contains elements of both the extreme subjectivism of romanticism and the positivist ideology of realism. I noted earlier how for Nietzsche the erasure of subjectivity in realism is matched by Wagner's wilful annihilation of the individual in the search for redemption. So too for Adorno, Wagner's music turns from the extreme idealism of its redemptive annihilation of the subject to a positivistic use of a specific *leitmotif* to introduce each individual character. It therefore contains the seeds of both subsequent developments in twentieth-century music, which for Adorno are exemplified by Schoenberg and Stravinsky. In Schoenberg the Wagnerian dissolution of tonal structure is continued to its logical end, while in Stravinsky there occurs the regression to the archaic and the elimination of the individual that had also been central to Wagner. In his *Philosophy of Modern Music* Adorno continues his interrogation of the artistic response to the crisis of the legitimacy of the inherited musical language.[12] It represents an analogue to the more general sense of crisis which he, in common with Nietzsche, sees as characteristic of modernity. Permeating Adorno's approach to the issue is the conviction that the dialectic of musical change cannot be turned back, that is, that the musical language inherited from classicism is a product of a specific set of social, historical and musicological forces now been superseded. Regarding Beethoven he notes,

> it is the total niveau of Beethoven's technique which gives the chord its specific weight. The components of this technique include the tension between the most extreme dissonance possible for him and consonance . . . and the dynamic conception of tonality as a whole. But the historical process through which this weight has been lost is irreversible. The chord itself, as an obsolete form, represents in its dissolution a state of technique contradictory as a whole to the state of technique actually in practice.
>
> (*PMM*, pp. 35–6)

For Adorno the only truly authentic response is therefore to pursue the

dissolution of tonality to its logical conclusion, since atonality is 'the fulfilled purification of music from all conventions' (p. 40 n.).[13]

Seen in these terms, Schoenberg's twelve-tone music represents a liberation of the subjectivity of the composer from the objectivity of musical form, that is, the musical tradition, and Adorno sees the history of music as gaining its momentum from the tension between these two poles, the specificity of artistic expression and the generality of the musical vocabulary. As Adorno says, traditional music 'had further to content itself with rendering the specific continuously by means of configurations of the general, which these configurations paradoxically present as identical with the unique. Beethoven's entire oeuvre is an exegesis of this paradox' (*PMM,* pp. 51–2). One notes the function, for Adorno, of this *tension* between expression and tradition, and it can be compared with the stress Nietzsche lays on tradition as the productive site of resistance to the self-assertion of aesthetic will to power.

According to Adorno one of the aspects of musical form which mirrors this dichotomy is the opposition between melody and harmony, or between homophony and polyphony. In this compositional opposition are sedimented, in mediated form, the social relations between the individual subject and the objectivity of the social collective. Twelve-tone music represents a sublation of this opposition (*PMM,* pp. 53–4) inasmuch as polyphony is sublated into the purely subjective disposition over the grammar of musical form. Adorno writes, 'The epistemological energy of modern music finds its legitimacy not in that it relates back to the "great bourgeois past" – to the heroic classicism of the revolutionary period – but rather in that it neutralizes in itself romantic differentiation in terms of technique and, thereby, according to its substantiality. The subject of modern music . . . is the emancipated, isolated, concrete subject of the late bourgeois phase' (p. 57).

Thus in Adorno's reading, Schoenberg's invention of twelve-tone music with its concomitant rejection of tradition represents a complete subjectification of musical form. The subject remains sovereign over the work, and the work is truly modern, that is, as owing nothing to the past. It is also the only authentic possibility, in contrast to the path taken by Stravinsky. Adorno sees Stravinsky's reversion to classicism as a

reactionary attempt to deny history by the restitution of obsolete forms. He begins his account of Stravinsky by quoting a passage from Hegel's *Aesthetics:* 'Nor is it of any real assistance to him that he further appropriates, so to speak . . . a view of the world that belongs to the past . . . and, let us say, turns Roman Catholic' (*PMM,* p. 135). This dictum serves as the guiding principle in his interpretation of Stravinsky, whom he sees as reactionary in comparison with the authentic modernism of Schoenberg. He claims, for example, that 'In Stravinsky the desire of the adolescent is ever stubbornly at work; it is the struggle of the youth to become a valid, proven classicist' (p. 137). In Stravinsky the dialectic of innovation and tradition, of expression and construction or of subjective autonomy and objective musical grammar has been resolved in favour of the latter.

Adorno sees a parallel, quite striking in the light of Nietzsche's own remarks, between Stravinsky, positivism and Flaubert. Stravinsky's music executes a negation of the subject by passing over into the objective, a process symbolised above all in *The Rite of Spring.* Adorno writes, 'In Stravinsky's case subjectivity assumes the character of sacrifice, but – and this is where he sneers at the tradition of humanistic art – music does not identify with the victim, but rather with the destructive element. Through the liquidation of the victim it rids itself of all intentions, that is, of its own subjectivity' (p. 143). As such it is a musical parallel to Flaubert: 'At first the music states: this is the situation as it was, and the music is as far removed from adopting a position as was Flaubert in *Madame Bovary.* Atrocity is observed with a certain satisfaction, but it is not transfigured' (p. 146). Adorno comments later that Stravinsky belongs to Machian positivism, 'a type of Western art the highest summit of which lies in the work of Baudelaire, in which the individual, through the force of emotional sensation, enjoys his own annihilation. Therefore, the mythologizing tendency of *The Rite of Spring* continues where Wagner left off' (p. 166). Paradoxically, Stravinsky is as much heir to Wagner as is Schoenberg, and we are reminded of the dual significance of Wagnerian opera. On the one hand, Wagner's chromaticism represents the subjective disruption of musical tradition and anticipates Schoenberg's twelve-tone music. On the other, his espousal of myth, his yearning for redemption through the erasure of his heroes, pre-figures Stravinsky's mythic

celebration of the collective sacrifice of the individual. For Adorno Stravinsky's elimination of the subject dissolves the tension between individual style and universal musical form. Paralleling his celebration of sacrifice is his espousal, in later neo-classical works such as *The Soldier's Tale,* of a self-less pastiche of quotations from other works; spontaneity gives to way to reproduction: 'the subject . . . actually ceases to engage in "production," and must content itself with the hollow echo of objective musical language, which is no longer its own' (pp. 181–2). Later Adorno adds, 'Out of the externalized language of music, which has been reduced to rubble, *The Soldier's Tale* constructs a second language of dreamlike regression (p. 181). Against the modernist idea of a progressive employment of ever renewed artistic forms, Stravinsky's music responds to the demand 'that something should sound as if it had been present since the beginning of time' (p. 216). As such it has been suggested that Stravinsky's music foreshadows the wider characteristics of post-modernism in its rejection of the narrative of human emancipation through autonomy and its rejection of the notion of progress. It inverts the development of musical form and merely parrots the broken fragments of the tradition, since the annihilation of the subject means the loss of any organising principle.

Adorno thus appears unequivocally to espouse the modernism of Schoenberg and to express dismay at the identification with the collective in Stravinsky. However, his position is actually rather more ambiguous. He is aware, for example, that the path of Schoenberg risks repeating the erasure of identity found in Stravinsky, inasmuch as twelve-tone technique, through its espousal of free atonality, tended towards a co-ordinateless, inarticulate state of absolute indifference. He writes, 'Differentiation is only of any force when it distinguishes itself from that which is already implicitly established' (p. 79) and adds later 'that the very universality of dissonance has suspended the concept itself, that dissonance was possible only in tension leading to consonance' (p. 85). In other words, the shock effect of twelve-tone technique, its value as an expression of subjective freedom, is negated by a lack of determinacy, giving way to an inchoate flux in which freedom and shock lose their meaning. Likewise, he concludes that 'Stravinsky's regression to archaism is not totally alien to authenticity, even if authenticity is com-

pletely destroyed by it' (p. 216). Indeed, Adorno sees the inherent dangers of Schoenberg's modernism reach their climax in the work of Schoenberg's pupils Alban Berg and Anton von Webern. This danger was already recognised in an early essay on Webern's *Five Orchestral Pieces* in which Adorno argues

> The difficulty and exclusiveness of the works of Anton von Webern has to do with the fact that in them the tension between given form and personal freedom is completely dissolved, because they allot the form-giving right alone to the individual. Whereas it is normally precisely through the tension which governs the relation between the community and the individual that the intelligibility of music finds its completion, that which the community finds intelligible serves to ratify the individual and opens the community to the explosive will of the individual.[14]

As Adorno later writes in *Aesthetic Theory,* 'However much a song by Webern is more thoroughly constructed, the universality of the language of Schubert's *Winterreise* secures for it an element of superiority.'[15]

This analysis of Adorno's account of the trajectory of modern music reveals instructive parallels with Nietzsche, and these similarities make it difficult to label Nietzsche simply as an anti-modernist. Clearly, Nietzsche is opposed to a certain tendency in modernism, but this unease is shared by Adorno; although Adorno stops short of saying as much, his own account seems to admit that Schoenberg's work leads to a dead end, and this is the ultimate aporia of modernism. For both Adorno and Nietzsche the constant danger is that modernity will lead to the erasure of subjectivity. Admittedly, Nietzsche argues that the human subject is to be superseded by the Übermensch, but for both a central goal is the preservation of a certain type of individual. Nietzsche's critique of the subject is a critique of a particular conception of subjectivity, namely, the guilty subject of metaphysics. In addition, the ritual annihilation of the subject in tragedy, despite its similarities with the sacrifice in Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring,* constitutes only one step in the movement of a dialectic, where the Apollonian and the Dionysian remain in unresolved tension. In similar fashion, for Adorno the aesthetic goal is the emancipation of the reified, alienated subject of

modernity. Modern art is the expression of protest against its pending demise.

In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche refers to art as the 'good will to appearance' (*GS* §107). As I have indicated throughout, this is to be understood in terms of a logic of immanence. All knowledge, all interpretation consists of necessary illusion, but art alone declares its status as such. It is because of this that Bohrer stresses the irruptive basis of Nietzschean appearance.[16] On the one hand, appearance consists of an illusory semblance of the timeless; on the other, Nietzsche views the *appearance* of appearance as a sudden event that disrupts the illusion of permanence. The Apollonian dream always has Dionysian intoxication inscribed within it. This supplements my earlier assertion that in *The Birth of Tragedy* the Dionysian is always already mediated by Apollonian intelligibility. Crucial in this regard is Nietzsche's reference to both Apollonian *and* Dionysian intoxication (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §10). Here the distinction between dream and intoxication has been erased; the only difference now is that the Apollonian impulse is a *visionary* and the Dionysian a *carnal* intoxication.

Nietzsche's notion of art as the 'good' will to appearance contrasts with the Wagnerian music drama in which the theatre seduces and deludes the spectator: 'He flatters every nihilistic (Buddhist) instinct and dresses it up in music, he flatters every form of Christianity, every religious expression of decadence . . . through persuasion of the senses' (*CW* 'First Postscript'). In addition, Nietzsche's foregrounding of the illusoriness of aesthetic appearance clashes with the claim of Wagnerian theatre to represent the process of redemptive transcendence, with all its metaphysical connotations. Again Nietzsche's critique throws up important parallels with Adorno, for illusion plays a prominent part in the latter's thinking and is also closely linked to the functional role of dissonance. Having criticised Wagner's use of phantasmagoria, Adorno generalises the notion in his account of modern art and illusion: 'During the nineteenth century aesthetic semblance was heightened to the point of phantasmagoria. Artworks effaced the traces of their production, probably because the victorious positivistic spirit penetrated art to the degree that art aspired to be a fact and was ashamed of whatever re-

vealed its compact immediateness as mediated' (*AT*, p. 102). The unmentioned subject is Wagner, but Adorno's inclusion of positivism in the same sentence as the reference to Wagnerian phantasmagoria again reinforces the critique shared with Nietzsche, that extreme subjectivism and extreme objectivism stem from the same root. An exemplary case of this might be a painter such as Jean-Léon Gérôme, whose obsession with photographic verisimilitude is matched only by the notoriety of his romantic fascination with the exotic.

Yet as Adorno notes, 'Phantasmagoria became an embarrassment because the gapless being-in-itself, after which the pure artwork strives, is incompatible with its determination as something humanly made' (*AT*, p. 102), and hence modern art frequently attempts to shake off this illusory quality. The most powerful way in which this is rejected is through dissonance, since, for Adorno, dissonance contradicts the harmony that is essential to artistic illusion or semblance (p. 110). And yet the dissonant rejection of semblance is always only partially successful, for art is inherently illusory and hence bound to semblance, and the revolt against semblance is based on 'the hope that aesthetic semblance could rescue itself from the morass in which it is sunk by pulling itself up by the scruff of its own neck' (p. 103).[17]

Nietzsche and Adorno both regard art as a necessarily illusionistic disruption of illusory semblance, in that art is only ever an appearance. Hence art forms the microcosm of the more general cultural task of establishing a normativity that does not appeal to an external foundation. However, there is an important difference between the two. Ultimately, Adorno harbours the desire for a final reconciliation with reality that is only ever deferred by aesthetic illusion, and it is because of this that he regards the aporias of art as essentially tragic. For Nietzsche any such melancholy science would be seen as an example of weak nihilism. Moreover, for all the similarities in their interpretations of modern art, Adorno and Nietzsche diverge on one important point: whereas Adorno locates the aporia of modernism in the consequences of technique, Nietzsche sees it as originating in the weakly nihilistic impulse that gave birth to its logic. His conservative response to the chromaticism of Wagnerian music can be read as a critique of the deficiencies which derive from its extreme subjectivism.

The Sublime: After Modernity

During the course of my account of Nietzsche I have repeatedly stressed his intellectual debt to Kant and Hegel; in particular, I have explored his productive appropriation of the notion of the sublime. Specifically, the tragic dialectic of Apollo and Dionysus draws upon the sublime in outlining the kind of aesthetic experience engendered by witnessing the tragic action. Nietzsche is anxious to move away from an aesthetic based purely on the spectator's experience, and hence the sublime impulse, which could be seen as a kind of constructive dissonance, becomes essential to Nietzsche's prescription of what a counter-metaphysical art should be based on. This configuration of the sublime, modernity and the aesthetic recalls the importance of the historical sublime, which, I suggested, underpinned the temporal logic of modernity. In addition, it almost inevitably invites comparison with a more recent attempt to explore the interlinking of these issues, namely, Jean-François Lyotard's characterisation of the post-modern.

For Lyotard the sublime is central to an understanding of both modern and post-modern culture; it underpins both, thus confirming their intrinsic affinity as well as underlying their difference. Lyotard simplifies Kant's account of the dialectic of the sublime with the summation that the sublime 'carries with it both pleasure and pain . . . a conflict between the faculties of a subject, the faculty to conceive of something and the faculty to "present" something.'[18] The sublime is founded on the experience of an internal dissonance, and this contradiction between the limitations of intuitive powers to 'present' something and the ability of reason to conceive of the infinite receives its aesthetic inflection in the artistic enterprise of modern art to 'make visible that there is something which can be conceived and which can be neither seen nor made visible.'[19] This identification of the sublime as the basis of modern art confirms Nietzsche's equation of romanticism with modernity, for the modernist practice of 'making an allusion to the unpresentable'[20] echoes the role accorded to art, the symbol of the infinite, by romantics such as the Schlegel brothers or Novalis. So too Wagner's chromaticism, or the dissonance of Schoenberg, can be read as an artistic allusion to the unpresentable, namely, absolute subjective freedom. Ly-

otard extends this definition to encompass artists such as Kasimir Malevich, Barnett Newman or minimalist sculptors such as Donald Judd or Robert Morris, whose blank abstract works purportedly allegorise the unpresentable. Amongst these 'moderns' one could also, of course, include Nietzsche himself, whose key terms 'Dionysus' and 'Apollo' are mediated 'forms of appearing.'

The sublimicist sensibility of modern art is derived partly, therefore, from recognition of the limitation of representation. As Lyotard notes, 'realism,' which had exercised a dominance over visual representation since the Quattrocento, maintained increasingly little credibility, and consequently artists, from Cézanne onwards, were no longer concerned with the establishment of a personal style, but with much more fundamental questions. Cézanne's atomisation of the pictorial surface drives from the insight that 'elementary sensations are hidden in ordinary perception which remains under the hegemony of habitual or classical ways of looking.'[21] Accordingly, the sublime begins to take on two senses. First, it seems to imply the recognition of the irreducible heterogeneity of a reality already perceived subliminally, and consequently consists of attempts at its representation. The most concrete example of this subliminal aesthetic can be found in Surrealism, with its symbolic presentations of the repressed in experience, the uncanny. One might think here of Max Ernst's use of *frottage,* the automatic drawing and writing of André Masson or the paranoiac-critical method of Dali. The second sense of the sublime emerges as a consequence of the emancipation of artistic production. Lyotard conceives innovation as itself sublime through highlighting the potential infinity of possibilities open to art, and here there is a parallel with the limitless possibilities, too, of techno-scientific progress.[22]

The sublime therefore inheres in either the artistic representation of experience as uncanny or the expansive possibilities of constantly remarking art and its rules. Nietzsche's reading of tragedy exemplifies the former and thus reminds us of the *modernity* of his interpretation while, paradoxically, he remains implacably opposed to the other sublime of modern culture, its belief in infinite progress. Yet the sublime is also central to an understanding of *post*-modernity, and the difference rests on the fact that the modern sublime is founded on nostalgia; the unpre-

sentable remains as a palpable absence, a 'missing contents.' One can trace this idea back to Hegel's identification of the constitutive gap in Romantic art between the Absolute and the plastic means of its representation. Hence in Proust, 'the unity of the book, the odyssey of that consciousness, even if it is deferred from chapter to chapter, is not seriously challenged.'[23] In this context, while Nietzsche's criticism of 'the beyond in art' (*HAH* I §220) may refer to a quasi-religious Wagnerian search for transcendence,[24] it may also be expanded to encompass the nostalgia for artistic forms that have been rendered obsolete by the process of artistic progress.

In contrast the post-modern sublime is stripped of any such nostalgia and denies the imaginary solace of final reconciliation. In the post-modern, 'the sublime of immanence replaces the sublime of transcendence.'[25] The avant-garde destruction of the inherited vocabulary and syntax of artistic form no longer serves the aim of finding a new means of presenting the unpresentable, but rather is the expression of an exhilaration at the possibility of infinite artistic experiment and development. Hence while the dissonance of the modernist sublime is sustained by the promise of ultimate solace, the dissonance of the post-modern, the collapse of consensus concerning the appropriate artistic practice, is left unresolved. Indeed, the lack of resolution is celebrated and figures as part of a much larger political aim of resisting the impulse towards totality. In this sense he conceives the work of art as an irruptive event, parallel with the micrological 'event' of the individual phrase or sentence cut off from larger totalising narratives.[26]

This account of the sublime is strongly reminiscent of Nietzsche's critique of modernism and indicates the extent to which an unorthodox reading of the dramatic poetry of classical Athens pre-figured central debates over the meaning of modern and contemporary culture. For both Lyotard and Nietzsche the loss of the real should no longer be an object of mourning and melancholy, but instead celebrated as an emancipatory occasion. Lyotard's interest in art as an event also recalls Nietzsche's own notion of art as an event, as a punctuation of will to power. Furthermore, his contrast between the post-modern sublime of immanence and the modern sublime of transcendence again echoes Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical culture of modernity. Yet while

Nietzsche's criticisms of the art and culture of his own time find numerous echoes in the critical analysis of post-modernity, there are still significant differences. Lyotard's celebration of the absolute heterogeneity or plurality of artistic practices exemplifies a widespread theoretical motif in late-twentieth-century thought; it parallels, for example, the emphasis on differential desire of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, whose celebrated schizoanalysis of capitalism re-figures the subject as a heteronomous desiring-machine.[27] While Nietzsche criticises systematic thinking for its dishonesty, the constant focus of his relentless tirades against Wagner is the disorganisation caused by his reduction of music to the micrological. Furthermore, Nietzsche's own reading of the meaning of the sublime can be mobilised in a critical interrogation of those more recent positions.

Returning to Lyotard, an important issue is raised by his failure to explain what is gained from the sublime.[28] Having stated that the sublime is a source of gratification, Lyotard fails to indicate what this gratification consists in. Given that the nostalgic sublime is regarded as in some sense inauthentic, Lyotard does not offer a convincing account of why the possibility of endless experimentation, in line with the model of techno-scientific progress, is a source of gratification. This stands in contrast both with Kant and with Nietzsche. For Kant the displeasure of the experience of inadequacy gives way to the pleasure produced by the revelation of power of reason. Kant's re-assertion of the noumenal self ill fits Nietzsche's own position, but since *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche had posited the necessity of a final recouping of some form of illusion, even though its value remains completely contingent and unsure. Though his dialectical reading of tragedy reeks 'offensively Hegelian,' it nevertheless sustains his wider view of art. While Nietzsche regards 'joy in uncertainty and polysemy' as the sign of a strong spirit, dissonance, contradiction and ambiguity are not ends in themselves, but rather strategic moves in the project of undermining the amnesiac illusions of metaphysics. Hence the restoration of (Apollonian) illusion through the detour of the Dionysian never is, properly speaking, a simple restoration. Again it is the axiological role of contradiction and negation that forces one to refer to Nietzsche's preference for a *Dionysian* classicism. Lyotard offers no promise of anything achieved *through struggle,* which

is at the heart of Nietzsche's thinking. As Nietzsche repeatedly argues, the value of anything achieved is through the measure of resistance overcome, and he regards a certain type of artistic practice, tragedy, as forming the paradigmatic case of such a process. However, the absence of sublime *nostalgia* produces the kind of freedom that Nietzsche found meaningless and ultimately nihilistic. In this context one might cite, in support of Nietzsche, the numerous contemporary criticisms that Lyotard's exhilarating and sublime liberation turns out to be an empty stylistic game, 'irony produced only by the disillusion of things, a fossilized irony . . . the irony of repentance and *ressentiment* towards one's own culture.'[29]

The idea of a post-modern sensibility in which the unpresentable is no longer conceived of as a missing content bears a superficial resemblance to Nietzsche's anti-Platonism. An important element in Nietzsche's criticism of Kant is that for all the latter's distance from metaphysical realism, his constructivist epistemology is only half-hearted; particularly in his moral theory, Kant regards the noumenal realm not merely as a theoretical posit, but as real. As I argued in the first chapter, Nietzsche regards the object not merely as resistant or opaque to knowledge, but as having been constituted by the interpreting process. However, while his critique focuses on the metaphysical ideology of the given, it also recognises the psychological necessity of drawing a particular horizon; a completely perspectiveless anti-metaphysics is as impossible as is the metaphysical idea of a perspectiveless knowledge. The sublime differs from the romantic or Kantian notion in that it refuses the concept of an absolute that can only be alluded to, but it also differs from Lyotard's 'post-modern' sublime in that it maintains the necessity of believing in the sublime object at the same time as its disavowal. I noted earlier Nietzsche's critique of modern subjectivity, and in particular his diagnosis of the paralysis of the modern subject when faced with an infinity of freedoms. So here, too, Lyotard's founding of the sublime in the possibility of infinite experiment and development stands as an exemplar of the modernity of which Nietzsche was critical. One can also bring into consideration Nietzsche's criticisms of Wagner. Behind his apparently conservative criticisms of the Wagnerian atomisation of melodic structure and the concomitant loss of rhythm, a serious

point is being made about the function of tonal and syntactic dissonance, namely, that the elevation of the subjective, allegorised by the *leitmotif,* to the highest principle, results in its dissolution. The absence of a temporal and cultural horizon is as problematic as its excess; both are therefore expressions of enfeebled will to power in the form of a weak self. Of course, Nietzsche was witness only to the emergence of modernism, but his analysis outlined a similar position that, as I have argued, was later put forward in more systematic fashion by Adorno, looking back on the maturation of modernism. Ultimately, therefore, Nietzsche's position leads to the conclusion that the discarding of any sense of the real replicates many of the problems that Nietzsche had seen as characteristic of the culminating, disastrous and nihilistic phase of modernity. The sense of the real, of some external normativity, has to be maintained, but in order that this does not lead to a regression to metaphysics, it can only be allowed to appear as a Dionysian trauma.[30] As Nietzsche states, 'the preference for questionable and terrible things is a symptom of strength' (*WP* §852), and it is only on the basis of this strength that the destruction of illusion can be coupled with its necessity.

In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno writes, 'There is no art that is entirely devoid of affirmation, since by its very existence every work rises above the plight and degradation of everyday existence. . . . This apriority of the affirmative is art's ideological dark side' (*AT,* p. 160). Nietzsche's contention was that in the crisis of nihilism art had lost its affirmative character and as such also its power to intervene in the construction of post-metaphysical normative horizons. As is now clear, the dialectic of interpretation that Nietzsche puts forward in the place of metaphysical knowledge is based on the sublime, and it is the sublime that governs the logic of will to power. Adorno's fear of pure affirmativity was focused on the equation of the affirmative with the administered culture of modernity, manifest in the kitsch of the culture industry. Modernist negation is seen as the only authentic counter, even though it leads to a number of aporia, as in the examples of Schoenberg and Webern. For Nietzsche the pure negation in the nascent modernism of his own time was the symptom of nihilistic passivity and hence cultural collapse. Affirmation thus plays a crucial role in the strategic resistance to nihilism.

However, affirmation *tout court* was as problematic for Nietzsche as it was for Adorno. Affirmative optimism was the fatal error of metaphysics, beginning with Socrates' search for certain definitions. In terms of aesthetic practice, itself a microcosm of wider social and cultural values, Nietzsche holds tenaciously to the necessity of both negation and affirmation, with the tension between the two being left unresolved. Here, then, is perhaps the most striking of the many contradictions in Nietzsche's oeuvre, namely, that in spite of his many criticisms of dialectics, from Socrates to Hegel, dialectical thought is central to his own aesthetic theory and hence to his thinking in general.

Notes

Introduction

1 Zeitler (1900). See also Ludovici (1911), Meyer (1991), Young (1992).
2 Habermas (1987), pp. 7–8.
3 Deleuze (1983).
4 Jaspers (1966).
5 See Connor (1991) for a cogent critique of anti-foundationalist thought.
6 There have been some dissenting voices. See, for example, Breazeale (1975). Breazeale's argument not only suggests ways in which Nietzsche's thought still bears the traces of Hegel, but also points out the extent to which Deleuze's portrait of the latter thinker amounts to an insensitive caricature.
7 Strong notes that 'In a genealogical understanding, there is almost no automatic logic to the evolution of a set of events, certainly no *Aufhebung*.' Strong (1975), p. 30.
8 See Smith (1996), p. 88. Smith's comments refer to three texts by Bataille: 'The Notion of Expenditure,' Bataille (1985), pp. 116–29, Bataille (1988) and Bataille (1992).
9 Adorno (1990), p. 145.
10 Ibid., p. 158.
11 Ibid., p. 13.
12 Hegel (1969), p. 107.
13 In his essay on différance, Derrida writes, 'différance . . . maintaining relations of profound affinity with Hegelian discourse . . . is also, up to a certain point, unable to break with that discourse . . . but it can operate a kind of infinitesimal and radical displacement of it.' Derrida (1982), p. 14.
14 See Nehemas (1985), pp. 24–34. This similarity is of no little significance given that Socrates represents for Nietzsche the founder of metaphysical tradition he seeks to undermine.
15 See Young (1992).
16 See Barker (1992). Barker notes that in Nietzsche 'the evaluative nexus of aesthetic energy is internal and solipsistic, sufficient unto itself' (p. 71).
17 Ansell-Pearson (1991b).

18 On the evolution of the modern sense of time and history see Koselleck (1985) and Osborne (1995).

Chapter 1. Truth, Interpretation and the Dialectic of Nihilism

1 Hume (1984), p. 234.

2 If Nietzsche's critique were focused on the first edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* he might be more justified, for in that edition Kant writes (A 249) that 'the concept of appearances . . . establishes the objective reality of noumena.' In the second edition of 1787 (B), however, he deletes the passage, replacing it with a lengthy discussion on the nature of the noumenon as itself a construct of human thought, in order to make sense of the notion of phenomena. See Kant (1989), B 306ff.

3 Bataille (1988), p. 109.

4 Holub (1995).

5 See, for example, Pautrat (1971), Kofman, (1972) and Derrida (1979).

6 This point has been made in Baker and Hacker (1989), p. 18.

7 The term 'Augustinian' derives from Wittgenstein, who analyses a similar conception of language in Augustine's *Confessions*. See Wittgenstein (1953), §1.

8 Simon (1980), pp. 187–9.

9 Michael Dummett, who is correctly seen as thoroughly grounded in the tradition of logical semantics founded by Frege, has nevertheless come to a similar conclusion. In his essay on realism he notes that 'the realist holds that the meanings of statements . . . are not directly tied to the kind of evidence for them that we can have, but consist in the manner of their determination as true or false by states of affairs whose existence is not dependent on our possession of evidence for them. The anti-realist insists, on the contrary, that the meanings of these statements are tied directly to what we count as evidence for them . . . which we could know and which we should count as evidence for its truth.' Dummett (1978), p. 146. While Dummett's concerns seem to be distant from those of Nietzsche, his endorsement of anti-realism leads to conclusions which bear some proximity to Nietzsche's thinking, most notably, perhaps, Dummett's assertion of the impossibility of speaking of history as a discrete entity existing apart from our statements about it. See Dummett, 'The Reality of the Past,' in (1978), pp. 358–74.

10 Schleiermacher (1977), p. 167. For an exhaustive account of Schleiermacher's 'linguistic turn' see Frank (1977).

11 In *The Gay Science* Nietzsche commends Hume's scepticism regarding causality (*GS* §357). However, this has to be contrasted with his view of Hume as one more exemplar of the unphilosophical English, alongside Locke and Hobbes (*BGE* §252).

12 Hume notes that 'all our simple ideas in their first appearance are deriv'd from simple impressions which are correspondent to them and which they exactly represent.' Hume (1984), p. 52.

13 Kofman (1972).

14 Kofman also indicates the extent to which Nietzsche attempts to avoid this process of petrifaction in his own work by employing a constantly shifting range of metaphors, such as those of the bee, the spider, the tree and the fortress to describe the production of meaning. I would temper her assertions with the observation that Nietzsche also coins a new, post-metaphysical vocabulary, in which certain terms such as 'Becoming' ['*Werden*'], 'Life' ['*Leben*'], 'Interpretation' ['*Auslegung*'] and '*Falsehood*' ['*Lüge*'] *are* privileged, consequently recurring throughout his writings. This conflict could be interpreted as a recognition on Nietzsche's part of the necessity to employ a finite vocabulary to make any meaningful statements, while at the same time also being aware of the dangers of this repeated use of the same terms. This is a theme I discuss later.

15 On these shared characteristics of the thinking of John Searle and Jacques Derrida, see Manfred Frank's essay 'Die Entropie der Sprache' in Frank (1980), pp. 141–210.

16 A probing and insightful discussion of nihilism in Nietzsche is offered in Vattimo (1988). See also Vattimo (1989).

17 At the conclusion of book I of *A Treatise of Human Nature* Hume notes that 'we are apt not only to forget our scepticism but even our modesty too; and make use of such terms as these, *'tis evident, 'tis certain, 'tis undeniable;* which a due deference to the public ought, perhaps prevent' (p. 321). However, he then adds a caveat to this observation, namely, that his use of such terms does not imply any less scepticism. It is almost as if he shrinks from the consequences of his own comment.

18 Nietzsche's critique of science has been the subject of a recent study in Babich (1994).

19 Kant (1989), B xi–xii.

20 Kant (1988), p. 7.

21 Cf. Kant (1989), B 432–595.

22 When writing about Nietzsche one has to be wary about the use of the notion of ideology, which of course cannot be set against some 'true' representation of the Real. Mark Warren has suggested ways in which it might be meaningful to talk in terms of a Nietzschean theory of ideology. See Warren (1984).

23 The idea that science (specifically technology) and theology represent mutually exclusive values is one that Heidegger, and more recently Vattimo, have been at pains to discredit. Vattimo writes, 'Even technology is a fable or *Sage,* a transmitted message: when seen in this light it is stripped of all its (imaginary) claims to be able to constitute a new "strong" reality that could be taken as self-evident.' Vattimo (1988), p. 29.

24 Nehemas (1985), p. 71.

25 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, 'The Communist Manifesto,' in Marx (1977), p. 224.

26 As Walter Kaufmann notes, although Nietzsche was undoubtedly influenced

by Bourget, to the extent even of quoting his 'Theory of Decadence' from the *Essais,* his reading of Bourget produced little change in the substance of his understanding of modernity and rather simply extended the vocabulary at his disposal. See Kaufmann (1974), p. 73.

27 This phrase comes from Gianni Vattimo. See Vattimo (1988), pp. 19–30.

28 See, for example, Schrift (1990), Nehemas (1985), Abel (1984), Figl (1982).

29 Michael Dummett, 'The Philosophical Basis of Intuitionistic Logic,' in Dummett (1978), pp. 215–47.

30 See, for example, *HAH* II §19 or *GS* §112.

31 See Schlegel's Jena and Cologne Lectures of 1804–5, in Friedrich Schlegel (1967), vol. XII, p. 37ff. and p. 391ff. For a concise account of Schlegel's replacement of Being by Becoming as foundation see Wessell (1973).

32 Heidegger (1991), vols. II and III. See also Figl (1982), p. 73ff.

33 The principal example of this mode of reading is Kofman (1972).

34 Schrift (1989), p. 191.

35 As Alexander Nehemas has noted, 'Though the world is always "more" than our theories, this is only because there can always be more theories, not because its essential nature remains untouched.' Nehemas (1983), pp. 486–7.

36 Critics such as Paul de Man consider language the key to Nietzsche's critique. See de Man (1974). In contrast, I would argue that language, while important in the early writings, later constitutes only one of various weapons in the struggle to displace metaphysics.

37 See Heidegger (1991), vol. III, p. 212; Kaufmann (1974). Kaufmann writes, 'Nietzsche's central concern is with man, and power is to him above all a state of human being' (p. 420).

38 This point has been made by Wolfgang Müller-Lauter in Müller-Lauter (1974).

39 Foucault (1977), p. 27.

40 Heidegger (1977). See also Zimmerman (1990).

41 On the relation of Nietzsche's thinking to the hermeneutic tradition from Schleiermacher onwards see Davey (1986).

42 This point has been made by Karsten Harries in Harries (1988), p. 33ff.

43 As Josef Simon notes, the difference between Nietzsche and Enlightenment thinkers is that whereas all share a recognition of the historicity of knowledge, Nietzsche thereby affirms the process of enlightenment without end, i.e., the activity itself, whereas other thinkers such as Kant and Hegel see humanity as being on the path towards some goal of complete enlightened being. Simon (1989).

44 Hegel (1969), p. 82.

45 Ibid., p. 113.

46 Adorno (1990), pp. 144–5.

47 Ibid., p. 145.

48 Ibid., p. 160.

Chapter 2. Nietzsche's Subject

1 Habermas (1987), p. 160. Habermas's position has recently been criticised by Hudson (1993).

2 I am referring here to Lukács's *The Destruction of Reason,* which, by common consent, relies on a crude form of caricature. See Lukács (1980).

3 Apel, in Freundlich and Hudson (1993), p. 25.

4 On Nietzsche's impact in the early twentieth century see Taylor (1990).

5 In this respect it is important to recall Nietzsche's influence on conservative figures such as Ludwig Klages or the poet Stefan George and the so-called George Circle. See Raschel (1984).

6 Within anthropology this thesis has been pursued most single-mindedly by Benjamin Whorf (1956).

7 Derrida (1982), p. 16.

8 'Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences,' in Derrida (1978), pp. 280–1. In drawing a contrast between Nietzsche and Derrida on the possibility of critiquing metaphysics I am working against the interpretation of Nehemas, who maintains linguistic reform is not on the agenda in Nietzsche's critical thinking. Michel Haar, influenced by Derrida, reads Nietzsche otherwise, maintaining that he deliberately plays with the meaning of metaphysical concepts in order to bring out the ambiguities of meaning, with precisely the goal of undercutting the language of metaphysics. See Haar (1977). One might go further and suggest, as Strong has done, that Nietzsche coins his own set of counter-metaphysical concepts, imbued though they are with a certain irony and distance.

9 Foucault (1974), p. 47.

10 'One thing is certain: man is neither the oldest nor the most constant problem that has been posed for human knowledge. Taking a relatively short chronological sample within a restricted geographical area – European culture since the sixteenth century – one can be certain that man is a recent invention within it.' Foucault (1989), p. 386.

11 In the case of authorial subjectivity, for example, Foucault notes that 'the author does not precede the works, he is a certain functional principle by which, in our culture, one limits, excludes and chooses; in short one impedes the free circulation . . . of fiction.' Foucault (1979), p. 159.

12 See in particular Foucault (1988), pp. 39–68.

13 Plato (1975), 79b.

14 See Plato (1955), 434e–444e.

15 Admittedly, Plato does view the ideal soul as one in which 'reason and its subordinates are all agreed that reason should rule' (442c), yet his insistence on the soul as a self-disciplined organisation of elements is not so distant from Nietzsche's own notion of the self as a disciplined harnessing of the disparate instinctual energies. One might compare Plato's conception with Nietzsche's

view of 'corruption as the expression of a threatening anarchy among the instincts' (*BGE* §258).

16 René Descartes (1984), vol. II, p. 18.

17 Ibid., p. 59.

18 Kant (1956).

19 On this topic see Brown (1988). See also Foucault on the concepts of '*akrasia*' and '*enkrateia*' in Foucault (1984), pp. 63–77. Foucault's account should be treated with caution, however, for it relies excessively on Plato as a source. From a Nietzschean perspective Plato was of course a most ungreek Greek.

20 The phrase has been coined by Fritjof Bergman in 'Nietzsche's Critique of Morality,' in Solomon and Higgins (1988), pp. 29–45.

21 There have been attempts to overcome this difficulty through the synthesis of phenomenological and physiological approaches to consciousness. See, for example, Hundert (1989).

22 The idea that moral behaviour and judgements are profoundly affected by the contingencies of the agent's environment has been explored by, amongst others, Bernard Williams and Thomas Nagel, according to the notion of 'moral luck.' Williams states, 'the aim of making morality immune to luck is bound to be disappointed . . . the dispositions of morality . . . are as "conditioned" as anything else,' and yet the belief 'is so intimate to our notion of morality, in fact, that its failure may rather make us consider whether we should not give up that notion altogether.' Williams (1981), pp. 21–2. See also Nagel (1979).

23 This stands in contrast to Foucault's genealogy of the subject, in which it is only ever a discursive formation.

24 Thiele (1990).

25 See *Phaedrus* 253d in Plato (1973).

26 Nehemas (1985), p. 182; Altieri (1976).

27 Wittgenstein (1970), §101.

28 Wittgenstein (1953), §146.

29 Quoted in Budd (1989), pp. 28–9.

30 For a concise account of Wittgenstein's writings on subjectivity see Budd (1989). It is also worth noting that the early writings of both Nietzsche and Wittgenstein were profoundly influenced by Schopenhauer, and one can thus posit an indirect connection between the two. A concise summation of the influence of Schopenhauer on Wittgenstein can be found in Magee (1983), pp. 286–315.

31 This point has been made by Dews (1987).

32 Deleuze and Guattari (1983).

33 Bruce Detwiler has brought to prominence the extent to which Nietzsche's anti-democratic political views have been systematically underplayed since Walter Kaufmann's rehabilitation of Nietzsche after the Second World War. See Detwiler (1990).

34 Other examples of Nietzsche's critique of the herd can be found in *BGE* §§44, 191, 202, 203, 212; *GS* §§23, 50; *Z* 'Of the 1001 Goals.'

35 David Cooper has also put forward Goethe's name as candidate for Übermensch in Cooper (1983). As Cooper points out, though, one has to be cautious when identifying any actual historical figures with the Nietzschean type, since there are many such candidates ranging from Socrates to Cesare Borgia or Machiavelli. Few, I think, would concur with Bäumler's preferred choice of Hitler.

36 Houlgate (1991).

37 Bataille, 'Hegel,' in Bataille (1988).

Chapter 3. Laughter and Sublimity

1 A comprehensive exploration of the relation of Nietzsche to Schiller has recently appeared in Martin (1996).

2 Schiller (1967), p. 9.

3 See Woodmansee (1993).

4 This reading has most been recently been proposed by Young (1992).

5 The parallel between Nietzsche and Hegel in terms of their shared belief in modernity as spelling the death of art has been recently taken up again by Reschke (1995).

6 'Genesis and Genealogy (Nietzsche),' in de Man (1979), pp. 79–102.

7 A useful collection of essays discussing the function of the dialogue in Plato can be found in Griswold (1988).

8 See Staten (1990) and Böning (1990).

9 See, for example, Samuel Monk's seminal study (Monk 1960), or Weiskel (1976).

10 Longinus (1965), p. 2.

11 On this topic see de Bolla (1989), p. 36ff.

12 Burke (1987), p. 57.

13 Kant (1952), §28.

14 As Jacques Derrida has pointed out, there is no reason why the sublime cannot equally apply to the infinitely small, although Kant gives no space for consideration of this possibility. Derrida (1987), p. 136.

15 With the reworking of Kant's aesthetic by Schiller the groundwork is prepared for the philosophies of art which dominate the nineteenth century. As Peter Szondi notes, Kant's aesthetic is still firmly in the mould of the psychologising aesthetic theories of Burke, Shaftesbury or Hutcheson, who are more interested in the *feeling* aroused by the object than by any inherent characteristics it may possess. However, where Szondi might be criticised is in his assertion that Friedrich Schlegel was the first to leave the Enlightenment '*Wirkungsästhetik*' behind, for as I have suggested, Schiller's role is pivotal in seeing aspects of subjective experience objectified in the formal structure of the artwork. See Szondi, 'Antike und Moderne in der Ästhetik der Goethezeit,' in Szondi (1974), p. 145ff.

16 'On the Sublime' refers to the essay 'Über das Erhabene' in Schiller (1962),

Vol. XXI, pp. 38–54, and not the roughly contemporaneous 'Vom Erhabenen,' in vol. XX, pp. 171–95, where the other essays 'On the Basis of the Enjoyment of Tragic Objects' (pp. 133–47) and 'On Tragic Art' (pp. 148–70) appear.

17 Schiller (1962), vol. XXI, p. 38.

18 Ibid., p. 39.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid., p. 40.

21 Ibid., p. 48.

22 Ibid., p. 43.

23 Ibid., p. 45.

24 Ibid., p. 52. As Gary Shapiro has observed, this privilege of the sublime is a typical feature of modernist poetics, where the beautiful is seen as inevitably having to give way to the terror of sublimity, since it is an unsustainable illusion, a view Shapiro sees exemplified in a line from one of Rilke's *Duino Elegies,* where Rilke writes, 'For the beautiful is nothing / but the start of terror we can hardly bear [Denn das Schöne ist nichts / als des Schrecklichen Anfang, den wir noch grade ertragen]. See Shapiro (1985), pp. 213–35.

25 Schiller (1962), vol. XX, p. 148.

26 Ibid., p. 140.

27 Schopenhauer (1958), vol. I, p. 275.

28 Ibid., p. 202.

29 Ibid., p. 205.

30 Ibid., p. 252.

31 Ibid., p. 253.

32 Christopher Janaway has recently explored a potential contradiction in Schopenhauer's account of tragedy. While, as an art form, it should be the object of Will-less aesthetic contemplation, Schopenhauer also envisages that the spectator will feel fear and pity, both of which are intimately related to the self-expressions of the Will. As Janaway concludes, it is *only* when subsumed under the notion of the sublime that this tension can be resolved. See Janaway (1996).

33 Schopenhauer (1958), Vol. II, p. 433.

34 Given my previous emphasis on the importance of Hegel to Nietzsche, it may seem odd that I have not discussed Hegel's thoughts on the sublime. While the sublime features in the analysis of Symbolic art in his *Lectures on Aesthetics,* Hegel transforms the sublime such that from describing the subjective experience of the artist and spectator, it becomes a quality of the content of the Symbolic work of art. Having noted that 'The sublime is the attempt to express the infinite without finding in the realm of phenomena an object which proves adequate for this representation,' Hegel adds that 'differing from Kant, we need not place [the sublime] in the pure subjectivity of the mind and its Ideas of Reason; on the contrary, we must grasp it as grounded in the one absolute substance *qua* the content which is to be represented.' Hegel (1975a), vol. I, p.

363. Hegel is thus working with a theory of the sublime which plays little part in the thought of Nietzsche and which also stands apart from the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tradition.

35 Sloterdijk (1988). Sloterdijk subsequently employs the term in his own work on Nietzsche and tragedy (1990).

36 It seems not to occur to de Man that the Nachlass from the period of *The Birth of Tragedy* might cause him to revise his reading of the latter.

37 See, for example, Schopenhauer (1958), vol. I, §36ff.

38 The classic text of Schiller's which introduces this term and also contrasts it with the 'sentimental' is 'Über Naive und Sentimentale Dichtung,' or 'On Naive and Sentimental Poetry,' in Schiller (1962), vol. XX, pp. 413–503.

39 As Nicholas Martin has pointed out, Nietzsche felt awkward about Schiller's category of the 'sentimental' since, unlike the 'naive,' it could not be equated with either of his own terms. Martin (1996), p. 32ff.

40 Sloterdijk (1990), p. 28.

41 See Burnett (1983), pp. 15–104.

42 It will have become clear that while for Kant, Schiller and Schopenhauer the aesthetic object can be either natural or a product of human artifice, for Nietzsche it is merely to be seen as the work of art.

43 See Lippitt (1992).

44 Hegel (1975a), vol. I, p. 601.

45 Ibid., vol. II, p. 1199.

46 Modiano (1987). Modiano notes that 'the comic needs the sublime for its survival, for otherwise it would lose the contrast between ideality and mundane existence which defines its special dialectical character' (p. 241).

47 Benjamin (1985), pp. 125–8. Benjamin traced the origin of this co-mingling back to the examples of Shakespeare and Calderón, which he sharply distinguished from classical tragedy. For reasons that are clear, this distinction need not be so absolute.

48 Schopenhauer (1958), vol. I, p. 322.

49 Vernant (1983), p. 195. The Greek '*apolis*' means 'cityless,' while '*daimon*' denotes any unspecified minor deity, such as the one Socrates claimed had spoken to him through his inner voice.

50 This point has been made by Babette Babich (1994), pp. 244–5.

Chapter 4. Wagner, Modernity and the Problem of Transcendence

1 For a brief synopsis of 'endless melody' see Dahlhaus (1980), pp. 52–64.

2 This has been suggested by Strong (1988), pp. 153–174.

3 Friedrich Nietzsche, 'On Music and Words,' trans. W. Kaufmann, in Dahlhaus (1980), p. 108.

4 Ibid., pp. 115–16.

5 Ibid., p. 109.

6 Wagner (1979), vol. 6, no. 184.

7 Ibid., vol. 7, no. 71. See also vol. 7, no. 46, to Jakob Sulzer, dated 10–12 May 1855.

8 On this issue in Wagner see Strong (1975), p. 228ff.

9 For a brief account of *Tristan and Isolde* see the chapter devoted to it in Dahlhaus (1979).

10 For a recent account of the aesthetics of Schlegel and others see Behler (1992). For all his scathing criticisms of romanticism, Nietzsche's project is still deeply indebted to romantic theory, and this is not only because of his early infatuation with Schopenhauer. His interpretative dialectic as I formulated it in the first chapter is prefigured by the role of dialectic in early romantic literary theory. Of Friedrich Schlegel, Jochen Schulte-Sasse has written, 'Intellectual annihilation means a mode of thinking that sublates what it negates; that subsumes and includes specific, concrete ideas – that is potentially all possible semantic "identities" – while at the same time floating between these "identities," never arresting their meaning . . . it is intended to permit thinking that is not constrained by always already existent social inscriptions.' Schulte-Sasse (1985), p. 111. Schulte-Sasse's description accords very closely with Nietzsche's own project.

11 In the *Republic* Plato makes two criticisms of art. The first, put forward in book II, is that many artists portray the gods and mythic heroes in ignoble and shameful ways and that therefore they offer a potentially corrupting set of values. However, in this book Plato does not recommend the wholesale expunging of art from the ideal state. Rather, 'our first business is to supervise the production of stories and choose only those we think suitable, and reject the rest' (377e). In book X, on the other hand, his position hardens; any kind of art is false, inasmuch as it deals only with surface appearance: 'all the poets from Homer onwards have no grasp of truth but merely produce a superficial likeness of any subject they treat, including human excellence' (600e). Rather unconvincingly, Plato adds later that poetry may remain within the state, provided it can argue the case for its retention.

12 Of the Symbolic Hegel writes, 'the Idea still *seeks* its genuine expression in art, because in itself it is still abstract and indeterminate and therefore does not have its adequate manifestation on and in itself, but finds itself confronted by what is external to itself, external things in nature and human affairs. Now, since it has only an immediate inkling of its own abstractions in this objective world or drives itself with its undetermined universals into a concrete existence, it corrupts and falsifies the shapes that it finds confronting it,' Hegel (1975a), vol. I, p. 300. There is naturally a crucial difference between Nietzsche and Hegel, since the latter sees the Symbolic as the prelude to the Classical in which the Idea finds adequate form, while Nietzsche disputes both the idea that art can be located on a teleological historical schema and the conception of art as a vehicle of truth.

13 In a highly suggestive article on Nietzsche and music, Gary Peters reads Nietz-

schean music as pointing above all towards a radical improvisational practice. Drawing on the (apparently) improvisational nature of Nietzsche's own writing, Peters argues that a Nietzschean music would comprise 'an instantaneous scrutinization of radically isolated tonal points devoid of past or future.' My own reading tends towards an opposing position, giving due account to the importance of the classical in Nietzsche's aesthetic thought. See Peters (1993), p. 154.

14 Nietzsche makes numerous references to Mozart, all of them praising him in terms similar to his commendation of the Greeks. Praising the 'cheerful, sunny, tender, frivolous spirit of Mozart' (*WS* §165), Nietzsche writes that he 'gave forth the age of Louis the Fourteenth and the art of Racine and Claude Lorraine in *ringing gold*' (*HAH* II §171), his music displays a 'charm and graciousness of the heart' (*HAH* II §298) that 'shows what Germans should strive after' (ibid.), and he 'finds his inspirations not in listening to music but in looking at life' (*WS* §152).

Chapter 5. Memory, History and Eternal Recurrence

1 In book IV of *The Physics* Aristotle is puzzled by the paradox of time, inasmuch as 'Some of it has been and is not, some of it is to be and is not yet.' From this observation he notes that 'it would seem to be impossible that what is composed of things that are not should not participate in being' (218^a 1–2). Yet as various commentators have objected, Aristotle's couching of the problem of time in these terms appears possible only on the premise that existence can only be predicated of something in the present, i.e., an object referred to in the present tense of the verb 'be.' Hence if we cannot say that something 'is' in the present, we must infer that it does not have full reality or existence, a conclusion which parallels Plato's argument that because mundane objects are brought into being and then decay with time, they therefore do not truly exist. See Aristotle (1983).

2 See, for example, Nietzsche's account of Heraclitus in 'Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks,' *KSA* 7, p. 822ff.

3 Kosellek (1985).

4 Immanuel Kant, 'An Answer to the Question: What Is Enlightenment?' in Kant (1991), pp. 41–53. See also 'Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent' in the same volume, pp. 54–60.

5 Osborne (1995), esp. p. 13ff.

6 Hegel (1975b), p. 64.

7 The co-existence of these two tendencies, apparently opposed but actually interdependent, was remarked on by Nietzsche's contemporary, the art historian Alois Riegl. See Riegl (1982).

8 The parallel between modernity and metaphysics inevitably invites comparison with Karl Löwith's notion of modernity as the secularisation of the Christian view of world history. For Löwith the Christian notion of a divine inter-

vention which would bring an end to mundane history becomes translated into the modernist ideology of progress, in which at some time in the future humanity will have reached a state of perfection, and history will have effectively come to a halt. See Löwith (1949). Nietzsche certainly sees a parallel between metaphysics and Christianity, though this stems less from a process of secularisation than from the fact that they are both symptoms of the same drive to petrify temporal existence, and to valorise a conceptual ideality. Löwith's account has been subjected to an exhaustive critique by Hans Blumenberg (1985). On this debate see also Wallace (1981).

9 Although Nietzsche was not familiar with Marx, Marx provides the prime example of critical history in Nietzsche's sense. Famously, Marx claims, 'The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living,' a view which he follows later with the assertion that in contrast to the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century, the 'social revolution of the nineteenth century cannot draw its poetry from the past but only from the future.' Karl Marx, 'The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,' in Marx (1977), pp. 300, 302.

10 Benjamin (1979), p. 352.

11 Although Benjamin and Nietzsche both see the collector as the exemplar of the modern type, their evaluation is quite distinct. Benjamin sees the collector as preserving a past that commodified culture is rushing to forget, interpreting him in a much more positive light than does Nietzsche. See Abbas (1989).

12 Knodt (1989) has made a useful comparison of Nietzsche's critique of linear time with that of Schopenhauer, pointing out, for example, that the latter equates subjective time with linear time, in contrast to the goalless strivings of the Will, which naturally give priority to a cyclical notion of temporality. Yet although Schopenhauer views cyclical time as more primordial than the (Aristotelian) idea of time as a linear succession of 'nows,' he then reverts back to more traditional notions of temporality and redemption when he stresses the ability of the ascetic or the person held by an aesthetic experience to elude the strivings of the Will, and hence to escape from time itself. The notion of transcendence in Schopenhauer is naturally opposed to a cyclical idea of time, thus revealing a considerable distance between Schopenhauerian time and Nietzsche's '*circulus vitiosus.*'

13 I am referring primarily to Klossowski (1969), Stambaugh (1972) and Löwith (1956).

14 Heidegger (1991), vol. II, 'The Eternal Recurrence of the Same,' p. 6.

15 Ibid.

16 This interpretation has been offered by Wood (1989).

17 Kant (1989), pp. 396–421.

18 See Warren (1988), pp. 196–203.

19 Benjamin (1983), p. 134.

20 On the German inflections of what was originally a French literary debate see

Behler (1992), pp. 95–130; Menges (1988); Hans Robert Jauss, 'Schlegels und Schillers Replik auf die "Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes,"' in Jauss (1970), pp. 67–106.

21 Del Caro (1989). Del Caro argues that Nietzsche's return to some form of classical norm is partly inspired by Goethe, who shared his antipathy towards romanticism. Significantly, as del Caro points out (p. 594), Nietzsche's diagnosis of romanticism as being a sickly phenomenon was one already made by Goethe, who also regarded classicism as essentially healthy in contrast.

22 Karl Heinz Bohrer, 'Aesthetics and Historicism: Nietzsche's Idea of "Appearance,"' in Bohrer (1994), pp. 113–47.

23 Adorno (1991), p. 31ff.

24 Ibid., p. 33.

25 Because of the shifting meanings of 'Dionysian,' Eugen Fink accused it of lacking clarity, of being intuited 'mystically.' It is undoubtedly because of his failure to take into account the internally complex nature of the Dionysian that led Fink to such a conclusion. See Fink (1960), p. 27.

26 Kant (1952), §15.

27 Crowther (1989), p. 153.

28 As Christoph Menke has argued, this notion of aesthetic indeterminacy or negation has formed the basis of the aesthetic tradition from Kant onwards, culminating perhaps in Adorno's linking of modernism and negation and Jacques Derrida's equation of the slippage of meaning between signs with the aesthetic process. See Menke (1991).

29 See, for example, Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy (1988), especially pp. 39–58.

30 This parallels the interpretation of Nietzsche in Nehemas (1985).

31 This point has been made by Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe in Lacoue-Labarthe (1983).

32 This point has been made by Jacques Taminiaux in 'The Nostalgia for Greece at the Dawn of Classical Germany,' in Taminiaux (1993), pp. 73–92. Taminiaux is referring to the specific case of Goethe, who, unlike Hölderlin or Schiller, views the Greeks as exemplary models but does not conceive of himself as separated from them by a great historical gulf. Nostalgia, for Taminiaux, is intimately connected with the sense of exile, and in this sense Nietzsche, like Goethe, envisions a re-activation of Greek culture through an overcoming of historical distance. In contrast, Schiller and Hölderlin are weighted by modernity's sense of history.

33 Wilfried van der Will has criticised the reading of Nietzsche by Lyotard and Derrida for keeping Nietzsche entrapped within the perpetual critique of modernity in which 'the open-endedness of fragmentary, playful, associative writing appears the most lofty goal that can be desired.' See van der Will (1993). My own interpretation accords with van der Will's criticism in that it also emphasises the role of monumentality to Nietzsche as a form of exemplariness in aesthetic practice.

Chapter 6. Towards a Physiological Aesthetic

1 In ¶69 of *Being and Time* (Heidegger 1967), which is concerned with the problem of transcendence, Heidegger constantly describes concernful being-in-the-world as attending to Dasein's 'whither' [*Wohin*] (e.g., p. 416), its relation of 'towards-which' [*Wozu*](e.g., p. 415), and the structure of care as constituted by 'Being-alongside' [*Sein bei*] (e.g., p. 404), all of which use spatial metaphors. Most obvious of all, though, is Heidegger's insistence on the 'There' [*Da*] of Dasein, which in his later works will become the clearing of Being's self-disclosure.

2 Blondel (1991).

3 See *EH*, 'Why I Am So Clever,' §2, *GS*, §§59, 306, 367, or *WP*, §652, 702.

4 This is the case with Blondel's reading, which critiques interpretations that see in Nietzsche a joyful affirmation of textual play, a fetishism of the text, in order then to give primacy to the body. See also Blondel's criticism of certain post-structuralist readings of Nietzsche. Blondel (1981–2).

5 On Nietzsche's relation to Lange see Stack (1983).

6 Schopenhauer (1958), vol. II, p. 284.

7 For an account of Wundt and the history of early experimental psychology see Danziger (1990).

8 Helmut Pfotenhauer has given an outline of the physiological literature with which Nietzsche was familiar in Pfotenhauer (1985), pp. 71–6. On the influence of Wilhelm Roux on Nietzsche see Müller-Lauter (1978).

9 On the function of medical imagery in Nietzsche see Malcolm Pasley, 'Nietzsche's Use of Medical Imagery,' in Pasley (1978), pp. 123–58.

10 See Richard Brown (1989), n. 4.

11 Other examples listed by Brown include Nietzsche's reference to 'physiological purification and strengthening' (*WP* §953); 'physiological well-being' (*OGM* III §11); 'physiological exhaustion' (*WP* §230) and 'physiological decadence' (*WP* §851).

12 This point is made by Nussbaum (1998).

13 On Nietzsche's physiological aesthetics see also Gerhardt (1984). Gerhardt argues that Nietzsche comes to a physiology only late in his career, whereas I am suggesting that it is the result of a continuous development of the same theme.

14 See Heidegger (1991), vol. I, §15, 'Kant's Doctrine of the Beautiful: Its Misinterpretation by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche,' pp. 107–14.

15 See Djuric (1985), pp. 209–22, and Heftrich (1991).

16 Ernst Behler has suggested that Nietzsche entertains both a concept of art as play, symbolised in the ideas of *l'art pour l'art*, and one of art as a life-enhancing practice. I shall argue, however, that this sense of play in art, which Nietzsche sees in the artist's willingness to play with truth, is far from the ideas of *l'art pour l'art*. Art-as-play in Nietzsche is not necessarily opposed to

the idea of art-as-will-to-power but rather complements it, as part of the interpretative process. See Behler (1988), p. 100ff.

17 Kant (1952), §5.

18 There is an important exception to this, namely, Kant's recognition of the sublime in the case of self-sacrifice by soldiers on behalf of some higher moral ideal. Kant could be criticised for inconsistency in this particular example, since it appears to contradict the link between sublimity and representation. However, the fact that the soldiers defending a moral ideal question actively disregard threats to their own existence lends it a quality comparable to the aesthetic experience. Kant's distinction allows us to understand why we can allow fictional events or objects to affect us while we know they do not actually exist, without having to resort to contemporary theories of make-believe, such as that of Kendall Walton, who proposes the curious notion that fiction is a game of make-believe into which the spectator knowingly enters, and that emotional responses to what are known to be fictional events are in fact 'pretend' responses. See Walton (1990).

19 Schopenhauer (1958), vol. I, p. 253.

20 Ibid., p. 259.

21 See Schulte-Sasse (1985), p. 87ff.

22 Quoted in ibid., p. 87.

23 Schulte-Sasse quotes August Schlegel as asserting that 'It is the essence of the fine arts not to want to be useful. In a certain sense the beautiful is the opposite of the useful' (p. 88).

24 See, for example, Bell (1981), Fry (1920) or Greenberg (1939), (1940).

25 Hanslick (1854).

26 Gautier's classic statement of the doctrine of 'art for art's sake' occurs in the preface to *Mademoiselle de Maupin:* 'Nothing is really beautiful except that which cannot be used for anything; everything that is useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need.' Gautier (1955), p. 23. The most recent and comprehensive account of Gautier and criticism is Snell (1982).

27 For other references to Hanslick see also *KSA* 7: 9[8] and *KSA* 7:9 [98]. Nietzsche also refers to Gautier a number of times, including *WP* §103, *KSA* 13:11 [296] and *WP* §815. Nietzsche's interest in Hanslick in the early 1870s obviously derives from his interest at that time in music, whereas his comments on Gautier are much more set within the context of French literary and artistic culture.

28 Mallarmé (1945), p. 366.

29 This idea is explored in Pütz (1963), pp. 15–16.

30 It is important to take note of Ernst Behler's observations (Behler 1978) that Nietzsche's concept of romanticism is on the whole limited to the 'late' romanticism of mid-nineteenth-century France, the primary figure being Victor Hugo, rather than the work of the early romantics in Germany.

Chapter 7. Art, Truth and Woman

1 See Jacques Taminiaux, 'Between the Aesthetic Attitude and the Death of Art,' in Taminiaux (1993), pp. 55–72.
2 Hegel (1975a), vol. I, p. 73.
3 Schelling (1978), p. 231. On the role of Schelling as an intermediary between Kant and Hegel see Wicks (1994), pp. 57–69. See also Bowie (1993), esp. pp. 45–54.
4 For a succinct account of Schlegel's conception of poetry see Behler (1992), pp. 131–80.
5 August Schlegel, 'Vorlesungen über die schöne Literatur und Kunst,' in Schlegel (1989), vol. I, p. 220.
6 This theme is explored in Menke (1991).
7 Derrida (1979).
8 The role of reflection in romanticism has been explored in Walter Benjamin, 'The Concept of Criticism in German Romanticism,' in Benjamin (1996), pp. 116–200. In the reflective unfolding of the work, criticism played a vital role in completing the process. For romantics such as the Schlegel brothers, therefore, criticism was not extrinsic to the work, a notion subsequently taken up by Derrida, Barthes and Lacan.
9 Heidegger (1991), vol. I, p. 109.
10 Ibid., p. 216.
11 Ibid., p. 217.
12 Most obviously, of course, in *TI*, 'How the "true world" eventually became a fable.'
13 On the configuration of woman, distance and veiled dissimulation see Derrida (1979), pp. 37–63. See also, more recently, Vasseleu (1993). Vasseleu attends particularly to the metaphor of the sea in Nietzsche, which functions as a figure for the perpetual dissimulation of identity. The classic discussion of marine metaphors in Nietzsche is Irigaray (1991).
14 The general difficulties of Nietzsche's account of woman have been explored in Irigaray (1991) and Ansell-Pearson (1993). Ansell-Pearson is particularly critical of Derrida for his unquestioning affirmation of Nietzsche, even when the latter is most hostile to feminism and patronising to women.
15 On the wider critique of mass culture as feminine see Andreas Huyssen, 'Mass Culture as Woman: Modernism's Other,' in Huyssen (1986).
16 Nietzsche's comments on the erasure of authorial subjectivity are also part of a response to Burckhardt's *Der Cicerone,* which equates grand style with 'impersonality': see Burckhardt (1855), p. 175. See also Nietzsche, *KSA* 11:25 [117].
17 The philosopher Philipp Mainländer was the author of *Die Philosophie der Erlösung* [The Philosophy of Redemption] (Berlin: T. Grieben, 1876). Nietzsche's relation to Mainländer has recently been discussed in Decher (1996).
18 Urs Heftrich has made a similar point in Heftrich (1991), p. 259ff.

19 Gadamer (1965), p. 88.
20 See especially §§46 and 47 of *The Critique of Judgement* on the relation of genius to rules.
21 An informative contrast can be made, for example, between Kant's *Critique of Judgement* and Burke (1987).
22 *KSA* 7:7 [9].
23 E.g., *BGE* §256.
24 '"Don Quixote" is one of the most harmful of books' (*KSA* 8:8 [7]).
25 Nietzsche's willingness to apply the word '*Kunst*' both to what might be called authentic art and to those trivial works of contemporary art such as opera which he considers as unaesthetic may well lie behind Behler's confusion as regards the significance attached to the notion of play in Nietzsche. As I noted in the previous chapter, Behler ascribes to Nietzsche an attitude which would lead him to condone *l'art pour l'art* as a mode of understanding art. My own interpretation differs somewhat.
26 See Nehemas (1983).
27 Derrida (1979), p. 77.
28 See Burke (1987) or Kant (1960), which devotes a whole section to the analogy between the relation of the sexes and that of the beautiful and the sublime.
29 On this theme see Shapiro (1991).

Chapter 8. Overcoming Nihilism

1 The most obvious example is the work of Walter Benjamin, whose writings repeatedly return to Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*. See especially Benjamin (1983).
2 See, for example, *KSA* 13:11 [159]. Nietzsche also linked Baudelaire with Sainte-Beuve, of whom he made vicious criticisms, concluding that Sainte-Beuve was 'a prototype of Baudelaire' (*TI* 'Skirmishes' §3).
3 Adorno (1981).
4 Albrecht Wellmer has also noted that Adorno's thought 'secretly communicates' with Nietzsche and Schopenhauer. See Wellmer (1991), p. 1.
5 See, for example, the essays collected in Koelb (1990) on this topic.
6 Dahlhaus (1980), pp. 60–1.
7 Adorno (1981), p. 55.
8 A recent essay has put forward the speculative proposition that Nietzsche would have been sympathetic to jazz. Quite apart from the methodological questions that are raised by such speculation, it seems highly improbable, given Nietzsche's conservatism. See Carvalho (1998).
9 *The Case of Wagner* begins with a celebration of Bizet, noting that 'This music appears to me to be perfect. . . . It constructs, it organises, it becomes complete: with this it forms the opposite to the polyp of music, "endless melody"' (*CW* §1). As Walter Kaufmann has noted, Nietzsche had rather sentimental tastes, showing a preference for Claude Lorraine and the novelist Adalbert Stifter. See Kaufmann, 'Translator's Introduction' (1974), p. 12.

10 Peter Hohendahl has recently defended Adorno against his detractors, particularly in terms of the concept of the culture industry. Where Adorno is often seen as displaying a typical modernist disdain for mass culture, Hohendahl argues for a more differentiated picture, in which the 'culture industry' denotes the commodification and reification of both popular culture and so-called high art. See Hohendahl (1995), especially pp. 119–48.

11 Adorno (1981), p. 43.

12 Adorno (1987).

13 In another essay on Schoenberg Adorno writes, 'Schoenberg's nonconformity is not a matter of temperament. . . . His integrity was forced on him; he had to work out the tension between the Brahmsian and Wagnerian elements. His expansive imagination thrived on Wagnerian material, whereas the demands of compositional consistency, the responsibility of respecting the music's intrinsic tendencies drew him to Brahmsian methods.' Adorno (1967), pp. 152–3.

14 Theodor Adorno, 'Anton von Webern: Zur Aufführung der Fünf Orchesterstücke, op. 10, in Zürich' (1926), cited in Paddison (1993), p. 51.

15 Adorno (1997), pp. 159–60.

16 Bohrer, 'Aestheticism and Historicism: Nietzsche's Idea of Appearance,' in Bohrer (1994), pp. 113–47.

17 Adorno frequently uses this figure of speech, and it is intended less as a criticism than as an assertion of the circular situation in which art, and more generally philosophy, finds itself. In *Minima Moralia* he uses the story of Baron von Münchhausen: 'Today nothing less is demanded of the thinker than that he should be at any time both inside and outside the matter – the gesture of Münchhausen, who pulls himself out of the swamp by his own ponytail.' See Adorno (1978), §46.

18 Lyotard (1984b), p. 77.

19 Ibid., p. 78.

20 Ibid.

21 Lyotard (1984c), p. 40.

22 See Lyotard (1982), p. 68.

23 Ibid., p. 80.

24 In the previous aphorism (*HAH* I §219) Nietzsche complains of the religious basis of modern music, citing in particular the seminal role of Palestrina after the Council of Trent.

25 Lyotard (1984a), p. 153.

26 At the culmination of *The Differend* Lyotard, drawing on Wittgenstein's notion of 'language games,' concludes that 'the heterogeneity of phrase regimens and of genres of discourse' is the only 'insurmountable obstacle' to the totalising impulse of capitalism and modernity, noting that resistance based around counter-narratives or ideologies ultimately replicates the totalising logic of modernity.

27 Deleuze and Guattari (1983).

28 This point has been made by Crowther (1992).

29 Jean Baudrillard, quoted in Bews (1997), p. 57. See also Jameson (1991), especially chapter 1, or Callinicos (1986).

30 The notion of a cultural practice in which the real appears, but as the site of trauma, has been explored recently in Hal Foster, 'The Return of the Real,' in Foster (1996), pp. 127–68. Foster's focus of interest is the work of artists such as Andy Warhol or Cindy Sherman, indicating a type of post-modern artistic practice that is difficult to square with Lyotard's stipulation of the avant-garde as essentially sublime.

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