

WILL TO POWER AS THE SELF-OVERCOMING OF WILL TO TRUTH

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To Mom, Dad, Mariko, and Natania

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AC	=	<i>The Antichrist</i>
BGE	=	<i>Beyond Good and Evil</i>
D	=	<i>Daybreak</i>
GM	=	<i>On the Genealogy of Morals</i>
GS	=	<i>The Gay Science</i>
NCW	=	<i>Nietzsche contra Wagner</i>
TI	=	<i>Twilight of the Idols</i>
TSZ	=	<i>Thus Spoke Zarathustra</i>
WP	=	<i>The Will to Power</i>

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this work is to develop a reading of Nietzsche's concept of will to power. I will argue that will to power cannot be understood apart from Nietzsche's concepts of self-overcoming and of will to truth. More specifically, I claim that the meaning of will to power emerges only at the point of the self-overcoming of will to truth.

It is a curious feature of Nietzsche's published writings that will to power is mentioned as infrequently as it is, given the centrality of this concept in his thought. There are different conclusions one can draw from this fact. One strategy in reading Nietzsche has been to turn to the *Nachlass* in order to address some of his more direct, expositional passages regarding this will. There is nothing in principle objectionable about this tactic, but I think that it is needed only if the published works don't provide a sufficient account of will to power. But while it's true that will to power appears with a rarity disproportionate to its importance, I think that Nietzsche develops a robust and integral account of its meaning in these published works alone.

The integrity of Nietzsche's account was my primary criterion in deciding whether to incorporate materials Nietzsche didn't intend to publish. Based on the relationship to the self-overcoming of the will to truth that I develop, I think that the relative infrequency of explicit developments of will to power is to be expected. For I will claim that Nietzsche's concept of will to power is a will that is creative and affirmative, and that the possibilities for the exercise of this will have been occluded by the long dominion of the will to truth, which is expressed by the perpetual devaluation of

all values. Such possibilities are only now emerging as the value-creating force of will to power can only be glimpsed from under the shadow of the slave moral temples.

Because I contend that will to power can be understood only by relation to the self-overcoming of will to truth, those places where Nietzsche develops both self-overcoming and the will to truth are also sites where he develops the meaning of will to power. Thus the central text for this project is *On the Genealogy of Morals*, which I read as a systematic account of the will to truth and an argument for the necessity of its destructive self-overcoming brought about through the devaluing force of this very will itself. This work is the primary textual focus of the first three chapters of this dissertation.

The fourth chapter will be textually rooted in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which I read as an attempt to portray, through the character of Zarathustra, an embodiment of the creative aspect of self-overcoming. Zarathustra's primary task is not the rejection of the valuational standards of truth, but instead the development of a new mode of affirming. Zarathustra's will to power, produced in the creative self-overcoming of the will to truth, is his expression of this abundant affirmative capacity. Zarathustra's power is creative; he affirms what no one has heretofore affirmed.

In what follows below I summarize the project. Because each chapter begins with an overview of each of its sections, here in the introduction I will address the general contours of each chapter more broadly.

The first chapter is about the constitutive difference between what Nietzsche calls the "noble" and "slave." These two names designate opposite modes of valuation which, taken together, span the continuum of ways in which evaluations have been made.

Nietzsche's noble esteems through the crudest gestures in which force and goodness are concurrently signified. The same action by which the noble elevates herself socially, economically, or physically is for that very reason a sign of her moral elevation as well. The slave, in reaction, reinterprets such noble gestures to be merely apparent signs of goodness. This reversal requires some explanation as to why the most obvious and visible signs of noble domination do not indicate superiority. The moral slave provides this explanation by constructing two new valuational sites. Rather than emphasize the present and external meanings of noble gestures, the moral slave refers these gestures to the distant future, as well as to the hidden recesses of an interior agency. In this way the moral slave can reverse noble valuations by reactively reinterpreting their signs of immediate dominance to indicate moral weakness within the interior site, expressed as an incapacity to control the affects. And the moral slave imagines that such sins must be paid for in the future. That is, they imagine a future in which the true value of all present gestures will be revealed, and in this future all present power relations and (noble) valuations will be reversed. By this proliferation of the significance of every gesture, the moral slave transforms noble goodness into evil.

In the second chapter I will further develop these two new valuational sites by addressing their relationship to one another. The slave magnifies her power by mutually referencing the two. That is, the interior domain becomes temporalized. This interior site acquires guilt that extends into the distant past and that demands punishment infinitely into the future. This production of guilt has the effect of integrating the force of moral slave evaluations by directing them towards the singular goal of uncovering evil in all present externalities. Greater and greater force is stored up for both the destruction of

noble signs of esteem as well as the most violent self-lacerations by which the moral slave becomes capable of finding in her own interior agency ever more to reject. These ascetic practices of the slave are indicative of a will to truth. The will to truth is the name for the most spiritualized, refined, and powerful expression of the moral slave's quest to find and reject evil in everything present and external.

In the third chapter I claim that the inevitable consequence of this integrating forcefulness of the will to truth is the self-overcoming of this will. I do so by analyzing the question that begins the third essay of the *Genealogy*, which is the question as to the contemporary bearer of the force of the will to truth. Nietzsche finds reason to disqualify every heir to the will to truth. In each case he examines, he finds that the ostensive representative of this will always has some gesture that he secretly affirms. This is to say that such representatives fail by the very standards of the will to truth. For in affirming any particular gesture they truncate the integrating forcefulness of the will to truth. Thus Nietzsche characterizes the will to truth as perpetually destructive of even its own forms. The culminating expression of this tendency is what Nietzsche terms the overcoming of Christianity as dogma by Christianity as morality. At this point Nietzsche insists that the will to truth must itself perish by the same act of negation through which every extant gesture of this will has been devalued. This is the destructive character of self-overcoming that the will to truth applies against itself. I will end the chapter with the conclusion of the *Genealogy*. Here Nietzsche says that the kernel of all will to truth is a will to nothingness, but that even a will to nothingness remains a will. That is, even in the rejection of all valuations that is expressed as the destructive force of self-

overcoming, there remains some willing that is not destroyed, some affirmative excess that cannot but create values, even if this value is expressed as pure devaluation.

In the final chapter I turn to *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. I interpret Zarathustra's project as an attempt to understand and execute the creative component of self-overcoming, the movement by which some new value is named and instantiated. I claim that this occurs when Zarathustra affirms the eternal recurrence, and that this affirmation can only be the expression of a will to power, and not of a will to truth or of a will to nothingness. Will to power then emerges only after the self-overcoming of the will to truth. Furthermore, will to power is the creative force that exceeds all will to truth, and cannot simply be expressed as the destructive force of the latter will. Self-overcoming then has two aspects. It indicates both the most magnified force of the "self," in this case the will to truth in its most magnificently destructive gestures, as well as the rupturing overcoming of that "self" in the emergence of a will that affirms everything negated by the will to truth. The concept of will to power also suggests such dual aspects. On the one hand, it is a will that has been honed and integrated through the long dominance of the will to truth. On the other, it expresses an affirmative power that ruptures this very dominance.

CHAPTER ONE

THE MEANING OF “NOBLE” AND “SLAVE”

The purpose of this chapter is to characterize the two poles of the valuational opposition that structures Nietzsche’s bifurcation of ethical, social, political, and aesthetic evaluations. Following the terminology of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, I will call these valuational modes the noble and the slavish. The purpose of this endeavor, as it relates to a reading of the will to power, is twofold. First, I aim to determine the defining features of slave morality. This will be essential to Nietzsche’s understanding of the development of the will to truth. The will to truth, in turn, is necessary for understanding the will to power, given my claim that the concept of will to power emerges in the self-overcoming of will to truth. Thus this understanding of slave morality will be necessary to interpret will to power. Second, I will argue that the self-overcoming of the will to truth is propelled through the uncovering of noble characteristics embedded even in those practices through which the will to truth has formerly been perpetuated. That is, gestures which were once used to oppose noble morality are interpreted to contain noble characteristics that compromise their moral force. Thus it is necessary to identify what is meant by noble as well.

I will begin by interpreting Nietzsche’s characterization of noble valuation as spontaneous and self-generated insofar as the signs by which the noble evaluates something as good are the same signs by which they exert their power. Hence the

evaluation “good” is at the same time a description of the forcefulness by which the noble seizes the right to name and assign value. That which the noble praises as good is praiseworthy for no other reason than that it elevates, for the noble gesture is a communication of an inequality of power, and this inequality is the condition for all noble evaluations. This will be the topic of the section “Concurrence of Noble Signs of Power and Esteem.”

Next, I will develop a reading of Nietzsche’s use of the terms “affect,” “instinct,” and “feeling” as expressions of valuational frames that in their momentary operation are immediate and absolute. These terms delineate parameters of possible gestures, and as constitutive of such limits, provide noble valuations with a simple kind of integrity. The consequence of this integrity is that noble deeds are resistant to rupturing forces in their momentary insularity. Noble signs of esteem therefore often take crude forms, and it is essential to their character that they are visible and unambiguous in their significance. This will be the theme of the section titled “The Noble as Natural, Affective, and Instinctual.”

The following section, “The Noble Economy of Suffering,” addresses the consequence of the concurrence of noble gestures of force and esteem. Here I develop a reading of Nietzsche’s interpretation of the noble response to suffering, which is characterized by the effort to find affirmation in every exchange of force. I claim that the noble economy of suffering produces an affirmative abundance; the imposition of suffering from one body to another is interpreted as the very condition of affirmation insofar as it is a necessary component of any gesture by which force (and hence esteem) is signified.

In the next two sections I address the constitutive differences of the slavish interpretation of suffering specifically, and of the slavish manner of valuation more broadly. This difference is generated out of the slavish dissociation of gestures of force and esteem, which is accomplished by the creation of two new domains of valuation. I interpret the first of these in the section titled “The Interior Domain of Value.” Here I analyze Nietzsche’s claim that the moral slave attributes efficacy not to the “external” consequences of a gesture but instead to the “subject” or “doer” that is posited behind every deed. This displacement of force allows the moral slave to reinterpret noble gestures of domination as signs of the incapacity to control one’s affects or instincts and hence to devalue these gestures (as well as the affects and instincts generally).

In the second of these sections, titled “The Temporal Domain of Value,” I claim that the moral slave privileges the future at the expense of the present by expecting a reversal of all present power relations and evaluations. As with the interior valuational site, the moral slave uses this conception of the future to dissociate gestures of force and esteem. The straightforward signs of earthly noble supremacy turn out to be deceitful, and their true meaning is to be revealed in a future reversal.

In the final section of the chapter, “The Slavish Economy of Suffering,” I characterize the slavish economy of suffering as productive of signficatory abundance, in contrast to the affirmative production of the noble economy. The two new valuational sites – the interior and futural – are necessary for the transition from the good-bad polarity of the noble manner of valuation to the good-evil polarity of slave morality. The latter requires that ever deeper meanings are assigned to the once crude interpretations of noble force and esteem.

This chapter provides the groundwork for the second, in which I will examine the relationship between the interior and futural domains of valuation, which I argue is productive of the will to truth.

Concurrence of Noble Signs of Power and Esteem

In this section I will develop what I consider to be the definitive feature of noble valuations. Specifically, I argue that noble gestures that communicate power always also indicate noble goodness, and that noble esteem is always an expression of noble power. Power and esteem are concurrently signified in noble gestures, and the two cannot be conceived in isolation from one another. Because of this, early noble evaluations were often accomplished through brutishly violent gestures. But even more seemingly sophisticated noble actions (e.g. demonstrations of pity and forbearance for their inferiors) and self-designations (e.g. the noble as “truthful”) preserve this same overlap and communicate both force and goodness in the same gesture.

Nietzsche characterizes the distinction between noble and slavish modes of valuation in the *Genealogy* as an opposition between creative self-generation and deliberate reactivity. Nietzsche begins to develop this distinction early in the first essay, where he criticizes contemporary moral philosophers for their backwards historical spirit – that is, for attributing present evaluations retroactively and finding them fully formed even in their most distant predecessors. As such they fail to see the fundamentally different motivations of noble valuations. Of these contemporaries he says:

“Originally” – so they decree – “one approved unegoistic actions and called them good from the point of view of those to whom they were done, that is to say, those to whom they were *useful*; later one *forgot* how this approval originated and, simply because unegoistic actions were always *habitually* praised as good, one also felt them to be good – as if they were something good in themselves.” One sees straightaway that this primary derivation already contains all the typical traits of the idiosyncrasy of the English psychologists – we have “utility,” “forgetting,” “habit,” and finally “error,” all as the basis of an evaluation of which the higher man has hitherto been proud as though it were a kind of prerogative of man as such.¹

What Nietzsche calls the “English” traits are of two categories. The explanatory value of “forgetting” and “habit” express general criticisms of the attempt to find present evaluations to be unchanging through time. One can only do so, Nietzsche suggests, by bridging the gulf between present and past with the implausibly reductive argument that things have never really changed, but that out of habit we have simply forgot what would amount to the most important and basic fact of human nature.² This is a most implausible explanation, but the error is a factual one and is for that reason not pernicious.

His criticism of “utility” is of a different kind. He is of course likewise skeptical of its explanatory value, but he further suggests the shortcomings of utility as an evaluative criterion.³ Utility is a reactive measure of the value of an act or person, and to insist on its primacy is to preclude a whole domain of more spontaneously creative ways of esteeming.

Now it is plain to me, first of all, that in this theory the source of the concept “good” has been sought and established in the wrong place: the judgment “good” did *not* originate with those to whom “goodness” was shown! Rather it was “the good” themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to

¹GM I, §2.

² Nietzsche further develops this criticism briefly in GM I, §3.

³ Nietzsche’s criticism of utility as a valuational criterion extends beyond just the *Genealogy*. He frequently characterizes slave morality as utilitarian in *Beyond Good and Evil*.

create values and to coin names for values: what had they to do with utility! The viewpoint of utility is as remote and inappropriate as it possibly could be in face of such a burning eruption of the highest rank-ordering, rank-defining value judgments: for here feeling has attained the antithesis of that low degree of warmth which any calculating prudence, any calculus of utility, presupposes – and not for once only, not for an exceptional hour, but for good. The pathos of nobility and distance, as aforesaid, the protracted and domineering fundamental total feeling on the part of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order, to a “below” – *that* is the origin of the antithesis “good” and “bad.”⁴

Measurements by utility are contrasted with evaluations generated out of the pathos of distance. To evaluate according to utility is to measure the value of an action from the perspective of the recipient or object of that action. By contrast, the noble does not evaluate according to any external perspective but rather understands separation itself (that is, any concrete signification of separation) as the definitive sign of high estimation. The latter is necessarily a self-generated conception of goodness because it makes no reference to any measurement save the power to elevate. The noble distinguishes herself as powerful in the same sign by which she designates herself as “good.” Thus what is considered “bad” from this perspective is an afterthought and largely a matter of indifference.

One would expect then that some of the signs of noble esteem will be brutally crude, especially considering Nietzsche’s reminder that the primitive world was conceptually a very simple place, and that noble gestures of strength need not (and in the sufficiently distant past, likely do not) have any spiritualized or metaphoric meanings.⁵

⁴ GM I, §2.

⁵ “. . . all the concepts of ancient man were rather at first incredibly uncouth, coarse, external, narrow, straightforward, and altogether *unsymbolical* in meaning to a degree that we can scarcely conceive. The “pure one” is from the beginning merely a man who washes himself, who forbids himself certain foods that produce skin ailments, who does not sleep with the dirty women of the lower strata, who has an aversion to blood – no more, hardly more!” GM I, §6.

In a passage that emphasizes both the simplicity and violence of the noble manner of valuation, Nietzsche refers to the nobles as

. . . triumphant monsters who perhaps emerge from a disgusting procession of murder, arson, rape, and torture, exhilarated and undisturbed of soul, as if it were no more than a student's prank, convinced they have provided the poets with a lot more material for song and praise.⁶

The noble's brutality is not the only disconcerting feature of this passage; their absolute innocence is equally unsettling in the face of our every expectation. These two seemingly impossible facts of noble psychic life can be explained by the same basic feature of their evaluative mode. The noble is totally unaware of those against whom they perpetrate their violence. They relate to them only as a "below," as that from which the noble separates herself, and hence she does imagine what it would be like to stand as the object of noble violence. She cannot measure the "utility" of her act considered from another or a collective perspective. The noble poets who eulogize such brutalities are not incapable of understanding the suffering of the slave, cognitively speaking. Presumably they are capable of acknowledging that the slave suffers quite extensively, were they for some reason compelled to take up the perspective of the slave. But of course, they would understand such a perspective would to be irrelevant to the task of esteeming.

Not all consequences of the noble manner of valuations are so violent; Nietzsche suggests a broad range of gestures characteristic of the noble, who also expresses her elevation in "pity, consideration, and forbearance."⁷ This unlikely or even contradictory pairing, from the vantage point of typical moral valuations, is entirely expected if the

⁶ GM I, §11.

⁷ GM I, §10. Nietzsche echoes this thought in BGE §260, where he says ". . . the noble human being, too, helps the unfortunate, but not, or almost not, from pity, but prompted more by an urge begotten by excess of power."

signs of esteem overlap entirely with signs of power. The same reason according to which the noble is unconcerned with those from whom they are separated is the reason that the noble is ignorant of her opposite to the point that she can even romanticize them and treat them (spontaneously and sporadically) with gentle regard. Noble contempt is generated out of the tremendous excess of force by which the noble elevates herself and through which she utterly disregards slavish suffering in orgies of violence. For at the same time this great excess frees her from the resentful demand to distort “bad” into “evil.”

. . . [the noble mode of valuation] acts and grows spontaneously, it seeks its opposite only so as to affirm itself more gratefully and triumphantly – its negative concept “low,” “common,” “bad” is only a subsequently-invented pale, contrasting image in relation to its positive basic concept . . . there is indeed too much carelessness, too much taking lightly, too much looking away and impatience involved in contempt, even too much joyfulness, for it to be able to transform its object into a real caricature and monster.⁸

Both crude noble violence and genuine consideration erupt from the pathos of distance as spontaneous expressions of superiority. What is significant to the noble is not the eventual purpose of her gestures (which obviously do not have integrated purposes) but that each gesture fully communicates noble elevation in each moment. The sign of superiority is immediately whole. The slaves are the objects of the noble world upon which the latter vent their affects and shape their landscape, whether this be in fits of fury or forbearance. The gestures are present, their future significance a pale shadow of their immediate communication of force and esteem. The gestures are visible and external, referring to the simplest signs of dominion that are wholly unambiguous.

⁸ GM I, §10.

Thus far I have focused on the most primitive expressions of nobility, but Nietzsche finds that even the more spiritualized noble evaluative designations referring to truth and truthfulness are deeply continuous with the most conceptually simplistic affirmations of noble power in the crudest political, economic, or military significations. For instance, he says of the (Iranian, Slavic, and pre-Socratic Greek) nobles,

. . . in the majority of cases, they designate themselves simply by their superiority in power (as “the powerful,” “the masters,” “the commanders”) or by the most clearly visible signs of this superiority, for example, as “the rich,” “the possessors” . . . But they also do it by a *typical character trait*: and this is the case that concerns us here. They call themselves, for instance, “the truthful”; this is so above all of the Greek nobility, whose mouthpiece is the Megarian poet Theognis. The root of the word coined for this, *esthlos*, signifies one who *is*, who possesses reality, who is actual, who is true; then, with a subjective turn, the true as the truthful: in this phase of conceptual transformation it becomes a slogan and catchword of the nobility and passes over entirely into the sense of “noble,” as distinct from the *lying* common man, which is what Theognis takes him to be and how he describes him – until finally, after the decline of the nobility, the word is left to designate nobility of soul and becomes as it were ripe and sweet.⁹

What Nietzsche calls the “altogether unsymbolical” quality of ancient thinking is on full display here. In the typical instance it was the simplest material signs of ascendancy or the brute fact of one’s political prominence which were interpreted as the fundamental characteristic of the noble by which she is esteemed.

But Nietzsche is also emphasizing the simplicity even of the seemingly more spiritualized designations like “the truthful.” One should understand this term at its noble origin, he says, as a way to indicate separation in every noble gesture. To be truthful was to be distinct from the commoner, it was a way of indicating immediately the place one occupied and the space that separated one from everything below.¹⁰ The internalized

⁹ GM I, §5.

¹⁰ Nietzsche addresses the noble self-designation as “we truthful ones” in BGE §260, which is contrasted to a list of character traits that indicate subservience. “One feels contempt for . . . the suspicious with their

meanings associated with nobility of the soul, Nietzsche says, only emerge after the period of noble dominance ends. When the noble speaks of being truthful, her self-designation is no more spiritualized than those of the Romans or the early Germans, who call themselves respectively “the warrior” or “the man of godlike race.”¹¹ It is because the noble evaluates spontaneously in the same gestures by which she exercises her force, and not simply because of the violent forms such expressions frequently take, that Nietzsche conjectures that “it is the noble races that have left behind them the concept “barbarian” wherever they have gone.”¹² Whether they do so by a self-designation of “the warrior” or “the truthful” is inconsequential. The noble just as immediately recognized who was truthful and who was a lying commoner as she could recognize who was a warrior and who a coward, or with whom she shared her race, and from whom she was different.¹³

Truth was an expression of the most direct force. Nietzsche even hypothesizes that language at its origin is just an extension of the “lordly right” to express dominion, a way to “seal every thing and event with a sound and, as it were, take possession of it.”¹⁴ Whether via her self-designation as truthful, blond, powerful, rich, or warlike, the noble expresses by the same sign her force and her high value. Even the noble word is every

unfree glances, those who humble themselves, the doglike people who allow themselves to be mistreated, the begging flatterers, above all the liars: it is part of the fundamental faith of all aristocrats that the common people lie.”

¹¹ GM I, §5.

¹² GM I, §11.

¹³ Almost immediately following Nietzsche’s discussion of “the truthful” as a noble designation, he addresses various etymological links between evaluative and racially descriptive words. “The Latin *malus* (beside which I set *melas*) may designate the common man as the dark-colored, above all as the black-haired man (“*hic niger est . . .*”), as the pre-Aryan occupant of the soil of Italy who was distinguished most obviously from the blond, that is Aryan, conqueror race by his color.” GM I, §5. That this passage could seem superficially ethnocentric is one more reason to keep in mind the complexity of Nietzsche’s evaluations of both noble and slave, and his repeated emphasis on the almost laughable simplicity of noble designations of goodness when placed in our far more sophisticated valuational landscape.

¹⁴ GM I, §2.

bit as much a sign of her power as it is an evaluation. For the noble word is issued as a command; it evaluates as it describes, and describes as it evaluates.

The Noble as Natural, Affective, and Instinctual

One of the ways that Nietzsche frequently expresses the straightforward forcefulness of noble valuations is through the language of nature, affects, and instincts. I don't intend to conflate the three, and I think Nietzsche's use of the terms preserves various different senses among them. However I will argue that they all communicate an integral evaluation. Gestures that are motivated instinctually, affectively, or out of one's nature are unambiguous in their purpose and meaning. They are direct expressions of crude forms of power and hence frequently expressions of noble goodness.

In the opening section of "What is Noble" from *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes the type in the following account of the formation of early aristocracies.

Human beings whose nature was still natural, barbarians in every terrible sense of the word, men of prey who were still in possession of unbroken strength of will and lust for power, hurled themselves upon weaker, more civilized, more peaceful races, perhaps traders or cattle raisers, or upon mellow old cultures whose last vitality was even then flaring up in splendid fireworks of spirit and corruption. In the beginning, the noble caste was always the barbarian caste: their predominance did not lie mainly in physical strength but in strength of the soul – they were more *whole* human beings (which also means, at every level, "more whole beasts.")¹⁵

The primitive noble is marked by a peculiar sort of integrity. This is not the sense of integrity that has moral overtones, but rather an integrity that makes one more beastly,

¹⁵ BGE §257.

more singularly committed to one's caste and hence unaware of any universal commitments to one's neighbor or to a principle of utility. Noble nature remains united with its natural condition, here associated with the violent conquests to which Nietzsche etymologically traced the simplest noble designations of goodness. Their predominance was not in their physical strength, but a willingness to demonstrate this strength was a consequence of their attachment to the simplest signs of force and esteem, which were typically brutish in their earliest incarnations.

This word "nature" can be dangerous. It has been one of the most useful terms in the arsenal of the kind of metaphysical philosophy that Nietzsche often denounces, as it is a way to reference valuations (especially resentful and no-saying ones) under the guise of objectivity. The word has the appearance of description, but Nietzsche insists that it is a thoroughly prescriptive term. Thus Nietzsche insists that the slave-moral rejection of what he often terms the "animal" (and sometimes the beastly) aspect of human life is a way for the moral slave to cover over his own inadequacies and dissatisfactions by appearing to state facts about the world. For instance, Nietzsche insists that we read every claim that human nature is sinful as a gesture indicative of *how* one evaluates, and not *what* is. Thus in Nietzsche's use of the term we should seek an explicitly evaluative usage, one associated with an unabashed esteeming of the honest and simplistic manner of noble valuation.

Indeed Nietzsche limits his use of the term to an indication of how one evaluates, and he consistently emphasizes the integrity of noble natures as an expression of singular conceptions of the good.

Common natures consider all noble, magnanimous feelings inexpedient and therefore first of all incredible . . . Compared to them, the higher type is more *unreasonable*, for those who are noble, magnanimous, and self-sacrificial do succumb to their instincts, and when they are at their best, their reason *pauses*. An animal that protects its young at the risk of its life, or that during the mating period follows the female even into death, does not think of danger and death; its reason also pauses, because the pleasure in its young or in the female and the fear of being deprived of this pleasure dominate it totally: the animal becomes more stupid than usual – just like those who are noble and magnanimous. They have some feelings of pleasure and displeasure that are so strong that they reduce the intellect to silence or to servitude: at that point their heart displaces the head, and one speaks of “passion.” . . . The unreason or counterreason of passion is what the common type despises in the noble, especially when this passion is directed toward objects whose value seems quite fantastic and arbitrary . . . the higher type has a singular value standard.¹⁶

Here the singularity of particular goods – which at times are crudely straightforward – guarantee at least that *some* gesture is unequivocally esteemed. Even if such a sign is viewed by a “common” nature as irrational or self-destructive, the noble remains far removed from the slavish perspective of utility precisely by the unquestioned (and in many cases simplistic) commitment to definitive and visible goods.

Not every passion is associated with typically “animal” instincts. Nietzsche claims that a passion for knowledge is another singular good to which the noble nature might dedicate and sacrifice itself.¹⁷ Such dedication could only be the result of a great deal of spiritualization of the baser instincts, a process that involves the transformation of one’s nature according to a singular directive.

To “give style” to one’s character – a great and rare art! It is practiced by those who survey all the strengths and weaknesses of their nature and then fit them into an artistic plan until every one of them appears as art and reason and even weaknesses delight the eye. Here a large mass of second nature has been added; there a piece of original nature has been removed – both times through long practice and daily work at it. Here the ugly that could not be removed is

¹⁶ GS §3.

¹⁷ “One is annoyed with those who succumb to the passion of the belly, but at least one comprehends the attraction that plays the tyrant in such cases. But one cannot comprehend how anyone could risk his health and honor for the sake of a passion for knowledge.” GS §3.

concealed; there it has been reinterpreted and made sublime. Much that is vague and resisted shaping has been saved and exploited for distant views; it is meant to beckon toward the far and immeasurable. In the end, when the work is finished, it becomes evident how the constraint of a single taste governed and formed everything large and small. Whether this taste was good or bad is less important than one might suppose, if only it was a single taste! It will be the strong and domineering natures that enjoy their finest gaiety in such constraint and perfection under a law of their own . . . ¹⁸

Clearly what is natural is not timeless, immutable, or original; it is rather the product of habit and endeavor. And such endeavor, expressed as the long obedience required to create a law, is the fruit of the natural noble nature which remained whole in its singular valuation. For while the actual gestures of the primitive noble and the seeker of knowledge are in a sense opposite (from the most ruthless disciplining of *others* to rigorous self-discipline), such gestures still express a single taste, a single passion, a single instinct. Transformation of one's "natural" values is still, in the case of the domineering nature, an expression of the need for a singular valuation. The noble manner of valuation seeks gestures that affirm, and such affirmation requires visible, external, and recognizable signs that unquestionably express force and esteem. (At the conclusion of this process the domineering nature finds that it can countenance itself; others it finds ugly – I think that the visual metaphor is no accident).

Heidegger, in his *Nietzsche*, understands affects as they operate in Nietzsche's thought as that which "seizes us," which "lifts us beyond ourselves, but in such a way that, seized by our excitement, we are no longer masters of ourselves."¹⁹ I think that Heidegger's reading is an apt description of how *we* understand affects as heirs to the slave revolt in morality, but the sense that Nietzsche is developing here precedes all

¹⁸GS §290.

¹⁹ Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche, Vols. One and Two*. Trans. David Krell. Harper Collins (1991), 45-46.

questions of mastery because it precedes the slavish negation of affective valuational frames. That is, the primitive noble remains a perfectly “whole beast” precisely because she does not yet need to indicate her strength or her value in opposition to her dominant affects, instincts, or nature. Even the seeker of knowledge, interpreted as a continuous development from the ancient noble, evaluates according to a dominant passion and feels no need to distinguish herself from this passion in order to master it.

Even in the case of the stylized character the mastery over various parts of one’s nature is ultimately exerted in the name of the demand to dominate one’s nature according to some other single taste – to determine and construct a network of visible gestures that signify obedience in every act of mastery. The separation of the self from the affects, the fracture of the self from a simple domineering valuation, is a modern invention and hence not the necessary conceptual backdrop of affective terminology. To put the opposition as succinctly as possible, the noble did not seek to demonstrate self-mastery over her affects, but deployed her affects to master others or impose her form on the world.²⁰

Thus this constellation of terminology – nature, affects, passions, instincts – refers to temporary frameworks (but fixed within their temporal domain) which underpin the conceptualization, organization, and evaluation of goods. The affects, instincts, passions, and nature of a person or people are expressions that unite the various gestures that they hold in high esteem. As we will develop later in the chapter, such terms are opposed to deliberation, reason, consciousness, calculation, and utility, all of the latter standing for a negative mode of valuation that primarily rejects any visible signs of esteem. But before

²⁰ What Nietzsche says of the “instinct for freedom” in GM II, §18 applies to instincts (and affects) more generally. He contrasts the internalized application of this instinct which devalues “man himself, his whole ancient animal self” from its more primitive channels that are vented against “some *other* man, *other* men.”

turning to the counterparts of the noble, we will first develop the consequence of this noble mode of valuation.

The Noble Economy of Suffering

In this section I will develop the consequence of the concurrence of noble signs of force and esteem and of noble valuational integrity. I do so with reference to Nietzsche's discussion of the meaning of suffering. Noble affirmation of suffering from the perspectives of the one causing it, the spectator, and even the one undergoing it indicates that the noble economy of suffering – by which I mean the exchange of forces between more and less powerful bodies – produces an abundance of affirmations.

Both noble and slave, Nietzsche says, seek meaning in acts of suffering. The modern strategy, which is the inheritance of slave morality, is to treat suffering as a problem and question. The “whole mysterious machinery of salvation” is not only a Christian-theological framework, but one in which suffering poses an elusive question which requires meanings hidden in the deepest recesses of the “soul” and the most distant futures. The noble response is far simpler, and because of this simplicity almost inaccessible to our subterranean instincts for such questions. The primitive noble affirms the cruelty behind every instance of making one suffer. Most straightforwardly, she does so by adopting the perspective of the one who causes suffering, a far cry from pity for the suffering, or anxiety about the very meaning of its existence. Nietzsche writes,

. . . let me declare expressly that in the days when mankind was not yet ashamed of its cruelty, life on earth was more cheerful than it is now that pessimists exist. The darkening of the sky above mankind has deepened in step with the increase in man's feeling of shame *at man*. The weary pessimistic glance, mistrust of the riddle of life, the icy No of disgust with life – these do not characterize the most *evil* epochs of the human race: rather do they first step into the light of day as the swamp weeds they are when the swamp to which they belong comes into being – I mean the morbid softening and moralization through which the animal “man” finally learns to be ashamed of all his instincts. On his way to becoming an “angel” (to employ no uglier word) man has evolved that queasy stomach and coated tongue through which not only the joy and innocence of the animal but life itself has become repugnant to him Today, when suffering is always brought forward as the principal argument *against* existence, as the worst question mark, one does well to recall the ages in which the opposite opinion prevailed because men were unwilling to refrain from *making* suffer and saw in it an enchantment of the first order, a genuine seduction *to* life.²¹

The association of cruelty with instinct and animality is an indication that noble gestures utilize cruelty as a means to indicate the power differential necessary to all their esteeming. Such gestures require suffering, and often suffering in its most brutish manifestations, as an indication of power. While Nietzsche suggests that cruelty and suffering can be spiritualized and symbolized,²² making another suffer was a seduction to life among more primitive and naïve times because it involved the most obvious measures of esteem. He has in mind here, using war as a primary model,²³ the domineering forces by which the noble vents “his whole ancient animal self” against “some *other* man, *other* men,”²⁴ in contradistinction to any of the internalized channels through which cruelty is brought to bear on oneself. Because these gestures of making-suffer require a simplistic obliviousness to the perspective of the one undergoing the suffering, the ancient noble remains attuned to the possibility of unambiguously assigning

²¹ GM II, §7.

²² GM II, §6.

²³ Specifically, he imagines the Olympian gods observing the Trojan War in GM II, §7.

²⁴ GM II, §18.

the highest value to the most visible and accessible gestures. Such gestures are not determined by their primordial animality or any original instinct, but to the instinctual or “animal” mode of signifying force and elevation concurrently. The pathos of distance is confirmed in every suffering body, in the subjugation of the other as the expression of noble power, command, and even truth.

The ancient noble also considers the perspective of the spectator, and here finds a means to justify even those acts of suffering which they do not cause.

So as to abolish hidden, undetected, unwitnessed suffering from the world and honestly to deny it, one was in the past virtually compelled to invent gods and genii of all the heights and depths, in short something that roams even in secret, hidden places, sees even in the dark, and will not easily let an interesting painful spectacle pass unnoticed.²⁵

Even bearing witness to the suffering of another is to partake of a divine happiness. “It is certain, at any rate, that the *Greeks* still knew of no tastier spice to offer their gods to season their happiness than the pleasures of cruelty.”²⁶ This offering to the gods is a genuine gift – the noble does not merely imagine herself as the cause of the spectacles in order to partake vicariously of the joy of imposing suffering on other bodies. The noble can honestly countenance suffering by attributing to it a necessary function in the production of affirmation, whether or not they participate in this production. To affirm any particular gesture requires first of all that the gesture be recognizable, and suffering itself is made into the familiar sign by which elevation is indicated. Thus it becomes conceptually inseparable from affirmation.

²⁵ GM II, §7.

²⁶ Ibid.

Nietzsche concludes his discussion of the spectator's role given to the gods by once again emphasizing the importance of visible signs by which human beings and their actions can be understood and evaluated.

The entire mankind of antiquity is full of tender regard for "the spectator," as an essentially public, essentially visible world which cannot imagine happiness apart from spectacles and festivals. – And, as aforesaid, even in great *punishment* there is so much that is festive!²⁷

Suffering is only one of the visible features of world, but it is the feature *par excellence* in that it is the crudest sign, and for this reason so "naturally" tempting. Not because it is the inevitable expression of our "animal" instincts, but because these expressions are the easiest to read. The gestures by which suffering is communicated are the clearest overlap of external and immediate force with elevation and "goodness" in the primitive noble sense. The ancient stage world produces abundant affirmations in every display of power, which are happiness to all who see them because they are reminders that affirmations are essentially visible, and forever around us.

The festivity of making-suffer is also indicated by the affirmative surplus of every exchange of force. Nietzsche's discussion of suffering is intertwined with a genealogy of punishment, in which the act of punishing originates as a compensation of some harm to the creditor by the "most delicious morsel" that is the infliction of suffering on the debtor, an expression of power that mimics the noble gestures of concurrent force and esteem.²⁸ What is of interest to us at this point is Nietzsche's development of the perspective of the recipient of this force. Prior to the interpretation of punishment as guilt and the preclusion of the more direct signs by which force is indicated, the one against whom

²⁷ GM II, §7.

²⁸ GM II, §5.

force is vented interprets their suffering in such a way that the totality of the exchange produces an affirmative surplus. The punished sufferer thinks merely that “here something has unexpectedly gone wrong,” and accepts with “stout-hearted fatalism”²⁹ the blows of his abuser and hence the necessity of the violently affirmative noble economy of suffering. Surely the punished one doesn’t affirm things exactly as they are, in the sense that they presumably wish to change places with the punisher, but they certainly do not wish to eradicate punishing and suffering, recognizing such as the condition for expressing affirmation.

Thus the relationship of force that produces suffering is not a zero-sum exchange. Mere disappointment from the perspective of the punished one is juxtaposed to the joyous affirmation of the punisher and spectator. This feature of the noble economy of suffering does not necessitate the crude character of noble cruelty in which the exchange of force is inscribed on the physical body of the sufferer. The only essential feature here is the character of the transmission of force within the noble economy of suffering, which produces an affirmative excess in the qualitative differential between the divine and festive happiness of cruelty and the tepid disappointment of suffering (to say nothing of the quantitative differential between the whole stage world and the single victim of punishment). Though Nietzsche is very careful not to whitewash noble brutality, his foremost concern here is the noble’s capacity to say Yes, which is a consequence of their attachment of high esteem to visible and obvious signs. Thus Nietzsche ventures as a palliative to our modern reservations the assurance that “perhaps in those days . . . pain did not hurt as much as it does now.”³⁰ Such a statement is fundamentally opposed to

²⁹ GM II, §15.

³⁰ GM II, §7.

every modern moral instinct, but is indicative of the profound affirmative capacity of the noble economy of suffering.

If it seems naively ignorant (at best), or more likely callous to justify the plight of the suffering in such a way, this is because this noble perspective is indeed simplistic and self-serving. The noble “falsifies the image of that which it despises,”³¹ but Nietzsche adds that this is likely less distorting than the falsification of the noble by the hateful slave, who is willing to decry the very value of existence in order to reverse noble self-affirmation and reverse extant power structures. Before addressing the larger issue of the relative value of noble and slavish morality, for our purposes here it is sufficient to indicate that any perspective will inevitably have its shortcomings from other perspectives, and that the stakes in the case of the noble manner of valuation are not only the abundant cruelty and violence (to which we could never want, and simply never could, return) but also the now obscured path to direct affirmations through the esteeming of the most unambiguous gestures.

Furthermore, Nietzsche addresses instances in which the noble herself is the suffering party and shows that such suffering does not hinder the affirmative production of the noble economy of suffering. First, Nietzsche describes the noble capacity to forget their own suffering and enervation in a new discharge of force that returns them to their rightful elevation above those on whom they vent their power.

Ressentiment itself, if it should appear in the nobleman, consummates and exhausts itself in an immediate reaction, and therefore does not *poison*: on the other hand, it fails to appear at all on countless occasions on which it inevitably appears in the weak and impotent. To be incapable of taking one’s enemies, one’s accidents, even one’s misdeeds seriously for very long – that is the sign of strong,

³¹ GM I, §10.

full natures in whom there is an excess of the power to form, to mold, to recuperate and to forget.³²

The instances in which the noble succumbs to *ressentiment* are instances in which the noble assumes the role of the sufferer in an exchange of force. Even in these most extreme cases marked by noble pettiness and spite (*ressentiment* would not be a feature of noble vengeance if this desire to cover over one's weakness is not her motivation), the noble quickly returns to her characteristic interpretation of suffering as affirmative.

We again encounter basic noble integrity. Noble nature is full because it is wholly invested in every gesture that affirms noble force. Here Nietzsche draws a contrast with the wounded memory of the slave that drags past insults into each new present. For the latter no moment is whole and no nature (or instinct or affect) is full because every evaluation is a reaction against some perceived evil. What differentiates the noble is not that she never has such resentful experiences but rather that she is capable of rupturing their hold on successive acts of esteeming. This is a feature not just of the experiential life of the noble but of the noble economy of suffering itself. Affirmation is produced spontaneously in the immediate indication of the *pathos of distance* through the collapse of the simplest signs of force and esteem. While the crude violence of this economy is the focal point of slavish interpretations of its functioning, Nietzsche insists that such violence is additionally an indication of its regenerative production of affirmation.

As if to separate the question of noble character from the question of the structure of their economy of suffering, Nietzsche addresses cases of individual noble decline, cases which threaten this possibility of regeneration and new affirmations. He imagines

³² GM I, §10.

the nobles confronting undeniable instances of suffering out of which they can take no pleasure as spectators, and which they do not immediately forget.

. . . “how is it possible? how could it actually have happened to heads such as *we* have, we men of aristocratic descent, of the best society, happy, well-constituted, noble, and virtuous? – thus noble Greeks asked themselves for centuries in the face of every incomprehensible atrocity or wantonness with which one of their kind had polluted himself. “He must have been deluded by a *god*,” they concluded finally, shaking their heads . . . This expedient is *typical* of the Greeks . . . In this way the gods served in those days to justify man to a certain extent even in his wickedness, they served as the originators of evil – in those days they took upon themselves, not the punishment but, what is *nobler*, the guilt.³³

In contrast to the “guilt” of the gods, the noble only imagines herself as “foolish:”

. . . “foolishness,” “folly,” a little “disturbance in the head,” this much even the Greeks of the strongest, bravest age conceded of themselves as the reason for much that was bad and calamitous – foolishness, *not* sin! Do you grasp that?³⁴

Here the noble confronts suffering that she cannot forget simply by recovering her elevated place and reaffirming the pathos of distance. But such suffering, whatever its effect on the individual, does not tempt the noble to interpret suffering *qua* suffering as an argument against life. Left with no other alternatives, the noble reduces suffering to nonsense – foolishness, and not a hidden meaning contained in a sinful past or guilty soul. This at least preserves the possibility of active forgetfulness and a future affirmation. The simplest intelligibility is a necessity for this world so sympathetic to the spectator, this stage-world in which the drama of every gesture is above all else visible. Noble suffering that seems inscrutable from an earthly perspective cannot be offered as divine spectacle (recalling that such gifts are honest), but is still attributed to the gods. Only now the gods are the “guilty” party, charged with introducing forms of suffering that cannot translate to the stage, in which no affirmations can be seen. These two noble

³³ GM II, §23.

³⁴ Ibid.

mechanisms (the immediate forgetting of *ressentiment* in a new deed, and the banishment of unforgettable suffering to the realm of nonsense) for preserving the affirmative production of their economy of suffering show that it is not only callous indifference that generates this affirmative abundance.

Deleuze understands this passage to express continuity between the Christian-slavish and noble interpretation of suffering, linking the two through their common evaluation of existence as blameworthy.

When existence is posited as blameworthy only one step is needed in order to make it responsible. All that is needed is a change of sex, Eve instead of the Titans, a change in the gods, a single God, actor and lover of justice, in place of spectator-gods and “Olympian judges.” That a god takes upon himself the responsibility for the folly he inspires in men, or that men are responsible for the folly of God who puts himself on the cross; these two solutions are not very different – although the first is incomparably more beautiful. In fact the question is not: is blameworthy existence responsible or not? *But is existence blameworthy . . . or innocent?*³⁵

Deleuze differentiates both noble and slavish responses to suffering from a Dionysian affirmation of plurality and becoming, which he identifies with the perspective that Nietzsche himself is developing. I’m sympathetic to his reading, and wholly agree that Nietzsche’s work opens up the horizon for a new kind of affirmation (this will be the subject of the fourth chapter) which isn’t accessible to the noble (or of course the slave), but I also think that Deleuze understates the difference between the noble and slavish understanding of the culpability of existence.

First, Nietzsche contrasts the noble emphasis on folly with the slavish emphasis on sin. Humans are not responsible for the “folly” of God on the cross; attributing their “evil” to foolishness was a way for the noble Greek to evacuate meaning from their

³⁵ Gilles Deleuze. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Trans. Hugh Tomlinson. Columbia University Press (2001), 22.

suffering. It indicates their refusal to find guilt in their punishment even when no other meaning could be found. This is the opposite of the Christian slavish insistence that suffering has spiritualized, temporally extended meanings that are hidden beneath the mere appearance of every gesture. God on the cross is not folly but profound necessity.

The attribution of inexplicable suffering to folly has a similar function to the noble discharge of *ressentiment* in an immediate reaction. In both cases the noble confronts suffering that is not productive of affirmation, and in both cases the noble reaction to such suffering opens the possibility of future affirmations through gestures of force that will cause new sufferings. Even when the noble first reacts with bitterness and no-saying, even when the noble commits a wanton atrocity, suffering itself is preserved as a direct expression of force and hence esteem by forgetting, discharging, and reducing to foolish nonsense the offensive instances of suffering. If the noble cannot immediately forget the suffering of her peers in the reassertion of her strength, then she can at least reduce the meaning of this suffering to keep open the possibility of a future discharge and future forgetting. Thus the noble can make another suffer anew and honestly affirm their own gestures, and thus the noble economy of suffering itself is affirmative and regenerative. Each successive instance of suffering is the possibility of a new affirmative production, and this regenerative character is the foundation of the affirmative abundance of this economy. Despite the occasional misfortune which pierces noble callousness to the negative effects of suffering, suffering itself remains an enticement to life, a sign of affirmation, and an enactment of the active forgetfulness that is necessary for any affirmation.

To change God from a spectator to an actor is no small step; in the former case the gods demand visibility in all gestures, and in those gestures in which they see no affirmation they can, out of their love for the visibility of all things and for the preservation of their stage world, find no meaning whatsoever. The latter God seeks a hidden agency buried beneath the mere appearance of the deed. For such a God even the smallest gestures have the most profound meanings that extend far beneath the visible world. As we will see, this transition from the exterior meaning of a gesture to the interpretation of an agency behind it is the first conceptual transformation necessary for the ascendancy of the moral slave.

The Interior Domain of Value

In order to reverse noble value judgments, the moral slave must dissociate noble gestures of force and esteem, as they are incapable of resisting the brutish noble dominations by which the latter signify their elevation. The slavish strategy involves the construction of new domains of valuation that exceed the immediate presence of the ancient stage-world. The first such domain is interior. The moral slave constructs a site behind the gesture in which the agential subject chooses whether he will pursue his affective-instinctual valuations, or whether he will resist them. From this perspective, it is the latter choice that demonstrates genuine strength, and hence genuine goodness.

It is the moral slave who interprets every gesture to indicate not the obvious signs of force expressed in the social, political, or bodily dominations that mark the primitive nobility, but rather the strength of the subject's agency or inner self. This is both a conceptual and an evaluative move. Conceptually, gestures no longer have visible

meanings; the world is no longer a stage for ancient drama. Gestures of force and gestures of esteem are for the first time sundered. This allows the slave to devalue all of those signs by which the noble signifies her elevation. Nietzsche makes his claim using the imagery of the natural world, likening this construction of a realm of action within or behind the mere appearance of an act to the grammatical-conceptual separation of subject and object.

. . . just as the popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning, so popular morality also separates strength from expressions of strength, as if there were a neutral substratum behind the strong man, which was *free* to express strength or not to do so. But there is no such substratum; there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a deed: it posits the same event first as cause and then a second time as its effect.³⁶

Of course, the purpose of such a doubling of the deed is to apply it to make moral evaluations. Unlike the case of lightning and its flash, the former merely being a shadow of the event itself, the latter encompassing and defining the lightning, in the case of moral agency the “doer” is privileged. Noble deeds are then interpreted to indicate the culpability of the noble for failing to reign in their instincts. In this way the slave gains “the right to make the bird of prey *accountable* for being a bird of prey,” and by contrast the “weakness of the weak” is transformed into “a voluntary achievement, willed, chosen, a *deed*, a *meritorious* act.”³⁷

The moral slave, imagined here as a lamb in contrast to the noble bird of prey, can only judge their way of life meritorious if they dissociate visibility from power, the signs of strength from the measurement of this strength on the external world, the bird of prey

³⁶ GM I, §13.

³⁷ Ibid.

from bird of prey instinct. The lamb must dissociate the bird of prey's violent activity from a simple overlap with the good, and to do so they must devalue affective emphases of the simple noble valuational frames. The slave-lamb opens up a space within which force is exchanged not between two bodies in the "external" world, but among the "inner" agent and her own actions, at the point at which the "inner" is translated into the "external." To be powerful, in the moral sense, is to be efficacious in this space. Force is no longer signified in the deed but is enacted prior to it, and in this maneuver it is the "interiority" that is given priority in every sense. Ontological priority in its original exertion of force, and valuational priority as the genuine site of power. Thus the noble association between power and value has not been eradicated entirely. Rather the gestures by which noble power was signified now are turned into signs of weakness – a lack of ability to control oneself, a weak and sinful soul, faulty reason. The hunt is divided into a double act – the bird first chooses to enact its preying instincts, and then externally signifies these instincts by localizing them at a particular time and place. True force, of the kind that is to be esteemed, is exercised before the "deed" marks the "external" world. It can no longer be read on the subjugated bodies of the lambs because it has been internalized; its channels now run into the depth of the soul, and not outwardly towards the most visible signs of noble domination. The bird of prey remains master of the external world, but this mastery is now a sign of the enervation of the soul.

Nietzsche is clear that the opening of this interior space and the devaluation of the visible and instinctive-affective noble valuations are inexorably linked. In fact, it is when the instincts are inhibited from their crudest expression that the demand arises to reevaluate those gestures associated with such expressions.

All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly *turn inward* – this is what I call the *internalization* of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his “soul.” The entire inner world, originally as thin as if it were stretched between two membranes, expanded and extended itself, acquired depth, breadth, and height, in the same measure as outward discharge was *inhibited*. Those fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself against the old instinct of freedom – punishments belong among these bulwarks – brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backward *against man himself*. Hostility, cruelty, joy in persecuting, in attacking, in change, in destruction – all this turned against the possessors of such instincts: *that* is the origin of the “bad conscience.”³⁸

Nietzsche hypothesizes that the bad conscience arises among those who can no longer vent their instincts, who can no longer signify values within a fixed frame. The crudest and simplest way to vent an instinct is against another person, just as the crudest and simplest manner of signifying one’s elevation is against the body of the subjugated. Nietzsche’s historical account attributes the first such inhibitions to political restrictions, but eventually it is “man” himself who learns to evaluate in new ways. One learns to externalize the instincts and view them as a foreign power (much as Heidegger suggests we understand our affects today) against which one measures one’s strength. Outward discharge is now inhibited in the case of the slave not simply because one is too weak to exercise one’s power over another body, but because the slave’s manner of signifying value is through opposition to those gestures that have become associated with animal nature, affect, and instinct.

Since no instinct or affect provides a measure of esteem for the moral slave, as these are constantly externalized, some new manner of esteeming is needed.³⁹ Slavish esteeming is a product of reason or consciousness, Nietzsche says, and it is inevitably

³⁸ GM II, §16.

³⁹ Nietzsche still characterizes this inward cruelty as an instinctive expression, but an instinct that remains operative only insofar as it is not recognized as a valuational frame. We will develop this problem in the third chapter.

tepid in contrast with the singular and unambiguous guidance of the instincts or affects, as it is not a spontaneous and self-generated conviction but rather a consequence of a devaluation. The moral slave is good only by process of elimination. Thus Nietzsche imagines the lamb-slave to say: “These birds of prey are evil; and whoever is least like a bird of prey, but rather its opposite, a lamb – would he not be good?”⁴⁰ The moral slave has a hyperactive consciousness in order to replace the missing instinctual valuations, which precludes the possibility of rest and certainty in a particular instinct and its corresponding gestures. In an analogy comparing those early human beings who could not directly vent their instincts to sea animals that needed to adapt to land, Nietzsche writes:

Suddenly all their instincts were disvalued and “suspended.” From now on they had to walk on their feet and “bear themselves” whereas hitherto they had been born by the water: a dreadful heaviness lay upon them. They felt unable to cope with the simplest undertakings; in this new world they no longer possessed their former guides, their regulating, unconscious and infallible drives: they were reduced to thinking, inferring, reckoning, co-ordinating cause and effect, these unfortunate creatures; they were reduced to their “consciousness,” their weakest and most fallible organ!”⁴¹

Consciousness is not necessarily so weak and fallible now, after its continual development and deployment. But it remains a site of fracture, lacking the simplistic and beastly integrity of the noble. This is how Nietzsche describes Socrates in *Twilight of the Idols*. The foil to Socrates is the remnant of the Greek nobility, who still insist that “what must first be proved is worth little,” who adhere to the idea that gestures of force and esteem must wholly overlap. By contrast, Socrates is a decadent. He experience “wantonness and anarchy of his instincts;” he demands “rationality at any price,” his

⁴⁰ GM I, §13.

⁴¹ GM II, §16.

evaluations being made “without instinct, in opposition to the instincts.”⁴² Socrates’ instincts are either too weak or too fractured to be associated with any unambiguous affirmations, and so despite his dialectic victories Nietzsche suggests that he finds no clear measure of value by which he can affirm even his own oppositional triumphs. Thus Nietzsche ends the section with his own conjecture as to Socrates’ last words, in which he imagines the latter to admit his grave illness and inability to cure it in a final soliloquy: “‘Socrates is no physician,’ he said softly to himself; ‘here death alone is the physician. Socrates himself has merely been sick a long time.’”⁴³ No new valuational frame has been created; the bad conscience is unresolved. Socrates sunders the noble unity of force and esteem, and with it devalues noble gestures. But without replacement affirmations and gestures Socrates cannot find new affirmations even in his victory. The economy of suffering within which Socrates operates cannot produce regenerative affirmation.

Thus there are two functions that define the interior valuational site, which is a conceptual necessity for the dissociation of gestures of force and esteem. First, it is reactive against noble gestures and the noble manner of valuation. This results in the interpretation of signs of noble dominance as signs of a weak moral agency and the interpretation of instincts and affects as external temptations that threaten the efficacy of this agency. Second, this site opens the horizon to a new wealth of meanings that can be attached to any gesture. This is the positive and creative component of the slave revolt in morality. The domain of the soul will be the site of the most profound and spiritualized esteeming – thus it is only with the priests that “man first became *an interesting*

⁴² TI, “The Problem of Socrates.”

⁴³ Ibid.

animal.”⁴⁴ But as we will see, no matter how sophisticated slave morality becomes, the profundity and creativity of all slavish valuations will remain tied to their negative origin. To the moral slave, the progress of the spirit begins with the devaluation of noble gestures.

The Temporal Domain of Value

The second valuational site constructed by the moral slave is temporal. The slave interprets the future as a privileged site in which the genuine values of present signs will be revealed. The future meanings of a gesture take precedence over its present significance, and the future meanings of noble gestures have the opposite significance that they appear to have in the present. Thus noble dominations are interpreted as signs of future damnation, which is the promised confirmation of slavish strength and worthiness of soul.

The first glimpse of the future as a privileged valuational site is in the section immediately following Nietzsche’s development of the interior domain of valuation. Here Nietzsche imagines a workshop of ideals in which the moral slave reinterprets her weaknesses into merits.

The manufacture of slavish ideals requires an agency that can be exercised without any visible consequences of the sort that indicate noble forcefulness. But the promised confirmation of such hidden agency requires a temporalization of value. Esteem is no longer the product of every gesture, and as it loses this visibility it also loses

⁴⁴ GM I, §6.

its presence. Thus the slave's elevation is promised in the future. The impotence of the slave that once seemed so amply indicated by their subjugation is now interpreted as a test. Their incapacity for any noble gesture is the very condition of their future place at the side of God. Nietzsche's commentary is placed in the mouth of an imaginary interlocutor who peers into the subterranean depths of this workshop, and of the slaves he says:

“They are miserable, no doubt of it, all these mutterers and nook counterfeiters, although they crouch warmly together – but they tell me their misery is a sign of being chosen by God; one beats the dogs one likes best; perhaps this misery is also a preparation, a testing, a schooling, perhaps it is even more – something that will one day be made good and recompensed with interest, with huge payments of gold, no! of happiness . . . Now they give me to understand that they are not merely better than the mighty, the lords of the earth whose spittle they have to lick . . . they are not merely better but are also “better off,” or at least will be better off someday.”⁴⁵

There are two noteworthy features of the slavish conception of the future. First, it is the privileged site that confirms the meaning of the past and present. Understanding suffering as a test and a preparation, the future is the culmination of this suffering insofar as it is the confirmation of its value. Second, it is a site in which all of the esteem and forcefulness associated with noble gestures, as well as the lack thereof in slavish gestures, is reversed. In light of their future consequences, noble gestures come to signify enervation of the soul; slavish gestures on the other hand are reinterpreted to indicate a meritorious display of inner force, all of which is justified by this promised future confirmation. Thus the slave's high esteem of the future is a direct consequence of the devaluation of the present. Only as tribulation can the present function as a test; only through the crudest subjugation to the lords of the earth can the moral slave demonstrate

⁴⁵ GM I, §14.

his worthiness for this future by the demonstration of his interior agency and the rejection of everything earthly, instinctual, and visible.

Nietzsche develops a passage from Tertullian as confirmation of this valuational privileging of the future and the belief that it will reverse the significance of all present gestures.⁴⁶ Tertullian is “adjuring his Christians to avoid the cruel pleasures of the public games”⁴⁷ by appealing to the far greater spectacle of the suffering of the damned that awaits the faithful Christian, which he describes in gruesome detail. Such a spectacle, according to Tertullian, will confirm that the Christian is indeed better off now because the Christian will be better off in the future and was hence better off all along. For the noble was always mistaken in thinking that her crude and visible gestures were genuine signs of force and esteem and not merely deceitful appearances. Goodness and power are not visible to the spectator; no victory in the public games can reveal the power of the moral soul. Tertullian’s conception of a new temporal site of valuation is in contrast to the noble response to *ressentiment*, which is both wholly visible and wholly present.

Tertullian rejects not only specific noble gestures, but also the noble economy of suffering itself in its incapacity to accommodate the moral slave. The perpetual discharge of *ressentiment* in the affirmative production of the economy of suffering is replaced by a displacement of all value to the future. Tertullian is not simply promising a reward – he is claiming that the present is evacuated of all value, that the evil rule the earth and enjoy its glory, but that in the future all such wrongs will be set right. This instance here is a fairly simple displacement through which everything lacking in the present is simply

⁴⁶ This passage is of interest to Nietzsche for multiple reasons, and we will return to it in the third chapter. Besides demonstrating the slavish evaluation of the future, Nietzsche also suggests that Tertullian is far too crude and violent by contemporary moral standards.

⁴⁷ GM I, §15. In what follows I summarize Tertullian’s recommendations. I will return to this passage and cite it in detail in the third chapter.

imagined at a future time, in a similar (though more extreme) form. More spiritualized instances of the same movement will be the topic of the next chapter. For now I emphasize only that Tertullian's admonitions indicate the denial of any value to the present exchange of force; there is no affirmative abundance here, but a primary No to the deceitful spectacle of the public games. Deceitful in their superficial display of force, for any participation in the exchange of suffering (being a spectator at the games, witnessing or enacting violent force against another body) is in fact a sign of one's eternal impotence. The signification of noble force is again a signification of weakness, expressed along a temporally broader domain. And since earthly strength now merely signifies one's future impotence before the vengeful hand of God, the public games are deceitful in another sense as well. Their seeming value – the enjoyment of the spectacle of cruelty – turns out instead to be a guarantee of suffering and a condemnation of suffering itself. The damned will in the future occupy a position in a new economy of suffering in which the affirmative discharge of pain, and thus the affirmative production of the noble economy, is precluded. Thus the moral slave thinks that visible gestures lie. Such gestures merely show apparent force and apparent value, but in truth signify their opposite.

By contrast the production of affirmative abundance in the noble economy of suffering necessitates its signifiatory poverty. Because of the saturation of affirmation in every moment, the noble has no need to emphasize the value of the future. Hence the importance of discharging *ressentiment* in immediate reactions and attributing the deepest suffering to inscrutable folly inspired by the gods. Such noble strategies regenerate the present affirmations attached to suffering. The moral slave has a wholly opposite

relationship to time. Their future is a site of the reversal of all present evaluations, which includes the evaluation that the present itself is devoid of all value. This however allows for the interpretation of manifold new meanings into present gestures, which now can contain the hidden seeds of the most the distant future evils. And like the interior domain of value, this ultimately functions to drain all value from the most visible noble gestures. Both future and soul are originally valued only in contrast to the visibility of the present and external.

The Slavish Economy of Suffering

Beginning in this section, and extending through the next chapter, I will discuss the consequences of the constitutive difference of the slavish manner of valuation. Whereas the simple noble gestures of concurrent force and esteem produced an abundance of affirmation in every instance of suffering, the slavish economy of suffering produces signficatory abundance. The slave interprets an increasing proliferation of meanings into every exchange of force, meanings that extend deeper beneath the visible exteriority of noble gestures, and further into the future. The noble economy of suffering produces an abundant proliferation of affirmations. The slavish economy produces an abundance of new signs.

With the emergence of the moral slave, gestures are imputed with rich meanings that far exceed the crude and obvious interpretations assigned by the noble. By sundering signs of force from those of esteem, the moral slave opens new domains of valuation inaccessible to the noble. The slave displaces the value of an act of suffering into the

future or into the interiority of the agential subject by the twofold process of measuring its consequence within these sites, and by evacuating all possibility of signifying force or esteem from the external or present meanings of all gestures. This displacement at first entails a simple reversal. Thus Nietzsche frequently says that those gestures which the noble esteemed are now devalued. But this is hardly the only transition that marks the slave revolt in morality. In fact, it is not even the most important. For the real creative genius of the moral slave begins with the transformation of “bad” into “evil.” The meaning of suffering is magnified in the sense that the gestures which cause suffering are taken to indicate not merely some immediate value, but a value that stretches across times, into the hidden natures behind the act, and through the entirety of the relationships of force that constitute all becoming, such that suffering is interpreted by the moral slave as a condemnation of life itself.

What is bad can be ignored; this was the primary attitude of the noble in dealing with the slave. But evil must be extirpated. Indeed it is this opposition that drives all slavish valuations, since they lack the visibility and affectivity that spontaneously generates noble estimations. In order for the slave to evaluate in his negative manner, some other value must always be opposed. Furthermore, the proof of the slave’s (moral) power increases with the increased vigor of this threat. The closer the slave wants to move toward the presence of God, the more he must find the devil in his breast. Not only is the threat of affective disruption of the slave’s interior agency necessary; this threat must be found lurking in more and more gestures so that the slave can demonstrate his power anew. And so too must the slave find new oppositions in every present, dependent as he is on a future in which the reversal of all extant dominations are to be reversed.

Thus the chasm between present and future, and gesture and interiority, grows ever wider. And in this opening abyss greater evils take root and deeper meanings – which attach to the most distant times and the most hidden recesses of the soul – are continually produced. Thus Nietzsche says that the final consequence of the slavish economy of suffering is to find evil that is rooted so deeply in the sinner that it extends across an infinite future. Speaking of “the moralization of the concepts guilt and duty,” which requires the interpretation of suffering as a just consequence of the guilty soul, Nietzsche says:

[T]he *aim* now is to preclude pessimistically, once and for all, the prospect of a final discharge; the *aim* now is to make the glance recoil disconsolately from an iron impossibility; the *aim* now is to turn back the concepts “guilt” and “duty” – back against whom? There can be no doubt: against the “debtor” first of all, in whom from now on the bad conscience is firmly rooted, eating into him and spreading within him like a polyp, until at last the irredeemable debt gives rise to a conception of irredeemable penance, the idea that it cannot be discharged (“*eternal punishment*”).⁴⁸

The next chapter will continue this investigation into the slavish economy of suffering by addressing the mutual referencing of these two new domains of valuation. That is, I will develop the ways in which the subject becomes temporalized and what this means with regard to the production of the slavish economy of suffering. But at this juncture at the close of the first chapter I want to note only that the significance of suffering has been magnified tremendously once the moral slave invents vast domains in which the small and simple valuations of the noble cannot begin to fill. The consequence of the slave revolt in morality is this proliferation of signs.

⁴⁸ GM II, §21.

CHAPTER TWO

SLAVE MORALITY AS WILL TO TRUTH

The first chapter introduced the two new valuational sites invented by the moral slave, namely the interior space of the soul and the temporal domain of the future. This chapter will analyze the relationship between the two, and I will argue that the force of the slavish manner of valuation is constituted in the mutual referencing of these two domains of valuation to one another. I will argue that the concept of will to truth expresses this relationship, and that the overcoming force of slave morality is constituted by the integrated forcefulness of this will.

I will begin by analyzing Nietzsche's assessment of the relationship between guilt, debt, and the bad conscience. The interpretation of the bad conscience as guilt is a feature peculiar to the moral slave's conception of debt, and I will argue that this difference is generated by the concurrent interiorization and temporalization of valuations. That is, the signficatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering produces guilt as a past deficiency that cannot be reconciled in the present or future only when the two domains of new moral signs mutually reference one another. The interior site of the soul becomes temporally extended, and the future becomes the validation of the promises of the soul. It is only in this specific relationship of these two domains through which the meanings ascribed to noble gestures are exceeded. This will be the topic of the section "The Bad Conscience and the Relationship between Debt and Guilt."

I will continue to develop the importance of this mutual referencing of the interior and temporal domains by contrasting Nietzsche's account of the bad conscience with the figures of the sovereign individual (from the *Genealogy*) and of the evangel (from the *Antichrist*). I will argue that in each instance only one of the two new valuational domains is fully cultivated, and in each case the product is very different from that of slave morality. In the former, the sovereign individual develops the temporal extension of valuations, but not their interior domain. With regard to the latter, Nietzsche portrays Jesus as one who is immediately affirmative of a hidden interior domain, but that it is only his Christian followers who temporalize his message. In each case we are provided with a missing link in the noble-slave taxonomy, and the difference of the sovereign individual and the evangel demonstrate the incapacity of either valuational domain, in isolation, to produce the movement of slave morality. These topics will be the focus of the sections titled "The Sovereign Individual as Temporalized Exteriority" and "The Evangel as Immediate Interiority" respectively.

Next, I will return to the *Genealogy* and address the methods by which the ascetic priest produces guilt through the mutual referencing of the interior and the temporal domains in order to magnify slave-moral power. I will develop a reading of such methods as the vehicles through which slave moral power is integrated in a projection towards a future in which all present valuations will be reversed. I will argue that this resentful relation to the present and this integrating forcefulness towards the future are the definitive qualities of slave morality which allow its force to continually grow by constantly finding new gestures to devalue. This will be addressed in the section "The Cultivation of *Ressentiment* by the Ascetic Priest."

Finally, I will interpret Nietzsche's argument that scientific practices are extensions (and not opponents) of the ascetic ideal. In doing so I will apply the reading I have developed of the incorporative power of slave morality to this concrete case in order to claim that these practices are but expressions of the same force generated in the relationship between interior and futural domains of valuation. This appropriative power to incorporate even the ostensive opposite of the most notable expression of slave morality (insofar as scientific practices are considered to be opposed to Christian dogmatism) demonstrates the full flowering of slave moral force. What unites such supposed opposites Nietzsche calls the will to truth. This section, entitled "Masks of the Will to Truth," offers a preliminary sketch of this will that leads to its full elaboration in the next chapter.

The Bad Conscience and the Relationship between Debt and Guilt

The purpose of this first section is to develop a preliminary characterization of the bad conscience based on the latter sections of the *Genealogy's* second essay. Nietzsche's analysis assesses the crucial transition to the modes of interpretation that associate the bad conscience with guilt. The purpose for this section will be to emphasize the role of the temporalization of the interior space of the soul in this production of guilt.

Nietzsche claims that the bad conscience is the result of the crudest external events. It begins with the "state," that is, with the domination of one population over another, with the imposition of forms of life from one political body (again in the crudest of manifestations) on another. The members of the subjugated body then find themselves

incapable of exercising their instincts (i.e. expressing their valuations) in the most obvious and readable ways that characterize noble violence. The subjugated body then turns its force against “his whole ancient animal self – and *not*, as in that greater and more obvious phenomenon, some *other* man, *other* men.”⁴⁹ Nietzsche’s name for this force is the “instinct for freedom.”⁵⁰ Because the obvious and readable manifestations that are the expressions of the conqueror are prohibited to the conquered, the subjugated can only unleash the instinct for freedom against this very instinct itself:

This *instinct for freedom* forcibly made latent – we have seen it already – this instinct for freedom pushed back and repressed, incarcerated within and finally able to discharge and vent itself only on itself: that, and that alone, is what the *bad conscience* is in its beginnings.⁵¹

In Nietzsche’s language, a single instinct has multiple forms. In this case, the earlier forms are closely associated with a signficatory mode that is crude, violent, and external.⁵² The later forms are subtle, subterranean, and internalized. But it is important to realize that from the perspective of those about whom Nietzsche speaks there is no recognition of any degree of unity among the expressions of the victorious and the defeated. It is constitutive of the freedom of the earliest sufferers of the bad conscience that they conceptualize the externalization of their animal self as a choice, just as the lamb necessarily interpreted its inability to prey on others as a free choice made in interior space between moral agency and external world. The bad conscience, in its beginnings, involved the damming of the most typical channels through which the force

⁴⁹ GM II, §18.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche here actually gives this force a dual characterization – he refers to it as the “instinct for freedom,” which he says is “in my language: the will to power.” I will develop this further in the fourth chapter on will to power.

⁵¹ GM II, §17.

⁵² Nietzsche says that those in whom the instinct for freedom has been forcibly made latent are those who are incapable of discharging it in the “visible world.” GM §II, 17.

of the instinct for freedom had heretofore been communicated. Everything that indicated the old instinct for freedom was forcibly devalued. Those afflicted by the bad conscience in its earliest stages therefore did not view a single instinct with multiple forms, but two wholly distinct manners of valuation, one instinctual and one free. According to the early moral slave, only the noble acts instinctually.

The instinct for freedom names a way of designating which gestures signify goodness and which gestures are to be devalued. In its subtle and subterranean manifestations, valuational force is “directed backward” in the development of “negative ideals” expressed as “critique,” as “contradiction,” as “No,”⁵³ With regard to our task of determining the role of the temporalization of the interior site of valuation in the interpretation of the bad conscience as guilt, we now ask how such negative ideals are produced. What does the latent instinct for freedom deny?

The Primeval Relation

Nietzsche sketches a tripartite history of the relationship between the bad conscience, indebtedness, and guilt, and assigns the possibility of the latter to only the third of these stages, which is characterized by the dominance of the moral slave. The preceding two stages remain of interest due to the particular gestures through which value is assigned and demonstrated and for the limitations such methods place on the temporalization of value.

In the first, characterized by Nietzsche as the “primeval” and “prehistorical” stage, the relationship between a community and its progenitors is marked by fear. At

⁵³ GM II, §18.

least, this is the case for the strong communities. Fear accompanies strength and diminishes with weakness because indebtedness is only produced in such “rude and ‘poor-souled’ ages” when some obvious benefit requires repayment.

The *fear* of the ancestor and his power, the consciousness of indebtedness to him, increases, according to this kind of logic, in exactly the same measure as the power of the tribe itself increases, as the tribe itself grows ever more victorious, independent, honored, and feared. By no means the other way round! Every step toward the decline of a tribe, every misfortune, every sign of degeneration, of coming disintegration always *diminishes* fear of the spirit of its founder and produces a meaner impression of his cunning, foresight, and present power.⁵⁴

Victory over one’s neighbors and the imposition of terror on others are the simple gestures which are valued at this point of the development. There can be no bad conscience as yet; the bad conscience originates only in subjugated peoples who can no longer express their valuations by venting their affects outwardly. These “prehistorical” peoples however can only incur debt by displays of strength. Hence the present power of the ancestor (displayed in the most obvious signs) is the only determining factor of the depth of one’s debt. Debt is a mark of a relation between past and present in which the present is privileged insofar as the meaning of the past is contingent only on the present success of a tribe. The past, on the other hand, is constantly reinterpreted in light of the power of the current community and its capacity for victory and dominion over its neighbors. The past is constantly accessible and malleable, always determined by the crudest of present gestures. Because the value of the past deeds of the ancestor are in this necessary relation with the current power of the tribe, which is to say that primitive debt can always be diminished in single moment of defeat, primitive debt is fully dischargeable and cannot provide fertile ground for the development of guilt.

⁵⁴ GM II, §19.

The Noble Relation

The intermediate period – that of the noble – is characterized with a similar insistence on the privileging of present meanings. Instead of associating the diminishment of debt with weakness, the noble is capable of paying back her debt especially in times of victory. Nietzsche articulates this difference as the transition from relations to the creditor-ancestor characterized by fear to those characterized by piety. Such piety is indicative of self-respect – the Greek gods are “reflections” of the noble.

What is it that the noble affirms through her own gestures that mirror those of her gods? Through which gestures does the noble discharge debt via the displays of her abundant strength? In the Greek gods “*the animal* in man felt deified and did *not* lacerate itself, did *not* rage against itself!”⁵⁵ Through the direct expression of these “ineluctable animal instincts,” the noble says Yes to “sense, instinct, nature, animal, in short all ideals hitherto,”⁵⁶ or in other words all those gestures in which displays of force overlap with signs of esteem.

There is resonance here with a claim I developed in the previous chapter, namely that the noble precludes the bad conscience by casting all gestures that compromise the affirmative production of the noble economy of suffering out of the signifiatory network altogether. For the noble, the sense of any gestures is either its present affirmative production, or else it has no meaning at all. Within the noble economy of suffering the bad conscience cannot arise, and the interpretation of debt as guilt is inconceivable, because the present is the sole locus of the significance of every gesture.

⁵⁵ GM II, §23. This passage is also one of numerous examples of the prevalence of negatively formulated valuational claims when one is contending with a dominant mode of valuation. This is a problem that will be explicitly engaged in the third and fourth chapters.

⁵⁶ GM II, §24.

Everything said of the prehistoric age regarding the temporal isolation of debt in the present is true of the noble, and in this latter case the reflective quality of the Greek gods allows for the full affirmative repayment of debts in every successive present. Because the noble can only incur debt by the very same gestures by which they repay it, the noble is entirely incapable of guilt.

The Slavish Relation

Lastly, we reach the moral slave, for whom the case is in every way opposite. This can be expressed by the formulation that the gestures through which slavish valuations are expressed necessarily magnify debt. The consequence is that debt can never be repaid either through displays of strength (as per the noble) or weakness (as per the primitive community). Or, no present signs are ever sufficient to diminish indebtedness. Regarding the association of the bad conscience with guilt, we return to an earlier citation, here expanded to reveal the relationship of the slavish conception of the future with the past. Nietzsche writes:

The *aim* now is to preclude pessimistically, once and for all, the prospect of a final discharge; the *aim* now is to make the glance recoil disconsolately from an iron impossibility; the *aim* now is to turn back the concepts “guilt” and “duty” – back against whom? There can be no doubt: against the “debtor” first of all, in whom from now on the bad conscience is firmly rooted, eating into him and spreading within him like a polyp, until at last the irredeemable debt gives rise to the conception of irredeemable penance, the idea that it cannot be discharged (“*eternal* punishment”). Finally, however, they are turned back against the “creditor,” too: whether we think of the *causa prima* of man, the beginning of the human race, its primal ancestor who is from now on burdened with a curse (“Adam,” “original sin,” “unfreedom of the will”), or of nature from whose womb mankind arose and into whom the principle of evil is projected from now on (“the diabolizing of nature”), or of existence in general, which is now considered *worthless as such . . .*⁵⁷

⁵⁷ GM II, §21.

Slavish gestures are incapable of discharging debt not simply because they are impotent and restrained from crude outward expression, but because their meanings have been magnified as a response to this impotence. In the first chapter we saw that the moral slave creates two new sites of valuation, and here we find a temporal expression of the consequences of the interiorization of slavish guilt. Because the simple external (the animal, instinctual, sensual, rude and poor-souled) signs are devalued by an oppositional interpretation that renders them as signs of the enervation of the interior moral space of the agent, the slavish economy of suffering is incapable of producing such simple affirmation. The precondition for the slavish reversal of noble valuations is that the slave must always interpret the seemingly straightforward and visible displays of noble strength to mean very much more. Because of the signifiatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering, debt can no longer be discharged by the kind of affirmation (or even, in the case of the prehistoric stage, enervation) that is signified externally, immediately, and presently.

As a consequence, slavish debt is increased through the same conceptual step through which “bad” is magnified into “evil.” The moral weakness of the interior space of the soul opens a valuational depth far more profound than anything the noble could imagine. Here this is expressed as the devaluation of the primal ancestor, who has become responsible for the worthlessness of existence as such. The consequence of this guilty debt, expressed futurally, is that it can never be discharged (“eternal punishment”). The interiorization of value, through which noble signs are reinterpreted and erupt into an abundance of new meanings, motivates the overflow of this signifiatory force into new temporal domains. Crude gestures of strength privilege the present, but subtle slavish

gestures magnify the significance of past and future events by temporalizing the interior valuational site.

I will continue to develop this relationship by analyzing Nietzsche's characterization of the ascetic priest. But first, I turn to two figures in Nietzsche's work that demonstrate the impossibility of guilt when only one of these two valuational domains is cultivated. And as we will see, neither such figure is capable of perpetuating the great force of slave morality.

The Sovereign Individual as Temporalized Exteriority

We meet the sovereign individual in the context of a genealogy of memory. Nietzsche's claim is that memory is a highly developed capacity. True to his admonishments against backwards history, he insists that we must ask how this ability has been developed, and cannot simply suppose that its present form extends to the distant past. Nietzsche formulates his question thusly:

How can one create a memory for the human animal? How can one impress something upon this partly obtuse, partly flighty mind, attuned only to the passing moment, in such a way that it will stay there?⁵⁸

He answers that pain is the most powerful mnemonic aid, and that the imposition of the severest injuries was necessary to impress the demand to remember on those who did not have the long history of the cultivation of memory behind them:

The worse man's memory has been, the more fearful has been the appearance of his custom; the severity of the penal code provides an especially significant measure of the degree of the effort needed to overcome forgetfulness and to

⁵⁸ GM II, §3.

impose a few primitive demands of social existence as *present realities* upon these slaves of momentary affect and desire.⁵⁹

The result of these severe penal codes (Nietzsche's list includes the crudest of examples – stoning, breaking on the wheel, boiling alive) is that one learns the advantages of consistency and begins to weigh the satisfaction of a fleeting affect or desire with the threatened pain consequent upon breach of communal custom. According to Nietzsche this amounts to the capacity to make a promise.

With the aid of such images and procedures [Nietzsche here is referring to the punishments above] one finally remembers five or six “I will not’s,” in regard to which one had given one’s *promise* so as to participate in the advantages of society – and it was indeed with the aid of this kind of memory that one at last came “to reason”! Ah, reason, seriousness, mastery over the affects, the whole somber thing called reflection, all these prerogatives and showpieces of man: how dearly they have been bought!⁶⁰

One learns to promise by repeated deliberate comparisons of the worth of one’s affects and desires with the pain of punishment. “Reason” is born of the ability to sustain one’s will over time, measured as resistance to the intrusion of merely temporary affects, such that what was promised in the past holds into the future despite the impediments of distracting desires or the obstacles of fate. One masters one’s affects, and in so doing one masters the affective valuational frames that clearly define immediate but fleeting goods. This mastery is accomplished by their disruption, by the conscious recognition of these frames as temporary and by their replacement with different “present realities” that in fact reach deep into the past (to the origin of one’s promise) and into the future (where the consequent pain of breaking a promise looms). The sovereign individual is Nietzsche’s name for the one who most fully executes this mastery, of whom he says:

⁵⁹ GM II, §3.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

The proud awareness of the extraordinary privilege of *responsibility*, the consciousness of this rare freedom, this power over oneself and over fate, has in his case penetrated to the profoundest depths and become instinct, the dominating instinct. What will he call this dominating instinct, supposing he feels the need to give it a name? The answer is beyond doubt: this sovereign man calls it his *conscience*.⁶¹

The would-be transgressor learns, through a long and violent process, to externalize his affects and to envision himself as a temporally consistent being. He is defined by his consistent resistance to any affect that would disrupt the freedom which he expresses by his temporal continuity – the consistency of perpetual resistance to momentary affective-valuational frames. The sovereign individual’s valuations are temporalized, and his present gestures reference the past and future. But unlike the moral slave, the sovereign individual retains clear and obvious gestures (those gestures by which he fulfills his promise) by which he can esteem himself and others. Thus Nietzsche describes the sovereign individual as one who resists the momentary intrusions of the sort associated with instinct, but in the name of another dominating instinct. Indeed the outcome of the sovereign individual’s temporal consistency is the association of the most external gestures with high esteem.

The “free” man, the possessor of a protracted and unbreakable will, also possesses his *measure of value*: looking out upon others from himself, he honors or he despises; and just as he is bound to honor his peers, the strong and reliable (those with the *right* to make promises) . . . he is bound to reserve a kick for the feeble windbags who promise without the right to do so, and a rod for the liar who breaks his word even at the moment he utters it.⁶²

⁶¹ GM II, §2.

⁶² GM II, §2.

I do not think that Nietzsche selected such violent responses to the liar by accident. The eye of the sovereign individual, so attuned to advantages of one affect over another, does not make the slavish distinction between the interior and exterior valuational domains. All valuations remain visible. Regardless of whatever other purposes the sketch of the sovereign individual serves (and it is indeed an impressive account of how the crudest origins can produce worthy fruit), it also shows that the temporal valuational site alone is not nearly enough to produce the moral slave.

The Evangel as Immediate Interiority

Nietzsche's characterization of Jesus in *The Antichrist* draws relatively little attention in comparison to many other of his portrayals of peoples and individuals. The historical foundation for Nietzsche's interpretation is never brought to the foreground of the text, and this makes it easy enough to dismiss as speculative history. However, much can be learned about Nietzsche's conception of the moral slave through the contrast that he carefully crafts between the person of Jesus and his later followers. This contrast is expressed in temporal terms – the difference between Jesus and his (moral-slave) followers is that he doesn't emphasize any of the future consequences of his teachings. Despite the fact that Jesus does devalue any gesture that is expressed externally, it is only the later Christians who proliferate the meanings of signs in the manner necessary to the victory of the moral slave. Jesus alone, Nietzsche says, was no threat to the noble. And he is no threat because he cannot produce guilt by referencing the interior and temporal domains of valuation to one another.

Nietzsche characterizes Jesus as the evangel. He is not Christ the anointed, distinguished, and elevated, but rather the bringer of the glad tidings, the content of which is thoroughly egalitarian. Indeed the lack of distinction and selection in this message is essential to Nietzsche's portrait.

Just the opposite of all wrestling, of all feeling-oneself-in-a-struggle, has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance becomes morality here ("resist not evil" – the most profound word of the Gospels, their key in a certain sense), blessedness in peace, in gentleness, in not *being able* to be an enemy. What are the "glad tidings?" True life, eternal life, has been found – it is not promised, it is here, it is *in you*: as a living in love, in love without subtraction and exclusion, without regard for station. Everyone is the child of God – Jesus definitely presumes nothing for himself alone – and as a child of God everyone is equal to everyone.⁶³

The leveling of all distinction is the result of the interiorization of value. The meaning of the glad tidings is the presence of God in the heart, and this presence is a sign of the indiscriminate quality of God's love, no matter the degree of inequality the crude noble signs of value suggest.

Blessedness is a living in love, but this love is characterized by the absence of exclusion. This could be stated as the universal affirmative "all are loved by God," but also as its obversion that "none are unloved." The ambivalence of these two formulations is typical of Nietzsche's analysis of the evangel. Like the slave, there is something subterranean and negative in the evangel's valuations insofar as he denies the significance of all external affirmations, but like the noble he focuses on present affirmations rather than devaluations. Nietzsche tells us that, much like the noble, he simply doesn't pay much attention to competing valuations at all. This is evident in Nietzsche's characterization of the evangel's valuational emphasis on interiority:

⁶³AC §29 .

[The evangel] speaks only of the innermost: “life” or “truth” or “light” is his word for the innermost – all the rest, the whole of reality, the whole of nature, language itself, has for him only the value of a sign, a simile. Make no mistake at this point, however seductive the Christian, in other words, the *ecclesiastical*, prejudice may be: such a symbolist par excellence stands outside all religion, all cult concepts, all history, all natural science, all experience of the world, all knowledge, all politics, all psychology, all books, all art – his “knowledge” is *pure foolishness* precisely concerning the fact that such things exist. *Culture* is not known to him even by hearsay, he does not need to fight it – he does not negate it. The same applies to the state, to the whole civic order and society, to work, to war – he never had any reason to negate “the world”; the ecclesiastical concept of “world” never occurred to him.⁶⁴

The significance of history, science, art, experience and the rest are reduced to nothing. The signifiatory force of these externals is, as is with the case with the moral slave, separated from the obvious displays of one’s power. However, the evangelical interpretation does not reverse their meanings (which first requires the expansion of their meanings in time). The hidden and opposite significance that the slave seeks in every noble sign is simply reduced by the evangel to foolishness, just as the noble Greeks cast out those externalities which were inexplicable to their immediate affirmations. Yet going far further, the evangel diminishes all such external signs. The evangel’s incapacity for negation results in the systematic depreciation of externalities – no sign is the vehicle for valuations. The negation of the ecclesiastical concept “world” – as the aggregate of all crude signs of power relations that determine the noble economy of suffering – is never motivated because these signs are never interpreted as indicative of goodness (or any kind of value judgment) in the first place.

The evangelical incapacity for the negation characteristic of the slave can in turn be explained as a consequence of different temporal valuations. Only for the moral slave is the future a site which reveals the significance of present gestures. For the evangel, the

⁶⁴ AC §32.

meaning of the glad tidings is fully contained in the present. Consider Nietzsche's description of the evangelical faith.

Such a faith is not angry, does not reproach, does not resist: it does not bring "the sword" – it simply does not foresee how it might one day separate. It does not prove itself either by miracle or by reward and promise, least of all "by scripture": at every moment it is its own miracle, its own reward, its own proof, its own "kingdom of God."⁶⁵

The evangel does not envision a future in which slave-moral interpretations are validated, for the evangel's future (the continued presence of the glad tidings) is, as with the noble, simply a perpetuation of the present valuational mode. The future contains the same gestures of the present, extended indefinitely. The evangel does not demand revolution because he cannot countenance a lack in the present which would require the future to compensate for what cannot be affirmed immediately. "The sword," and likewise God as the hangman who punishes eternally, are inconceivable without a rich interpretation of noble signs by which their meanings are expanded and reversed. And such signficatory abundance is not possible without the dual valuational domains of the interior and the future.

Nietzsche is clear that the Christian followers of the evangel reference this interior domain to the temporal one. These followers felt their master's death to be "disgraceful;" they reacted with "profoundly upset and insulted feelings."⁶⁶ Such an evaluation of the meaning of Jesus' death (which for the evangel, Nietzsche says, had no bearing on the glad tidings) demonstrates that the force of crude noble-external gestures deeply affected them. The evangel was not disgraced or upset, because he did not perceive the display of force imposed on his body as a threat. Those who did needed to render the event

⁶⁵ AC §32.

⁶⁶ AC §40.

meaningful. Their method involved a vengeful opposition that demanded the future rectification of the present injustice, such that the true meaning of the evangel's death would one day be clarified even to the perpetrators of their humiliation.

Precisely the most unevangelic feeling, *revenge*, came to the fore again. The matter could not possibly be finished with this death: "retribution" was needed, "judgment" (and yet, what could possibly be more unevangelical than "retribution," "punishment," "sitting in judgment"!) Once more the popular expectation of a Messiah came to the foreground; a historic moment was envisaged: the "kingdom of God" comes as a judgment over his enemies. But in this way everything is misunderstood: the "kingdom of God" as the last act, as a promise! After all, the evangel had been precisely the presence, the fulfillment, the *reality* of this kingdom.⁶⁷

Clearly a new conception of time is here developed, and equally clear is the fact that the creation of an interior domain of value is insufficient to the slave moral project. The specific relationship between these two valuational domains, and their production of the movement of slave morality, is the topic for the next section. We have already received a hint – to find this relationship we must examine the products of *ressentiment*.

The Cultivation of *Ressentiment* and the Ascetic Priest

The ascetic priest is the master of developing the relationship between the interior and futural domains of valuation in such a way that magnifies the power of the moral slave. This is accomplished by harnessing slavish *ressentiment*. For while slavish *ressentiment* can be directed toward the overcoming of all noble dominations, it is also a potentially self-destructive force. Hence Nietzsche says that the priest's most pressing problem is the cultivation, maintenance, and direction of this *ressentiment*.

⁶⁷ AC §40.

Indeed, he defends his sick herd well enough, this strange shepherd – he also defends it against itself, against the baseness, spite, malice, and whatever else is natural to the ailing and sick and smolders within the herd itself; he fights with cunning and severity and in secret against anarchy and ever-threatening disintegration within the herd, in which the most dangerous of all explosives, *ressentiment*, is constantly accumulating. So to detonate this explosive that it does not blow up herd and herdsman is his essential art, as it is his supreme utility; if one wanted to express the value of the priestly existence in the briefest formula it would be: the priest *alters the direction of ressentiment*.⁶⁸

This task is accomplished by an internal redirection:

“I suffer: someone must be to blame for it” – thus thinks every sickly sheep. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, tells him: “Quite so, my sheep! Someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it – *you alone are to blame for yourself!*” – This is brazen and false enough: but one thing at least is achieved by it, the direction of *ressentiment* is *altered*.⁶⁹

The reason that such methods are necessary is the dangerous combination of the slavish capacity to magnify the meanings of signs with the allure of the simplest and crudest expressions of force, or in other words, the danger is the volatile mixing of slavish subtly with noble brutality. Just as the moral slave magnifies her value judgments of the noble in the transformation of “bad” to “evil,” so too can the moral slave apply the harshest of judgments (and the most substantial of meanings) to the “imaginary slights” of “obscure and questionable occurrences” such that they “make evildoers out of their friends, wives, children, and whoever else stands closest to them.”⁷⁰ And while such magnification of these most insignificant of occurrences requires the subtlety of interpretation that is the moral slave’s art, there always remains this temptation to lash out brutishly and simplistically in response.

⁶⁸ GM III, §15.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

For every sufferer instinctively seeks a cause for his suffering; more exactly, an agent; still more specifically, a *guilty* agent who is susceptible to suffering – in short, some living thing upon which he can, on some pretext or other, vent his affects, actually or in effigy: for the venting of his affects represents the greatest attempt on the part of the suffering to win relief, *anaesthesia* – the narcotic he cannot help desiring to deaden pain of any kind.⁷¹

The allure to vent the affects “actually” (and hence not to internalize them) remains ever present.⁷² In response to this problem of *ressentiment*, the ascetic priest employs a variety of strategies to preempt brutish outbursts and to preserve the wholly self-directed internalization of *ressentiment*, which is the productive force of slave morality out of which its power grows.

The Innocent Methods of the Ascetic Priest

Nietzsche divides these strategies into two types, which he labels as the “innocent” and the “guilty.” The distinction between the two rests on whether the force of *ressentiment* is deadened or magnified. As we will see, the distinctive feature of those methods that increase the force of *ressentiment* is that they require that the interior domain of the soul be temporalized.

The “innocent” strategies are characterized generally as “means that reduce the feeling of life in general to its lowest point.”⁷³ Nietzsche provides specific examples; the

⁷¹ GM III, §15.

⁷² This is reminiscent of the case of Tertullian in the first essay, who is capable of reading noble signs of strength with the requisite subtlety to interpret them as signs of the enervation of the soul and future punishment. However, his capacity to imagine the concrete forms of this future punishment is exceptionally crude – the brutish power of God marked on the bodies of the suffering. I will discuss Tertullian in the body of the essay shortly, but I note here that Nietzsche does offer concrete instances of the magnification of the crudest sorts of violence through the signficatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering. Nietzsche’s consistent denouncement of anti-Semitism is another reference to the same temptation.

⁷³ GM III, 17. There is potential for disagreement concerning Nietzsche’s organization of the strategies that accomplish this diminishing function. Kaufmann for instance suggests in a footnote to his translation that this description does not apply to the “innocent” means generally, but only to specific iterations of them. I

first concrete practice he categorizes in this way is rote mechanical activity, which occupies consciousness as fully as possible by the habitual routine of physical labor, deadening the pain of *ressentiment* so as to avoid the explosive affects that can temporarily mitigate the slave's suffering.

The alleviation consists in this, that the interest of the sufferer is directed entirely away from his suffering – that activity, and nothing but activity, enters consciousness, and there is consequently little room left in it for suffering: for the chamber of human consciousness is *small!*⁷⁴

On the other hand, sometimes the ascetic priest urges the satisfaction of the affective urges, but only by allowing their most tepid and restricted expression. This Nietzsche calls the prescription of petty pleasure, most commonly by acts of modest charity.

The most common form in which pleasure is thus prescribed as a curative is that of the pleasure of *giving* pleasure (doing good, giving, relieving, helping, encouraging, consoling, praising, rewarding); by prescribing “love of the neighbor,” the ascetic priest prescribes fundamentally an excitement of the strongest, most life-affirming drive, even if in the most cautious doses – namely, the *will to power*. The happiness of “slight superiority,” involved in all doing good, being useful, helping, and rewarding, is the most effective means of consolation for the physiologically inhibited, and widely employed by them when they are well advised: otherwise they hurt one another, obedient, of course, to the same basic instinct.⁷⁵

Once again the general aim is to minimize the violent force of valuations. Here such mitigation is accomplished by finding those gestures that display one's outwardly directed power under the subtlest guise (the *least* visible signs of one's superiority).

Whether by vacating consciousness or by precluding the most dangerous expressions,

think however that the description matches the effect of all such innocent means, and is a clear indication of what is essential to them.

⁷⁴ GM III, 18.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

these innocent means do not temporalize slavish valuation. In each case the present is a void out of which no strong values are projected, in the former case due to the displacement of any gesture that signifies one's force, and in the latter by the maximal control of these gestures.

Thus these measures are doubly negative. They reduce the danger of *ressentiment* by reducing the strength of slavish valuations. This limitation constitutes their innocence. That is, they are relatively inefficacious to the ascendancy by which slave morality has come to define the valuational landscape; while they are a strategic necessity of the slave revolt, required so that the movement does not cannibalize itself, they are not the methods by which the moral slave can displace the entrenched noble manner of valuation. Nor are they the methods by which the moral slave magnifies her power through the escalating violence of her self-lacerations.

The Guilty Methods of the Ascetic Priest

The “guilty” means are characterized by their capacity to magnify the affects that are turned inwards in the production of guilt, and this is accomplished by expanding slavish *ressentiment* into new temporal domains and hence opening the space for far-reaching signs that allow for the interpretation of evil into every present gesture.

These techniques share an affective basis. “They all involve one thing: some kind of an *orgy of feeling* – employed as the most effective means of deadening dull, paralyzing, protracted pain.”⁷⁶ The particularity of the affect is irrelevant; what matters is the forcefulness of a valuation that can displace the slave's pain.

⁷⁶ GM III, §19.

Fundamentally, every great affect has this power, provided it explodes suddenly: anger, fear, voluptuousness, revenge, hope, triumph, despair, cruelty; and the ascetic priest has indeed pressed into his service indiscriminately the *whole* pack of savage hounds in man and let loose now this one and now that, always with the same end in view: to awaken men from their slow melancholy, to hunt away, if only for a time, their dull pain and lingering misery, and always under cover of a religious interpretation and “justification.”⁷⁷

Out of context, the ascetic priest seems to be cultivating new nobles in his encouragement of the most violent affects that might superficially suggest the most violent expressions. Of course, these savage hounds are not released indiscriminately; they are carefully directed back towards the moral slave herself, or more precisely, to the interior space of agency.

The chief trick the ascetic priest permitted himself for making the human soul resound with heart-rending, ecstatic music of all kinds was, as everyone knows, the exploitation of the *sense of guilt*.⁷⁸

The cultivation of this sense of guilt has consequences that Nietzsche describes in temporal terms. This internalization of *ressentiment* directs the slave to locate the cause of his suffering in the interior space of his own agency. “He must seek it in *himself*, in some *guilt*, in a piece of the past, he must understand his suffering as a *punishment*.”⁷⁹

We have already addressed the role of punishment in extending the interior agency temporally so that one’s present actions were always in service of a past promise and

⁷⁷ GM III, §20. While it might seem that this strategy bears superficial similarity to the innocent means, the dulling of pain is a reference to the “external” discomforts that are the result of the slave’s incapacity to signify values directly in the noble manner. But unlike with the innocent means, slavish power is not minimized but instead violently directed internally. Hence the ultimate consequence to this method of deadening pain is that the moral slave feels her power growing in her self-lacerations. Hence, later in the section, Nietzsche writes, “One no longer protested *against* pain, one *thirsted* for pain; ‘*more pain! More pain!*’”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ GM III, § 20.

projected towards a future end. But the sovereign individual finds a way to affirm in the most external gestures the results of this punishment.

But the slave interprets punishment as the product of a debt that one has not repaid. In the first section of this chapter, we noted that the moral slave magnifies the meanings of the gestures by which indebtedness had heretofore been signified. We expressed the consequence of this magnification negatively by noting the impossibility of the slavish discharge of debts once the immediately affirmative gestures of the noble had been devalued. Here we can add a positive formulation. The moral slave obscures the meaning of the noble signs by forcefully sundering the association of goodness with the crude presentation of immediate force.

The attribution of guilt – whether to oneself or to others – is itself an exercise of force. Not only are noble gestures interpretively reversed so that their power is conceptually transformed into impotence. The moral slave also generates a new mode of expressing power; the attribution of guilt vastly exceeds a merely prudential way of signifying hostility towards the brutish noble. This is not simply devaluation – this is the active (albeit redirected) forcefulness of the savage affects.

Consider Nietzsche's expression of the force of slavish vengefulness and *ressentiment* from the *Antichrist*. He says of the early Christians,

It was their revenge to *elevate* Jesus extravagantly, to sever him from themselves – precisely as the Jews had formerly, out of revenge against their enemies, severed their God from themselves and elevated him. The one God and the one Son of God – both products of *ressentiment*.⁸⁰

The elevation of God is the positive correlate of the devaluation of the “primal ancestor” or the self-abasement of the guilty soul; Adam is born guilty and human nature

⁸⁰ AC 40

is sinful because God has been elevated by a creative act of slavish forcefulness by which the secrets of the soul and the recesses of memory are incorporated into the domain of slavish valuations.

These two sites of valuation that characterize slavish valuations are not accidentally related. The conceptual artistry by which the moral slave transforms the once thin and insubstantial inner world that needed to be saturated by so many profound meanings before it could be deepened into the “soul” has, as its correlate, the saturation of meanings in the most distant temporal domains. Guilt extends infinitely into the past, but only once the soul can become pregnant with the richness of meanings by which it can sever itself so completely from the goodness of God, only at the point that slave-moral force swells to such proportions that guilt is buried in the deepest recesses of the heart and of the past. The slavish economy of suffering produces this magnificent explosion of meanings only by concurrently carving more deeply into the depths of the soul and into the most distant times. And this proliferation of meanings generates its exceptional force.

The Integrated Projection of the Ascetic Ideal

Temporally, this power is not limited to the past. The consequences of the interpretation of the bad conscience as guilt extend futurally. First, guilt is a justification for suffering. We saw one instance of such in the first chapter in our treatment of Tertullian, who condoned bodily violence against the enemies of Christendom on a scale unimaginable to the noble. The consequence of the extension of the meaning of slavish

gestures to the past can be expressed in the form of the future judgments of God – “God the Judge,” and “God the Hangman” promising eternal punishment.⁸¹

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche attributes the vengeful consequences of the Christian reinterpretation of the evangel’s death to a demand for purpose and meaning in the ideal of Jesus – “a disciple’s love knows no accident.”⁸² On the one hand, this is a demand for a meaning to be attached retrospectively to events that threaten Jesus’ disciples in their seeming devaluation of their master’s project. Thus, Nietzsche says, Jesus was retrospectively elevated; the seeds of guilt were sown when Jesus was understood to oppose sin rather than affirm his atemporal interiority. But his disciples did not merely condemn the past by reading guilt into the hearts of their persecutors (and themselves). They also expected judgment from their God, which is to say the future rectification of present injustices and the clarification of the power of the moral-slavish soul.

We have seen such expectation in many guises, from the simplistic to the sophisticated. The subtler vision of God (though he remains a hangman) involves the internally directed judgment that sees the future overladen with sin, as a ground in which either grace or damnation verifies its presence in the hidden interiority of the soul. In all cases, however different their surface manifestations and by whatever degree the internalized manifestations exceed their predecessors in maturity and profundity, the attribution of value to the future serves to expand the domain of the interior by incorporating those gestures devalued by the moral slave and conscripting them to the ends of slave morality. In each case, displays of social force or immediate physical violence are necessary as signs of moral weakness that one must avoid. Slave morality

⁸¹ GM II, §22.

⁸² AC §40.

incorporates the gestures by which noble esteem is signified and integrates them towards its own end of clarifying in the future the true strength of the moral slave in her No-saying capacity.

The ascetic ideal has a *goal* – this goal is so universal that all the other interests of human existence seem, when compared with it, petty and narrow; it interprets epochs, nations, and men inexorably with a view to this one goal; it permits no other interpretation, no other goal; it rejects, denies, affirms, and sanctions solely from the point of view of *its* interpretation (and has there ever been a system of interpretation more thoroughly thought through?); it submits to no power, it believes in its own predominance over every other power, in its absolute *superiority of rank* over every other power – it believes that no power exists on earth that does not first have to receive a meaning, a right to exist, a value, as a tool of the ascetic ideal, as a way and means to *its* goal, to *one* goal. – Where is the match of this closed system of will, goal, and interpretation? Why has it not found its match? Where is the *other* “one goal?”⁸³

The ascetic ideal of the moral slave, the internally directed violence that condemns the soul beneath the deed, has achieved ascendancy over the ostensibly more powerful noble manner of valuation because the signifiatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering enables the ascetic ideal to incorporate its rivals and press noble gestures into its service. Even noble displays of crude force are necessary, for without them the slave could not demonstrate her interior strength (promised in the future salvation of the kingdom of God, or in the progress of truth) by resistance and restraint towards such gestures.

The ascetic ideal expresses an integrated forcefulness. The interiority of moral agency is constituted in its integrity by its futural projection. When the interior space of the soul becomes more inscrutable as its meaning extends to the past and future, the significance of this interiority must exceed the present, and thus cannot be expected to present itself. The obscuring function of the temporalization of the interior is at first a

⁸³ GM III, §23.

devaluational move. As we have before seen, the gestures that seem to express noble power become marks of the enervation of the soul or weakness of will.

The essential structure of the noble manner of valuation is the collapse of signs of force and value; the essential consequence of the noble economy of suffering is the affirmation of the present. The moral slave, whose action is reaction, needs a hostile external world in order to act at all. And while on the one hand it is easy to see how such an interpretation is motivated by brutish noble oppression, Nietzsche goes to great lengths to emphasize that the moral slave also demands that the world be inhospitable to their desires, and even magnifies its hostile character in the transformation of “bad” to “evil.” The perpetual interpretation of the external world as a hostile one provides the possibility for the continuation of the moral-slave quest, which is to reverse every present valuation, to find evil in every good. Through the mutual referencing of the interior and futural domains of value, the promise of slave morality – to bring about this reversal – can forever be undertaken because it can never be fulfilled.

This paradoxical aim to both promise a future reversal but also ensure its impossibility in the incorporation of every sign to the negative project of the ascetic ideal is expressed by the dual signficatory effect of the temporal domain of value on the interior one.

On the one hand, reference to the future clarifies the significance of the interior. It isn't a surprise that the slavish interpretation projects the future vindication of slavish gestures. The slave is capable of reversing the meaning of any gesture. As an extension of the movement by which the moral slave deems the soul of the moral agent to hide the true power and value of the body it inhabits, she promises the proof of this interpretive

reversal in the future to come. We have seen simple manifestations of such a promise before. But every imagined fulfillment of such a promise eventually seems so crude.

For the other consequence of the temporalization of the interior domain is that the most prominent gestures of slave morality must always be reinterpreted as failure. Their obvious meanings are obscured and their hidden flaws uncovered. Long after the unimaginably simplistic gestures of the old nobility have become irretrievable, new gestures must stand in their place as the target against which slave morality constitutes its interiority. This is out of obedience to the temporal directive of slave morality; the moral slave projects towards a future conceived as a site of the reversal of all present evaluations only through the constant reinterpretation of various gestures as crudely immediate significations of force and value. Thus the temporalization of the interior functions to continually obscure the evaluations of this interior site.

These two functions (the obscuring and the clarifying of the interior domain of valuation through its temporalization) are not opposite as they may superficially seem. Their product is neither the permanent obfuscation of the interior domain nor lucid access to the future. The product is signification abundance, the constant proliferation of meanings and a perpetual reassessment of all gestures. New meanings are constantly generated, new gestures devalued, and through this the integral purposive power of slave morality is magnified. By this process the devaluation of noble gestures exceeds a simple oppositional no-saying; the slavish manner of valuation ascends over the noble by the production of a new dominant power that is constantly growing.

Masks of the Will to Truth

The ascetic ideal is one name for this incorporating, singular power, but Nietzsche ventures another, more “essential” name in the penultimate section of the *Genealogy*.

Everywhere else that the spirit is strong, mighty, and at work without counterfeit today, it does without ideals of any kind – the popular expression for this abstinence is “atheism” – *except for its will to truth*. But this will, this *remnant* of an ideal, is, if you will believe me, this ideal itself in its strictest, most spiritual formulation, esoteric through and through with all external additions abolished, and thus not so much its remnant as its *kernel*. Unconditional honest atheism (and *its* is the only air we breathe, we more spiritual men of this age!) is therefore *not* the antithesis of that ideal, as it appears to be; it is rather only one of the latest phases of its evolution, one of its terminal forms and inner consequences – it is the awe-inspiring *catastrophe* of two thousand years of training in truthfulness that finally forbids itself the *lie involved in belief in God*.⁸⁴

Only at this juncture has the creative power of the ascetic ideal been sufficiently developed in order to be expressed as the integrating forcefulness of the will to truth.

The integrity of this will is constituted in its consistent rejection of all merely apparent values, its force demonstrated by the destruction of all gestures that have hitherto signified force and esteem. Even the expression of the great victory over noble valuations – belief in God – is in its turn devalued and overcome.

One hears echoes of Nietzsche’s formulation of the will to truth from the fifth book of the *Gay Science* (also cited in the *Genealogy*):

No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this “other world” – look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our world*? – But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by

⁸⁴ GM III, § 27.

a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine.⁸⁵

The affirmative expression of this will is qualified by a negative one. The will to truth denies one world, namely that of the affirmation of externalities in the present, in order to affirm its own futural and interior “worlds.” In this way the will to truth links both dogma and atheism through the fundamentally negative character of the valuations they express. In each case one has faith in the singularity of this mode of expressing power and conferring value.

The vehicle for this most advanced expression of the will to truth, Nietzsche claims, is the practice of science.⁸⁶ Nietzsche characterizes the purpose of these practices in terms that parallel his bifurcation of the ascetic priest’s methods into the innocent and guilty means. First, Nietzsche addresses the capacity of scholarly pursuits to mitigate the force of *ressentiment* by diminishing its violence.

Science today is a *hiding place* for every kind of discontent, disbelief, gnawing worm, *despectio sui*, bad conscience – it is the unrest of the *lack* of ideals, the suffering from the *lack* of any great love, the discontent in the face of involuntary contentment. Oh, what does science not conceal today! how much, at any rate, is it *meant* to conceal! The proficiency of our finest scholars, their heedless industry, their heads smoking day and night, their very craftsmanship – how often the real meaning of all this lies in the desire to keep something hidden from oneself! Science as a means of self-narcosis: *do you have experience of that?*⁸⁷

Like the mechanical activity prescribed by the ascetic priest, one effect of scientific practice is to deaden pain. The scholars are “drugged and heedless men who fear only

⁸⁵ GS §344.

⁸⁶ Here the “science” (*Wissenschaft*) of which Nietzsche speaks is not the “science” that an English speaker might oppose to the liberal arts, but a more general conception of disciplined knowledge that can cover a range of topical areas. One can sense the wider meanings of the original German that are necessary to associate scientific practices with the will to truth by the fact that Nietzsche’s examples of scientists in the recently cited passage are Copernicus and Kant.

⁸⁷ GM III, § 23.

one thing: *regaining consciousness*,”⁸⁸ and so they fill the small chamber of consciousness with the toils of their industry.

And just as was the case with the ascetic priest’s techniques, the “innocent” means by which the *ressentiment* of the sufferer is diminished through distraction and dissipation of the force of the guilty bad conscience are incapable to motivate the ascendancy of the will to truth. For the “guilty” means we turn to those expressions of the scientific spirit that magnify and focus the aggressive affects.

*All science (and by no means only astronomy, on the humiliating and degrading effect of which Kant made the noteworthy confession: “it destroys my importance” . . .), all science, natural as well as unnatural – which is what I call the self-critique of knowledge – has at present the object of dissuading man from his former respect for himself, as if this had been nothing but a piece of bizarre conceit. One might even say that its own pride, its own austere form of stoical ataraxy, consists in sustaining this hard-won self-contempt of man as his ultimate and most serious claim to self-respect (and quite rightly, indeed: for he that despises is always one who “has not forgotten how to respect” . . .) Is this really to work against the ascetic ideal? Does one still seriously believe (as theologians imagined for a while) that Kant’s victory over the dogmatic concepts of theology (“God,” “soul,” “freedom,” “immortality”) damaged that ideal? – it being no concern of ours for the present whether Kant ever had any intention of doing such a thing. What is certain is that, since Kant, transcendentalists of every kind have once more won the day – they have been emancipated from the theologians: what joy! – Kant showed them a secret path by which they may, on their own initiative and with all scientific respectability, from now on follow their “heart’s desire.”*⁸⁹

Here we have the channeling of the greatest orgies of feeling, the strongest affects, against the very divinity of the soul itself. The “heart’s desire” is to diminish respect for the type humankind, conceived now as the interior valuational site; science is an expression of inwardly directed *ressentiment* writ large, directed against even the profoundest soul, and not just the evil behind brutish noble gestures. In its religious interpretation, the product of the ascetic ideal is the discovery of sin, through which

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ GM III, §25.

human nature becomes culpable for irredeemable past transgressions, and is burdened with debt for all of future time. The scientific expression preserves this temporal quality insofar as the scientific spirit exercises its forcefulness only through the devaluation of the concrete practices that have become “noble,” or at least which have come to be interpreted as crudely indicative of the centrality and significance of humankind. Here the brutish gestures of the bird of prey are no longer the signs that are to be reinterpreted as enervations. Instead, Christianity (dogmatically conceived) has itself become the conceptual framework for the weak of will and mind.

The arc of the stars overhead can no longer be naively read as an indication that humanity stands at the center of the cosmos; and with this negation, the geocentric universe has become a tempting deception to the feeble mind. Or, the undo faith in the power of reason to penetrate to the depths of being is refuted as the dream of the intellectual simpleton. That the previous masks of the will to truth come to be interpreted as grotesque caricatures – worn by the comedians of the ideal – is the inevitable consequence of the signifiatory abundance that produces integral slave-moral power. As the moral slave conceives of the future as a site of valuational reversals, she must perpetually project herself towards this future by the constitution of a singular integrity that is defined by the opposition to all immediate affirmations. The ascension of slave morality requires the continual discarding of its old masks because of its temporal quality. Through scientific practice this is accomplished without any longer requiring explicit reference to future damnation or salvation. The will to truth has become temporal by the violent projection of its power through which ever new masks are demanded as perpetual sacrifices to the continued glory of this will.

This assumption of new masks (through the destruction of the old) by the will to truth will be the focus of the inquiry of the third chapter. What we developed in this chapter was the condition for this movement of slave morality. The will to truth becomes stronger and more spiritual even (or always) in the twilight of its most recognizable standard bearer because the signifiatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering devalues every gesture as its meaning becomes clarified in the mutual referencing of the interior and temporal domains of valuation.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SELF-OVERCOMING OF WILL TO TRUTH

In the second chapter I developed the integrated forcefulness of slave morality, produced in the mutual referencing of the interior and futural sites of valuation. In this chapter I develop the consequences of this slave moral force, which are twofold. The first is the destruction of every previous slave-moral practice, understood as a network of gestures by which the value of truth was communicated. This destruction is accomplished by the perpetual reinterpretation of all such practices as crudely external and present signs of esteem. Old slave practices are made noble and hence overcome, and so the integrity of the will to truth is founded on the destruction of its once most cherished masks.

The second consequence is a product of the first. After the will to truth has overcome every extant gesture by which it is communicated, it turns on itself in the questioning of the value of truth. This culmination of the will to truth is also its self-overcoming, for it arises out of the same destructive force that was perpetuated and magnified through this will. The will to truth negates its very perpetuation of negation.

Thus I will characterize Nietzsche's concern with the will to truth as a two-part problematic. First, he treats the question of how ostensibly truthful-moral practices are

overcome by the very standards to which they purportedly adhere. Second, he asks what this perpetual overcoming indicates about the value of truth itself.

I begin by developing, respectively, Nietzsche's characterizations of Tertullian, Wagner, and Schopenhauer in the *Genealogy*. This investigation will span the sections titled "Anachronisms of the Ascetic Ideal" and "Contemporary Expressions of the Ascetic Ideal." The three stand for broad types – dogmatist, artist, and philosopher – and in each case Nietzsche disqualifies their type from bearing the full force of the will to truth according to the standards of this will itself.

Nietzsche finds Schopenhauer to be the most serious candidate, and he even credits him for making explicit the culminating consequence of the will to truth, which Nietzsche expresses as the question of whether existence has any meaning. However, Nietzsche also finds Schopenhauer to misunderstand the immediate gestures by which the latter finds meaning even in his explicit negations and insistence on the meaninglessness of all existence.

I will address what Nietzsche calls the overcoming of Christianity as dogma by Christianity as morality as the broad historical expression for the evacuation of all value and meaning from every external and present sign. As Nietzsche develops this consequence, he further insists that the will to truth must turn against itself and perish as a result of its rampant destruction of every mask. This destruction of the will to truth through the very force of this will indicates its self-overcoming character. This is the topic of the section "The Overcoming of Christianity as Dogma by Christianity as Morality."

The final section, titled “Nietzsche’s Will to Truth,” will examine the link between the overcoming of anachronistic forms of the will to truth and the self-overcoming of this will. I do so, as the title suggests, by developing Nietzsche’s own deployment of the will to truth. He insists on the integrity of his project of revaluating all values and expresses his goal as a projection towards a reversal of current values. He describes his efforts as an attempt to attach the bad conscience to all of those gestures that have come to be associated with Christianity as morality. In this way the will to truth generates its own rupturing force.

Yet this force also indicates an affirmative excess that cannot be expressed in the name “will to truth.” I conclude the chapter by differentiating Nietzsche from Schopenhauer through the former’s honesty in acknowledging this affirmative excess in the destructive force of the will to truth. Nietzsche’s honesty is expressed at the conclusion of the *Genealogy* when he reinterprets the will to truth as a will to nothingness. His insistence that it remains a will – that there is a value creating force even when it projects towards perpetual devaluation - makes explicit the tension between the affirmative force of willing and the ostensive evacuation of all value according to the standards of truth. I characterize this naming as a negative answer to the second problematic of the will to truth. The value of the will to truth cannot be contained exclusively in the interior and future domains of value. This conclusion prepares the way for Nietzsche’s positive response to this problematic, which I claim is embodied in the figure of Zarathustra, and which will be the topic of the final chapter.

Anachronisms of the Ascetic Ideal

The moral slave has worn many masks. Some are subtler than others, and this subtly differentiates them in their relative strength. For the subtlety of one mask is always relative to another, as it is the mark of a further retreat from the most visible signs of force. The subtlety of one mask makes crude its predecessors, as every mask reorders the interpretive landscape by devaluing what came before it. Hence, this subtlety is an expression of slavish force. Nietzsche insists on the crudity of earlier ages, and so it no surprise that the earliest Christian-ascetic masks will appear unbelievably violent and direct in comparison to their descendants.

Nietzsche's characterization of Tertullian in the first essay of the *Genealogy* is a development of just such a mask, and through an interpretation of this assessment of Tertullian in particular, as well as Nietzsche's comments about the shallowest manifestations of the ascetic ideal more generally, we will develop the cannibalistic manner in which the force of the ascetic ideal is conveyed. This will prepare the way for the analysis in the coming sections of more subtle exertions of slave-moral force that propel the force of slave morality to the point of its own self-overcoming.

Slave moral force is always accompanied by the interpretation of some gesture as crudely external and present. This interpretation is necessary so that the slave can signify strength by opposition to it. Of course, the primitive noble succumbed quickly and quite long ago. This force must then turn against ostensibly truthful and ascetic practices – gestures that at one point expressed the vanguard of the will to truth – which the moral slave now seeks to overcome. Tertullian is among the crudest ascetics; his vision of the

bodily damnation of his enemies is unsettlingly close to the most brutish violence of the noble. Thus we will return to Tertullian to most clearly demonstrate Nietzsche's understanding of the perpetually destructive movement of the will to truth.

Nietzsche's commentary and an extended citation from Tertullian's *De Spectaculis* constitutes the fifteenth section of the first essay. Despite its length, the character of the passage can be indicated briefly. First, Tertullian is recommending that early Christians avoid the public games of Rome. He then promises a spectacle which far exceeds in violence anything one could hope to see in combat or contest between the relatively comparable adversaries that such games featured. Tertullian describes with relish the various bodily torments to be imposed on deniers of Christ by the infinite hand of God, and he insists that the voyeuristic pleasures of enjoying another's bodily pain are the literal rewards of the faithful. He conjures the intoxicating imagery of hellfire, and he does so without any desire to mask his happiness and with the naïve certainty that he has no reason to do so.

Still, by comparison to the most visible signs of noble domination, Tertullian's valuations remain subtle. He is not associating strength with its externalization in immediate acts of murder, arson, rape or torture, as he is only projecting such atrocities into the future. This small resistance is significant, for his violent conception of salvation is a reward for the demonstration of one's inner faith, signified negatively by resistance to the allure of the public games and the vicarious participation in their crude gestures. The suffering witnessed by the spectators means more than the simple affirmation of cruelty. Succumbing to this temptation indicates impotence of the soul and penance in the future, and thus the resisting Christian demonstrates some measure of self-discipline

in the present, however certain Tertullian is that one will happily abandon it in the orgy of violence that he believes to be the confirmation of the grace of God.

Of course, Tertullian's words no longer seems subtle to the modern reader, a point Nietzsche develops in the following passage:

Dante, I think, committed a crude blunder when, with a terror-inspiring ingenuity, he placed above the gateway of his hell the inscription "I too was created by eternal love" – at any rate, there would be more justification for placing above the gateway to the Christian Paradise and its "eternal bliss" the inscription "I too was created by eternal *hate*" – provided a truth may be placed above the gateway to a lie!⁹⁰

The hatred behind eternal bliss is revealed in the form of the pleasures in which Tertullian imagines the saved to partake. Since these pleasures are constituted by the observation of the great suffering of the enemies of the early Christians, Tertullian imagines the force of the will to truth to be expressed crudely and externally on the bodies of the subjugated, only differing from the noble emphasis on the most visible signs of superiority in his imagination of the increased duration and extremity of their suffering. In a sense, Tertullian is nobler than even the noble, which is to say that the cruel gestures by which he hopes to elevate himself are more terrible than anything accessible to noble imagination. Because he ultimately advocates the same sort of gesture that the noble executes on the body of the slave, Tertullian precludes the internalization of the affects and hence he truncates the signification of the slavish economy of suffering. According to Nietzsche then, Dante's mistake is in supposing that love – ostensibly the transformative directive of the moral slave through which noble forms of signification are rejected – can paradoxically generate the kinds of bodily impositions of power previously associated with noble valuations. The simpler

⁹⁰ GM I, §15.

explanation, requiring no paradox, is that the deep continuities with the noble manner of valuation indicate that Tertullian's vision is only a magnified (in its force) and refined (in its expression) variation of cruelty. We are dealing with affirmation and instinct; there is no rupture with the noble economy of suffering. And the perspective that can condemn Tertullian in this way at the same time conveys a more spiritualized form of the will to truth. Tertullian is a slave next to the noble. But he is too proximate to the noble in the eyes of the more refined slave.

Retrospectively, Tertullian appears to merely wish to wield the power of his enemies in the manner of his enemies: "These weak people – some day or other *they* too intend to be the strong."⁹¹ The slavish projection of a reversal of values in the future is compromised by the manner in which Tertullian conceives of this future – as one in which the most traditional signs of dominance are recognized. Tertullian is a dishonest moral slave. And his dishonesty is revealed by appeal to the standards of the will to truth.

Thus Tertullian is an anachronism. One can only understand how he was once the bearer of the vanguard force of the ascetic ideal by evoking the astonishing simplicity of his enemies and the crudities that were once real threats to this ideal in its younger and more vulnerable form. We see too that what constitutes the superiority of one mask over another is nothing but the destructive force it brings to bear on its predecessor, a force which is perpetuated by a greater proliferation of significations in the retreat of meanings deeper into the interior and further into the future. Tertullian's soul is still enamored of bodily expressions of violence. The future he envisions is not different enough; it remains too much like the past. Such a force vents itself on all previous masks of the will

⁹¹ GM I, §15.

to truth which seem, in comparison, crudely noble. Inevitably, if the will to truth is to progress, the primary object of this force will be gestures once associated with the will to truth.

In the case of Tertullian it is fairly easy to observe the force exercised against him; this is the corollary to the difficulty of understanding his former power to promote the ascetic ideal. Indeed, Tertullian might not only be an anachronism. He might be also a comedian of the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche defines the comedian of this ideal as one who poses a threat to it by her advocacy of it:

. . . The ascetic ideal has at present only *one* kind of real enemy capable of *harming* it: the comedians of this ideal – they arouse mistrust of it.⁹²

One recalls the “epilogue of the ‘free spirit,’” in which the Church is characterized as just such a comic expression:

“ . . . Certainly [the church] has, over the years, become something crude and boorish, something repellent to a more delicate intellect, to a truly modern taste. Ought it not to become at least a little more refined? – Today it alienates rather than seduces. – Which of us would be a free spirit if the church did not exist? It is the church, and not its poison, that repels us. Apart from the church, we, too, love the poison. –”⁹³

Tertullian is indicative of the dogmatic anachronisms of the church; his crude exercise of the ascetic ideal is what distances the more refined taste. But the refined taste of the “free spirit” loves the poison – the mutual referencing of the futural and interior valuational sites by which all valuations are overcome. This “free spirit” has no standard other than that of truth by which to evaluate practices.

⁹² GM III, §27.

⁹³ GM I, §9.

The criticism leveled by the “free spirit” is echoed by Nietzsche with regard to the apes of the ascetic ideal that, to his dismay, still find traction even in his contemporary landscape:

I do not like these agitators dressed up as heroes who wear the magic cap of ideals on their straw heads; I do not like these ambitious artists who like to pose as ascetics and priests but who are at bottom only tragic buffoons; and I also do not like these latest speculators in idealism, the anti-Semites, who today roll their eyes in a Christian-Aryan-bourgeois manner and exhaust one’s patience by trying to rouse up all the horned-beast elements in the people by a brazen abuse of the cheapest of all agitator’s tricks, moral attitudinizing . . .⁹⁴

This type – the moral provocateur, the dogmatic Churchman, the anti-Semite – embodies a precipitate mixing of the noble and slavish economies of suffering. On the one hand she wants all the integrated forcefulness of the will to truth, or at least she wants to represent it. On the other hand she wants the mutually exclusive goal of the external and immediate discharge of this force. She wants to signify her moral superiority with the most obvious poses. The comedian of the ascetic ideal both wants to be morally superior, but also for this superiority to be expressed (socially, politically, economically, physically, in any case immediately) in the present. But externalized power diverts the internalized cruelty by which the strong soul was first cultivated, and the affirmation of the present precludes the projection towards a reversal of all valuations in the future. The comedian’s gestures mitigate the power of the ascetic ideal in a haphazard mixing of two incommensurable economies. And, the crudity of such superficial attempts at slave-moral gestures is revealed by reference to the ascetic ideal and its kernel of the will to

⁹⁴ GM III, §26. Also, Nietzsche’s longest parenthetical insertion into his citation of Tertullian is his note that the latter reserves particular vitriol for the Jews, who are blamed for Jesus’ death. This is consistent with Nietzsche’s repeated association of anti-Semitism with the worst abuses of the will to truth.

truth. Or in other words, the dishonesty of the comic type is devalued by the demand for integrity produced through the will to truth.

Contemporary Expressions of the Ascetic Ideal

The third essay of the *Genealogy* begins with the question of the meaning of the ascetic ideal. It is here that Nietzsche hopes to find an advanced expression of the will to truth, one in which exterior and present signs are rejected out of the self-discipline and self-laceration demanded by this will. Nietzsche seeks the bearer of the ascetic ideal, sometimes by examining general types (the artist and the philosopher) and sometimes by examining individual representatives of them, primarily the persons of Wagner and Schopenhauer. To what extent are these representatives capable of conveying the force of this ideal and of the will to truth? Nietzsche concludes that both artist and philosopher stand for a network of gestures that constitute visible indicators of the ascetic ideal. But ultimately it is this very visibility that constitutes their unworthiness to magnify the force of this ideal, for the will to truth is fundamentally negative and can only thrive by the perpetual dissociation of force and esteem and the consequent devaluation of all externals and immediacies. Once a certain mask of the ascetic ideal can be named, the ascetic ideal is already beyond this mask, and its continued force is expressed in the destruction of this mask. The vanguard expressions of the will to truth are always No-saying.

Wagner and the Artist

Nietzsche's search begins with an assessment of the artist, of whom he says:

One should guard against confusion through psychological *contiguity*, to use a British term, a confusion to which an artist himself is only too prone: as if he himself were what he is able to represent, conceive, and express. The fact is that *if* he were it, he would not represent, conceive, and express it.⁹⁵

Nietzsche says that the artist lacks efficacy, and to judge by his examples this is equally true of those artists who advocate noble and slave morality. He references Homer and Goethe, as well as Wagner. In every case the artist lacks "creativity;" she does not have a hand in shaping the parameters of an economy of suffering, which is to say she is not a catalyst at the origin of noble or slave valuations. The artist's gestures are delimited by the economy out of which her production arises. She is limited to expressing the parameters that she can neither construct nor rupture.

The genuine moral slave, by contrast, is creative precisely in her capacity to rupture the noble economy of suffering. Nietzsche develops the distinction between the perpetuation of an extant mode of valuation and its creative production in terms that emphasize the role of the moral slave's oppositional No-saying and the lack of such gestures in the artist:

Let us, first of all, eliminate the artists: they do not stand nearly independently enough in the world and *against* the world for their changing valuations to deserve attention *in themselves!* They have at all times been valets of some morality, philosophy, or religion; quite apart from the fact that they have unfortunately often been all-too-pliable courtiers of their own followers and patrons, and cunning flatterers of ancient or newly arrived powers. They always need at the very least protection, a prop, an established authority: artists never stand apart; standing alone is contrary to their deepest instincts.⁹⁶

⁹⁵ GM III, §4.

⁹⁶ GM III, §5.

By this point the emphasis of Nietzsche's discussion has shifted from the artist generally to the artistic representative of slave morality alone; the demand to stand against the world is not a demand made of the noble or of the representative of her valuations. Nietzsche's objection here is that such an artist fails to execute the oppositional movement of slave morality by which all recognizable gestures of esteem and force are devalued and enervated. The artist cannot stand alone as the moral slave must perpetually stand alone in the magnification of her integral forcefulness by the opposition to all valuations. Indeed past this point Nietzsche's references to Homer and Goethe cease, and Wagner alone commands center stage.

Although Nietzsche claims that no artist is capable of "creativity" in the domain of valuations, the slavish artist is a fundamentally insufficient carrier of the force of the ascetic ideal, for the attempts to communicate the ascetic ideal by recognizable external signs necessarily stultifies this force. In *Nietzsche Contra Wagner*, Nietzsche charges Wagner with the incapacity to oppose the world around him and the need to constitute superficial signs by which to communicate his art.

. . . if it was Wagner's theory that "the drama is the end, the music is always a mere means," his *practice* was always, from beginning to end, "the pose is the end; the drama, also the music, is always merely its means." Music as a means to clarify, strengthen, and lend inward dimension to the dramatic gesture and the actor's appeal to the senses – and the Wagnerian drama, a mere occasion for many interesting poses!⁹⁷

Here Nietzsche develops a polarity between the superficiality of the gesture and the depth of the interior, as the interior can never be presented by the pose insofar as it is distinguished by its opposition to every visible sign of force and value. Unsurprisingly

⁹⁷ NCW, "Where I Offer Objections."

then, Nietzsche claims that Wagnerian drama can never express the courage to stand alone.

In Bayreuth one is honest only in the mass; as an individual one lies, one lies to oneself. One leaves oneself at home when one goes to Bayreuth; one renounces the right to one's own tongue and choice, to one's taste, even to one's courage as one has it and exercises it between one's own four walls against both God and world.⁹⁸

Against both God and world – to convey moral force is to individuate through the negation of every external and the renunciation of all affirmations. Wagner cannot stand alone because he loves the gesture, and one can only pose for the herd. When Nietzsche says that Wagner's music is in the slavery of poses,⁹⁹ he does not criticize Wagner for being a moral slave. He criticizes the superficiality of the Wagnerian presentation of the ascetic ideal. He criticizes Wagnerian art for being a superficial and simplified vessel that is too shallow to convey the force of the ascetic ideal. He criticizes Wagner for being a *bad* moral slave.

Nietzsche has much respect for the ascetic ideal in its genuine incarnations (“All honor to the ascetic ideal *insofar as it is honest!*”¹⁰⁰). Wagner however merely attempts to signify this ideal by its most visible signs, which are always already anachronisms insofar as their force is conveyed by their visibility, externally and presently, in a manner that stultifies the cultivation of the integrating forcefulness of the ascetic ideal. This is a very specific elaboration of the problem of the artist's “contiguity.” Not only is Wagner-qua-artist separated from the creative force by which a valuational mode is brought to actualization; Wagner-qua-*slave-moral-artist* has the especial demand to distinguish

⁹⁸ NCW, “Where I Offer Objections.”

⁹⁹ Nietzsche describes the consequence of Wagnerian music in “Wagner as a Danger” as follows: “*Espressivo* at any price, and music in the service, the slavery, of poses – *that is the end.*”

¹⁰⁰ GM III, §26.

himself from every mask by which the ascetic ideal has henceforth been communicated in the name of that very ideal lest the ascetic ideal be reduced to theatrics. To be the moral slave one must separate by saying No. Nietzsche says that one joins the herd at Bayreuth. And while the herd is a product of slave morality, it is merely its residue and not its vanguard. So too, Nietzsche concludes, is the artist.¹⁰¹

Schopenhauer and the Philosopher

The “prop” behind Wagner is Schopenhauer. In his examination of the latter Nietzsche finds more reason to be optimistic in the search for the representative of the ascetic ideal.

Here we have arrived at the more serious question: what does it mean when a genuine *philosopher* pays homage to the ascetic ideal, a genuinely independent spirit like Schopenhauer, a man and knight of a steely eye who had the courage to be himself, who knew how to stand alone without first waiting for heralds and signs from above.¹⁰²

Standing alone is contrary to the deepest instincts of the artist who represents slave morality. But Schopenhauer knew how to stand alone. What is the meaning of this polarity Nietzsche develops between philosopher and artist, Schopenhauer and Wagner?

Nietzsche interprets Schopenhauer’s independence negatively. Remaining topically with aesthetics, this independence is characterized by resistance to certain conceptualizations of beauty, namely those which associate contemplation of the beautiful with recognizable values in other domains of experience. Specifically, Nietzsche interprets Schopenhauer’s independence as his resistance to one of the latter’s

¹⁰¹ In this context Nietzsche is only addressing the artist who takes herself to be a representative of the ascetic ideal. Regarding the evaluation of the artist who lies with a good conscience and who considers deception to be an end is of course a separate question.

¹⁰² GM III, §5.

“most regular experiences,” namely that of the urgency of desideration expressed sexually.

Of few things does Schopenhauer speak with greater assurance than he does of the effect of aesthetic contemplation: he says of it that it counteracts *sexual* “interestedness,” like lupulin and camphor; he never wearied of glorifying *this* liberation from the “will” as the great merit and utility of the aesthetic condition.¹⁰³

Schopenhauer’s textual expressions of this opposition are described by Nietzsche as evoking “an almost pathological antithesis” between servitude and freedom. Regardless of whether Nietzsche’s assessment of Schopenhauer’s motivations is correct, Nietzsche’s characterization of the philosophical expression of the ascetic ideal indicates that the courage of independence is a product of strong negations. Nietzsche concludes by once more emphasizing the negative character of Schopenhauer’s “freedom,” – the philosophical ascetic “wants *to gain release from a torture.*”¹⁰⁴

Whereas Wagner sought to disseminate the most recognizable signs to the Bayreuth herd, Schopenhauer resists any familiar signs with which to express beauty. Schopenhauer goes so far as to oppose the archetypical example of desiderative force in a now familiar movement in the repertoire of the moral slave. Instinct is aligned with visible and immediate expressions of force, and resistance to them carves out the channels of the soul. Thus far Nietzsche has provided reason for his optimism, but he will soon argue that Schopenhauer and the philosophical type have their own shortcomings that were only obscured by a favorable comparison to the Wagnerian-artistic type.

¹⁰³ GM III, §6.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

Schopenhauer's Mask

Nietzsche's analysis of Schopenhauer as "genuine" in his philosophy and independence is superficially contradictory with the question that Nietzsche poses only a few sections later:

Is there sufficient pride, daring, courage, self-confidence available today, sufficient will of the spirit, will to responsibility, *freedom of will*, for "the philosopher" to be henceforth – *possible* on earth?¹⁰⁵

In what way does the philosopher lack independence which just so recently seemed abundant, at least in comparison to the artistic type? To answer this question we return to the relationship between gesture-exterior and interior which is developed in Nietzsche's genealogy of the philosopher.

The earliest philosophers knew how to endow their existence and appearance with a meaning, a basis and background, through which others might come to *fear* them: more closely considered, they did so from an even more fundamental need, namely, so as to fear and reverence themselves. For they found all the value judgments within them turned *against* them, they had to fight down every kind of suspicion and resistance against "the philosopher in them." As men of frightful ages, they did this by using frightful means: cruelty towards themselves, inventive self-castigation – this was the principal means these power-hungry hermits and innovators of ideas required to overcome the gods and tradition in themselves, so as to be able to *believe* in their own innovations.¹⁰⁶

From the retrospective vantage point that Nietzsche now takes, the self-demand made on the philosopher is twofold. First, she needs to communicate strength in some way; if the early philosopher was not dreaded, then she was despised. Hence the philosopher needed some sign by which she could indicate her "unknown sources of power"¹⁰⁷ precisely to those who are tempted to loathe her, most especially herself. She does so by the processes of internalized cruelty that marked the formation of the interior and futural sites

¹⁰⁵ GM III, §10.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ D §42, to which Nietzsche directs the reader in GM III, §10.

of value. She does so by the self-directed ascetic practices of truth. Yet the original purpose and demand of these ascetic practices necessitates the truncation of the signifiatory abundance of the slavish economy in an affirmative production. So long as the philosopher's fundamental need is to fear and reverence herself, the philosopher is required to produce an exteriorized appearance¹⁰⁸ – a mere pose that guarantees and delimits the meanings of the philosophical “soul.” This is both the condition for the survival and self-estimation of the philosophical type as well as her weakness before the magnifying force of the ascetic ideal.

Concretely and historically expressed, this results in the appearance of the philosophical-religious ascetic, who is an early incarnation of the ascetic ideal.

The philosophic spirit always had to use as a mask and cocoon the *previously established* types of the contemplative man – priest, sorcerer, soothsayer, and in any case a religious type – in order to be able to *exist at all: the ascetic ideal* for a long time served the philosopher as a form in which to appear, as a precondition of existence – he had to *represent* it so as to be able to be a philosopher; he had to *believe* in it in order to be able to represent it. The peculiar, withdrawn attitude of the philosopher, world-denying, hostile to life, suspicious of the senses, freed from sensuality, which has been maintained down to the most modern times and has become virtually the *philosopher's pose par excellence* – it is above all a result of the emergency conditions under which philosophy arose and survived at all; for the longest time philosophy would not have been *possible at all* on earth without ascetic wraps and cloak, without an ascetic self-misunderstanding.¹⁰⁹

Returning to our question regarding how Schopenhauer or the philosophical type both possess and lack independence, we note two things. First, the philosopher's devaluation of all external signs – instinct, sensuality, world, life, sense – is merely a pose insofar as there is something he affirms. That is, the “withdrawn attitude” of the philosopher by

¹⁰⁸ See also BGE §51, in which Nietzsche claims that the appearance of the “saint” conveyed the visible sign of power that even the noble recognized: “The powerful of the world learned a new fear before [the saint]; they sensed a new power, a strange, as yet unconquered enemy – it was the “will to power” that made them stop before the saint. They had to ask him—”

¹⁰⁹ GM III, §10.

which he seems to negate the value of every external is disingenuous because it is done for the sake of appearances. It is a network of external signs that have a necessary degree of recognizability – they are re-cognized only after they acquire the capacity to immediately convey force and esteem. Second, this affirmation is an inheritance from the previous mask of the will to truth, namely its religious-ascetic mask.¹¹⁰ This demand for the gesture is a condition for survival rather than theatrics for their own sake, as was the case for the artist. But the philosopher still remains bound to the superficial poses.

It might help then to note a general shift in the language of Nietzsche's characterization and estimation of the ascetic type that takes place in the *Genealogy's* final essay. Here Nietzsche begins to associate the ascetic priest with imagery previously assigned exclusively to the noble. For instance, he describes the religious bearer of the will to truth as a new kind of beast of prey.¹¹¹ Or, he characterizes "no-saying" as productive of "an abundance of tender Yeses."¹¹² The shift to this more affirmative language begins with the development of the relative independence of the philosopher, where he characterizes the externalities by which the philosopher signifies the strength of his interiority and the differential future towards which he projects. Such gestures are continuous with the noble's most visible signs by which esteem is signified through a demonstrable display of force. And as we have just seen in the development of the philosophical type, the demand for visible gestures is a product of the slave's reaction against extant valuations. The ascetic first finds his affirmations in contestation rather than domination, but the signs of this struggle forever tend towards the latter as they

¹¹⁰ Indeed Nietzsche tells us in BGE §186 that what Schopenhauer affirms is morality itself.

¹¹¹ The priest represents "a new kind of animal ferocity in which the polar bear, the supple, cold, and patient tiger, and not least the fox seem to be joined in a unity at once enticing and terrifying." GM III, §15.

¹¹² GM III, §13.

become victorious. It is by tracking this tendency that one finds the hidden affirmations of ascetic expressions which demonstrate the “self-misunderstanding” of all bearers of this ideal.

In the case of Schopenhauer, it is against the signs of sensuality by which Schopenhauer shows his power for resistance. Yet this resistance comes to be signified in its own network of immediate externalities by which this negative force is clearly and presently indicated. To this extent the oppositional character of the philosopher’s need to “gain release from a torture” is called into question by a revealing of the affirmative signs of this negation.

Let us not become gloomy as soon as we hear the word “torture”: in this particular case there is plenty to offset and mitigate that word – even something to laugh at. Above all, we should not underestimate the fact that Schopenhauer, who treated sexuality as a personal enemy . . . *needed* enemies in order to keep in good spirits; that he loved bilious, black-green words, that he scolded for the sake of scolding, out of passion; that he would have become ill, become a *pessimist* (for he was not one, however much he desired it), if deprived of his enemies, of Hegel, of woman, of sensuality and the whole will to existence, to persistence.¹¹³

The catalogue of Schopenhauer’s enemies indicates the fundamental need of his oppositional spirit. The resistance to “sexual interestedness,” on which Nietzsche suggests that Schopenhauer’s asceticism rests, is itself merely one form that his negations take; the essential condition is that he make negations and that he finds recognizable poses by which to signify them. And though the “bilious, black-green words” are far more subtle than the bodily violence perpetrated by the noble, they do not for that reason dissociate a sign of force with a sign of value.

Or, put in affective language, Schopenhauer’s rejection of desideration expressed sexually remains a most passionate expression. Thus Nietzsche claims that even

¹¹³ GM III, §7.

Schopenhauer's independence, seen retrospectively, lacks the independence of the philosopher of the future, even if in proximity to the artistic type his independence seems boundless. The answer to our problem above then is that Schopenhauer is quite independent in relation to Wagner (or the philosopher is independent in relation to the artist), but not in relation to the perspective that Nietzsche is occupying and developing. In the former case, the philosopher represents a further advancement of the destructive march of the ascetic ideal by which esteemed (and once subtle) gestures are perpetually devalued. Yet this of course does not mean that the fundamental movement of slave morality stops with the philosopher. Or perhaps, Schopenhauer no longer represents the full flourishing of the philosophical type. Schopenhauer is an advance but not a stopping point.

The Overcoming of Christianity as Dogma by Christianity as Morality

Who then can inhabit the full force of the ascetic ideal? Given its no-saying movement, the will to truth does not come to rest in any network of gestures, any type, any person, or any mask. At this point we have seen both how the concrete practices of slave morality exert tremendous rupturing force against their own predecessors (always their most powerful enemies), as well as the eventual susceptibility of all slavish practices to this same force. The consequence of the proximity of the exertion and reception of the destructive force of the will to truth is nowhere more clearly expressed than in what Nietzsche calls the overcoming of Christianity as dogma by Christianity as morality.

In the second chapter, we addressed the overcoming of the Christian-dogmatic mask by the scientific expression of the will to truth, through which the will to truth was uncovered as the kernel of the ascetic ideal. There our question was the meaning of the will to truth, which was developed as the integrated forcefulness of a projection towards a future reversal of all valuations. We have in this chapter addressed the consequences of this meaning, which are expressed negatively in the destruction of every previous form by which the will to truth has been manifested.

In the penultimate section of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche gives the culminating expression of this negative character of the will to truth in which he surveys the ruins in its wake. In this same expression he forecasts its own self-overcoming as an extension of this negative movement:

All great things bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming: thus the law of life will have it, the law of the necessity of “self-overcoming” in the nature of life – the lawgiver himself eventually receives the call: “*patere legem, quam ipse tulisti.*” In this way Christianity *as a dogma* was destroyed by its own morality; in the same way Christianity *as morality* must now perish, too: we stand on the threshold of *this* event. After Christian truthfulness has drawn one inference after another, it must end by drawing its *most striking inference*, its inference *against* itself; this will happen, however, when it poses the question “*what is the meaning of all will to truth?*”¹¹⁴

The perishing of Christianity as morality, which Nietzsche equates with the self-reflective questioning by the will to truth of its own value, is the excess produced by the negation of every practice by which the will to truth has flourished.

I pause for a moment here to clarify our analysis of Nietzsche’s criticisms regarding the ascetic ideal and its expressions, which have two distinct forms that should not be confused if we are to faithfully pursue our problem of the self-overcoming of the

¹¹⁴ GM III, §27.

will to truth. First is the problem of the disingenuous expressions of the will to truth that fail by the very standards of the will to truth. This is the problem with which we have been occupied heretofore (and it is through this problem that we prepare the ground for the other), and which is developed through the perpetual destruction of all masks by which the kernel of the ascetic ideal is externally manifested. This negative movement is expressed as the destruction of Christianity as dogma by Christianity as morality.

Second, there is the problem of the meaning of the ascetic ideal and its profound influence on Western¹¹⁵ life. The value of truth is itself called into question by the standard of truth, threatening a nihilistic abyss at the foundation of all known values. This latter problem is a crisis of the confrontation with the destruction of all known economies by which exchanges of force are evaluated. Both the noble and slavish economies of suffering are prohibited by the magnified power of the will to truth, which finds something noble in every slavish gesture in order to perpetuate the spirit of slave morality.

So long as one deals only with comedians, one has reason to remain cheerful. One laughs at the comedians of the ascetic ideal out of faith in the bad conscience, with the supporting structure of an evaluative standard by which to scorn superficial moral expression. But the most honest moral slave discovers that the purely slavish economy is an impossibility, because the proliferation of significations that this economy produces is inevitably truncated in a disingenuous affirmation.

¹¹⁵ And, Nietzsche often suggests, non-Western culture as well. However, his more developed references to peoples and events are always within the trajectory of the West – Judaism, Christianity, modern democracy, Jesus, Socrates, etc. His references to Buddhism, Indian philosophy, the Japanese nobility, and others are generally less developed. Also, he considers his problem to be a European one, and the overcoming of the will to truth to be the consequence of *Europe's* longest and bravest self-overcoming.

The artist and the philosopher are not comedians. And it is precisely the subtlety of their poses that reveals the devaluational structure of the ascetic ideal. Each new ascetic gesture points beyond itself at the originality of its origin by devaluing everything before it. It is at the moment of its generation a singularity, and hence an unlimited expression of the signifiatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering. It is a new negation. But with the familiarity of repetition the gesture becomes recognized within the network of practices birthed at the origin. No original gesture is a pose; every repeated one is. And the expression of originality is, within the slavish economy of suffering, retrospectively devalued by placing the gestures in a network of repetitions. They are all “universalized” as mere poses, all alike to all, and hence equally superficial. It is through the recognition of this movement that the second problematic of the will to truth emerges, and this very negative movement is recognized as a moment of singular valuational crisis.

The threat of disingenuous nobility hangs over every gesture of the slave, a fact revealed both by the power with which the ascetic ideal wholly overcomes Tertullian as well as by the extension of its reach in finding even Schopenhauer to perpetuate noble affirmations. At this moment the name “ascetic ideal” becomes insufficient to the task of delimiting the movement of slave morality, insofar as asceticism is invariably ostentatious. The philosopher-ascetic is reduced to a pose, a remnant of the earlier types the philosopher needed to imitate in order to inspire the simplest sort of fear. Poses indicate incapacity to “stand alone,” the absence of the bold negating force of the will to truth by which the devaluations of the most entrenched valuations are dared. Ostensible self-denial is really the affirmation of the value of the self in contrast to all other things.

The sentence, “*Pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam!*” (Let the world perish, but let there be philosophy, the philosopher, me!)¹¹⁶ is Nietzsche’s answer to the question of the ultimate meaning of the ascetic ideal in the case of the philosopher. At this moment a separate designation is needed for those overly dogmatic and crude practices that inhibit the blossoming of the “kernel” of this ascetic ideal. The culmination of the first problematic of the will to truth is the moment we cease to speak of the ascetic ideal as the bearer of slave moral force, and the moment we speak of the will to truth that motivates this ideal. For what is at stake is not a static set of values, but a rending, creating, negating, and affirming will to truth. The previous masks have been so thoroughly sundered that asceticism is no longer a sign of integrity, insofar as we have reached the limits of the signs of asceticism; it is as the will to truth that the power of the moral slave continues to grow.

We turn now to Nietzsche’s analysis of the overcoming of religious ascetic masks by the will to truth – in his terms the overcoming of Christianity as dogma by Christianity as morality – as the precursor to the moment of crisis in which the repetition of slavish negation becomes singular in its self-turning and overcomes itself. The overcoming of Christianity as dogma is a negation at the threshold of self-overcoming.

The sense of this self-destructive force was first developed, as was the characterization of the will to truth itself, in the fifth book of the *Gay Science*, and is referenced here at the culmination of the *Genealogy*:

What, in all strictness, has really conquered the Christian God? . . . “Christian morality itself, the concept of truthfulness taken more and more strictly, the confessional subtlety of the Christian conscience translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price. To view nature as if it were a proof of the goodness and providence of a God; to interpret history

¹¹⁶ GM III, §7.

to the glory of a divine reason, as the perpetual witness to a moral world order and moral intentions; to interpret one's own experiences, as pious men long interpreted them, as if everything were preordained, everything a sign, everything sent for the salvation of the soul – that now belongs to the *past*, that has the conscience *against* it, that seems to every more sensitive conscience indecent, dishonest, mendacious, feminism, weakness, cowardice: it is this rigor if anything that makes us *good Europeans* and the heirs of Europe's longest and bravest self-overcoming."¹¹⁷

To view nature as proof of the goodness and providence of God is to interpret the whole of nature as pose, as a gesture indicating that being has been fully mined of all meaning and has hence become transparent. This is a lie by any standard of the will to truth, which requires for its perpetuation that lies be found on the surface of all things. Nature must be reduced to mere appearance, never proof. The preordination of salvation inhibits the development of the future as a site of the reversal of all valuations. To the increasingly subtler practitioner of the will to truth, preordination has become a deceptive means to smuggle presence into the language of projection. Preordination presents the future, but the will to truth demands that the future be constituted by its difference.

The problem that proves fatal for dogmatic Christianity (the same that proved fatal to Wagner and Schopenhauer) is that it is too proximate to noble gestures. Christianity as dogma truncates the temporal and spatial movements which in their mutual referencing produce the will to truth. As such these dogmatic practices inevitably crumble before their increasingly sophisticated, more "moral" successors. The explicit disavowals of worldly power were once sufficient, even in their most superficial instantiations (such as Tertullian's exclusion of the Christian from the public games). But such gestures are recognizable now as indications by which moral force is conveyed.

¹¹⁷ GM III, §27.

The ascetic has become transparent. “‘My kingdom is not of *this* world,’ he continued to say, as before: but did he still have the right to say it?”¹¹⁸

The dogmatic gesture is placed in the past, vanquished by the very force it once conveyed. And for the first time the horizon of a genuine future of valuational reversal is opened. For the moral slave is bound to the perpetuation of the negative force of the will to truth. Her particular appeals to a differential future necessarily reiterate slavish devaluations which reduce every present gesture to simulacrum of one another in their valuational equivalence. Every presence has only a negative value that is to be overcome, and hence all futures are reduced to the sameness of opposition. The signifying abundance of the slavish economy of suffering has proliferated infinitely. All signs mean so many things that they mean nothing at all.

God is dead. God as the fulfillment of the moral slave project is an impossibility, and this revelation makes one an heir to the work of the good European. The task that remains for those who would not merely be inheritors but who will also bequeath is to ask about the consequences of God’s death. (“And here I again touch on my problem, on our problem, my *unknown* friends . . . what meaning would *our* whole being possess if it were not this, that in us the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a *problem*?”).¹¹⁹ There remains the question of how this overcoming generates a crisis of the will to truth that can lead to new values, to a revaluation of all values that opens the horizon to a new kind of affirmation. How is it that Christianity as morality must now perish too?

¹¹⁸ GM III, §20.

¹¹⁹ GM III, §27.

Nietzsche's Will to Truth

The will to truth is overcome by itself at the height of its power. Our previous investigation concerned the application of the standard of truth by the gestures to which the force of truth is conveyed and by which truth is valued. We developed the character of this force to be inevitably self-consuming and self-externalizing. Thus the kernel of dogmatic Christianity – the integrating forcefulness of the will to truth – is preserved even in Schopenhauer's atheism, though such a preservation is expressed in the destruction of dogmatic gestures. Hence the question of the force by which the philosopher's (or scientist's)¹²⁰ mask is found to be too noble, too much pose, too external and present, has an answer that may at this point be unsurprising. It is through the same integrating force of the will to truth that Christianity as morality (which Nietzsche equates to Christianity as truthfulness) is likewise found to be merely a temporary dogmatic hardening that mitigates the magnification of the power of this will. To announce the overcoming of the will to truth is not for this reason a wholesale rejection of the standards of the will to truth because this overcoming is a self-overcoming; we will develop below the sense in which Nietzsche is a more honest heir of slave morality than Schopenhauer.

¹²⁰ Nietzsche sometimes refers to the vanguard of the will to truth as science, sometimes philosophy. Again the term *Wissenschaft* covers the scholarly component of both the philosopher and scientist in their stricter English meanings, such that Nietzsche's development of Schopenhauer provides the basis for his thought that science is an expression of the will to truth. When Nietzsche cites *Wissenschaft* as the newest domain of the flourishing will to truth, he uses what we would call philosophers (e.g. Schopenhauer, Kant) as his primary examples.

In the rapid tempo of the closing sections of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche does not systematically develop the necessity of the perishing of Christianity as morality. Rather, he forecasts the inevitability of this rupture. This is unsurprising because this self-overcoming, which arrives at the threshold of the rupture of the will to truth itself, is not simply a repetition of previous overcomings through which the force of the will to truth was magnified and perpetuated. As such it cannot be expressed in the way that the overcoming of various iterations of the ascetic ideal can be expressed. To address the rupture of the will to truth we cannot speak exclusively in denouncement and negations, for by such movements is the continuity of the will to truth preserved. Instead we must look for the ways in which Nietzsche develops the integrated forcefulness towards a reversal of all present valuations in a manner that allows for the cultivation of an affirmative excess by which the will to truth overcomes itself. In order to prepare for this development, we first turn to Nietzsche's expressions of this will, his honest advocacy for the power of integrity and projection.

Nietzsche's forecast of the perishing of Christianity as morality begins with the preface to the *Genealogy*, which frames the work as an attempt to develop the neglected domain of self-knowledge. The genealogist must, for the first time, really turn inwards to uncover the meaning of the inheritance of moral values. We "honey-gatherers of the spirit" have long developed the innermost meanings of our own spirit or soul or humanity through the will to truth, but "we have never sought ourselves"¹²¹ by asking how the will to truth constitutes our valuations, by making the question of the meaning of truth explicit. Nietzsche's project begins by counseling the first genuine internalization of this will.

¹²¹ GM, Preface 1.

In the second section Nietzsche addresses integrity explicitly. In this passage he traces the origin of his criticisms of morality textually to *Human, All too Human*,¹²² and chronologically to a period of time preceding the composition of this work. He finds it to the credit of his ideas that they have become more integrated, which he expresses as a sign that they are the consequence of a singular will.

*That I still cleave to [these ideas] today, however, that they have become in the meantime more and more firmly attached to one another, indeed entwined and interlaced with one another, strengthens my joyful assurance that they might have arisen in me from a common root, from a *fundamental will* of knowledge, pointing imperiously onto the depths, speaking more and more precisely, demanding greater and greater precision. For this alone is fitting for a philosopher. We have no right to *isolated* acts of any kind: we may not make isolated errors or hit upon isolated truths. Rather do our ideas, our values, our yeas and nays, our ifs and buts, grow out of us with the necessity with which a tree bears fruit – related and each with an affinity to each, and evidence of *one will, one health, one soil, one sun*.¹²³*

Accepting even that his knowledge is incomplete or errant, his criticisms of morality perpetuate the spirit of *one will*. Nietzsche's primary insistence is on this integrity. This singularity is clearly expressed at the conclusion of the second essay, when Nietzsche reflects on the structure of his genealogical project by addressing his "three question marks." The first question, perhaps the best known among them, is whether Nietzsche's polemical project is positive or negative. Is Nietzsche "erecting an ideal or knocking one down?" Nietzsche's answer – that "if a temple is to be erected *a temple must be destroyed*"¹²⁴ – expresses the negative character of the will to truth in its destructive singularity while leaving open the possibility of a creative excess. Focusing as we are for

¹²² The very first sentence of the preface to *Human, All too Human* begins with Nietzsche's observation that others have always considered his work to have "something that distinguishes them and unites them together."

¹²³ GM, Preface 2.

¹²⁴ GM II, §24.

now on the former, Nietzsche conceptualizes the incorporation of slave moral purposes to the project of overcoming the will to truth, in the same manner that the will to truth, in its integrating forcefulness, incorporates all competing ideals.¹²⁵ Just as the ascetic ideal redirects the energies of its antipodes to its own singular purpose, Nietzsche incorporates even the ascetic ideal to his own revaluative project (and hence extends the force of this ideal).

Man has all too long had an “evil eye” for his natural inclinations, so that they have finally become inseparable from his “bad conscience.” An attempt at the reverse would *in itself* be possible – but who is strong enough for it? – that is, to wed the bad conscience to all the *unnatural* inclinations, all those aspirations to the beyond, to that which runs counter to sense, instinct, nature, animal, in short all ideals hitherto, which are one and all hostile to life and ideals that slander the world.¹²⁶

The destructive component of the self-overcoming of the will to truth is a consequence of the magnified power of the will to truth, which integrates disparate energies once scattered across a multiplicity of objectives towards a single (negative and destructive) goal. This is an internalized application of force, an iteration of the movement that originally produced the bad conscience through the internalization of cruelty. Now of course the bad conscience is to be deployed against all those ideals with which it has heretofore been fundamentally identified, but doing so remains an internalization. One lacerates oneself for lacerating oneself. This is the consequence of insisting on a singular health and sun within the lineage of slave morality.

¹²⁵ I am here referring to the passage that was central to the second chapter in which Nietzsche develops the incorporative power of the will to truth, of which he says, “. . . it believes that no power exists on earth that does not first have to receive a meaning, a right to exist, a value, as a tool of the ascetic ideal, as a way and means to *its* goal, to *one* goal.” GM III, §23.

¹²⁶ GM II, §24.

Nietzsche's second question involves how – or more precisely through whom – such an act of destruction could take place. Such a figure would need to express the philosopher-courage of standing alone, that expression of the will to truth as well as the destruction of this will to truth at the moment of its culmination which was both embodied and failed in the person of Schopenhauer. “What gives greater offense, what separates one more fundamentally, than to reveal something of the severity and respect with which one treats oneself?”¹²⁷ Such a fundamental separation would require a constitution unlike any produced by the current gestures of the will to truth.

The attainment of this goal would require a *different* kind of spirit from that likely to appear in this present age: spirits strengthened by war and victory, for whom conquest, adventure, danger, and even pain have become needs; it would require habituation to the keen air of the heights, to winter journeys, to ice and mountains in every sense; it would require even a kind of sublime wickedness, an ultimate, supremely self-confident mischievousness in knowledge that goes with great health; it would require, in brief and alas, precisely this *great health!*¹²⁸

Such a great health is a singular health. Singular in the severity demanded by the rigors of the will to truth against even this will itself, against every moral and truthful manifestation of this will. There is more here than the integrity of the will to truth as well. The explicit affirmation of contestation distinguishes this spirit from any of its moral predecessors who always obscure their need for and love of contestation, as well as the visible signs required to signify it. We will address this excess in the next chapter, but for now I emphasize this continuity with and culmination of the integrity of the will to truth. To destroy a temple requires that one stand alone, and to this extent define oneself against all worshippers and all the signs of their community. One must fulfill the demand for the philosopher's courage.

¹²⁷ GM II, §24.

¹²⁸ Ibid.

The third question concerns the coming of such a figure. Nietzsche's project of wedding the bad conscience to the most visible signs of the will to truth is expressed as a promise, which is to say it is expressed temporally. The cultivation of the affirmatively conquering spirit is a futural projection, of which Nietzsche says:

Is this even possible today? – But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond, whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight *from* reality – while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration *into* reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the *redemption* of this reality: its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it. This man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness – *he must come one day.* –¹²⁹

As was the case with Nietzsche's characterization of this type, the specific images of Nietzsche's projection exceed the limits of the will to truth. But its form expresses this will. Even Tertullian and the crude dogmatist speak of future redemption, and while Nietzsche may be intentionally parodying the language of salvation, he still privileges the future as a site of valuational reversal, and he still signifies his force in opposition to the present differences from this conceived future. Such a future is the projection of an integral will, and expresses the force of that will. For Nietzsche is not only an anti-Christian in his opposition to dogmatic asceticism. He is also an anti-Christ, according to the portrait he later develops of Jesus (and which we examined in the previous chapter), in which the glad tidings are interpreted as the insistence of the equality of God's love distributed consistently through all times (and hence complete in the present). Nietzsche

¹²⁹ GM II, §24.

on the other hand forecasts the reversal of present valuations as the consequence of the culmination of the temporalization of the interior valuational site. The “man of the future” is none other than one who demonstrates self-severity, the courage to stand alone, the resistance to all of the now crude and all too visible signs of the reigning ideal in all of its poses. The man of the future demands all of the methods of the moral slave. The polemical character of the *Genealogy* is expressed in Nietzsche’s repeated devaluation of the most visible signs of slave-moral values. Such integrity always moves away from the present and towards the future.

Nietzsche Contra Schopenhauer

Above I claimed that the affirmative excess in Nietzsche’s deployment of the force of the will to truth requires some other strategy than pure opposition to this will; to destroy the will to truth by its fundamentally destructive force is to drive out devils by the power of the devil. The first development of this excess comes when Nietzsche transforms, renames, and affirms the will to truth at the closing of the *Genealogy*. His new name for this will is “will to nothingness.” In order to establish the difference between this creative act of naming and the purely oppositional masks of the will to truth which precede it, I will begin by contrasting Nietzsche’s execution of his own project with his characterization of Schopenhauer’s attempt to address the limits of the will to truth. Doing so will prepare the ground for a development of the sense in which Nietzsche’s renaming of the will to truth as the will to nothingness exceeds a mere perpetuation of slave moral force. The spirit that thrives on contestation is above all more honest than the slavish spirit, and hence capable of the explicit avowal of the need for indicators of its waxing strength. This excess demonstrates the insufficiency of a

“pure” self-application of the will to truth against itself, for it is only with the emergence of the affirmative excess that the will to truth becomes conscious of itself as a problem, that it becomes “self-conscious” of the lie behind all will to truth.

Conversely, any expression that doesn’t contain such an affirmative excess is nothing but a perpetuation of the will to truth and not the singular moment of its crisis. Such a moment is instead nihilistic, indicating a stagnation of the will to truth, and not a rupturing and self-overcoming culmination. Nietzsche uses Schopenhauer as an example of the former, who appears in both the *Genealogy* and the *Gay Science* at the crucial moment when the will to truth overcomes its most prominent religious mask and in so doing makes the problem of its meaning explicit. Yet by obscuring the affirmation hidden in every gesture of the will to truth, Schopenhauer cannot rupture the force of this will.

Beginning then with Schopenhauer’s deployment of the will to truth against its most visible masks, Nietzsche writes of him:

. . . Unconditional and honest atheism is simply the *presupposition* of the way he poses his problem, being a triumph achieved finally and with great difficulty by the European conscience, being the most fateful act of two thousand years of discipline for truth that in the end forbids itself the *lie* in faith in God.¹³⁰

The mark of Schopenhauer’s triumph is the magnification of his destructive powers, which is expressed as a question:

As we thus reject the Christian interpretation and condemn its “meaning” like counterfeit, *Schopenhauer’s* question immediately comes to us in a terrifying way: *Has existence any meaning at all?* It will require a few centuries before this question can even be heard completely and in its full depth.¹³¹

¹³⁰ GS §357.

¹³¹ Ibid.

This question is fundamentally negative. That is, it expresses the negating force of the will to truth by the implication of the total lack of meaning in existence. The question indicates that Christianity as dogma is overcome by Christianity as morality. The dogmatic interpretation of meaning in every event of nature, history, and personal experience is rejected through this question. Instead, through the strictest application of truthfulness Schopenhauer finds the entirety of being to be devoid of any external or present value. Thus he stands far above the straw-headed agitators, the anti-Semites, and above Wagner too. In this sense it may require centuries to fully understand just how far he has taken the will to truth, and what his question heralds. But Schopenhauer's answer to his question does not yet express the self-overcoming of the will to truth, for he remains stuck in the Christian-moral expression. Nietzsche says that this answer is

. . . hasty, youthful, only a compromise, a way of remaining – remaining stuck – in precisely those Christian-ascetic moral perspectives in which one had *renounced faith* along with the faith in God.¹³²

Schopenhauer's answer remains within the will to truth in two senses. By aspiring to the cessation of all willing, the consequence of Schopenhauer's question turns out to be the perpetuation of the will to truth. Schopenhauer, in the typical manner of the ascetic, devalues external immediacy. Schopenhauer's difference is that he does so most thoroughly and totally. Thus Nietzsche categorizes Schopenhauer in the fifth book of the *Gay Science* as a "romantic" who seeks knowledge because he "suffer[s] from the *impoverishment of life*."¹³³ The impoverishment of life is not necessarily a reference to some fundamental attribute of an individual's character. Minimally, it only need indicate expressions that negate. Such expressions impoverish life ("life" understood affectively

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ GS §370.

as developed in the first chapter, as a word that connects value with visible and present signs) by separating visible signs with the possibility of affirmation; the exchanges Schopenhauer imagines are situated within the slavish economy of suffering and its total evacuation of visible and immediate meanings.

Of course, as we have already seen in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche does not believe that Schopenhauer desires this. Enamored by his own “bilious, black-green words,” Schopenhauer affirms his own destructive powers, like all of his ascetic ancestors before him.¹³⁴ Thus the place to seek the difference between Nietzsche’s and Schopenhauer’s characterization of the limits of slave-morality is not in some inaccessibly idiosyncratic constitutional difference but in the ways that Nietzsche tries to develop the maximal power of the will to truth differently from Schopenhauer in these two senses. How does Nietzsche address the culminating force of the will to truth without impugning all of existence? How does Nietzsche remain honest about the affirmative excess in his wicked and malicious destruction of all will to truth?

Affirming the Will to Nothingness

The two questions are not separate. It is by remaining honest in the affirmative excess of his destruction that Nietzsche brings about the culmination of the will to truth without finding nihilistic meaninglessness in all gestures. Nietzsche accomplishes this by a double naming of the ascetic ideal. He names the kernel of the ascetic ideal the will to truth, thereby venting the destructive force of slave morality against all the poses of asceticism. But he also identifies the consequence of this will as a will to nothingness at

¹³⁴ Again BGE §186 is helpful here. Nietzsche in this passage insists that Schopenhauer is not a pessimist because he affirms his negative moral gestures (and also, Nietzsche says, plays the flute!). In any case, one still affirms even if one affirms No-saying.

the conclusion of the *Genealogy*. The context is important. Nietzsche has just finished his development of the consequence of slavish aversion to all of life, which is expressed as a movement towards the total evacuation of all values from every present and external sign. The “nothingness” of “will to nothingness” is an expression of this nihilism. And yet, Nietzsche insists that even this movement remains an expression of will. The moral slave strives towards this nihilism; even the quest for the total devaluation of world and life remains affirmative insofar as it wills something out of an excess of power generated by the integrated destructive force of the will to truth. That the “nothing” of the “will to nothing” remains something that is willed is the tension that I develop here, and which propels us to an examination of the methods by which this affirmative component of all willing is expressed concretely in Nietzsche’s figuration of Zarathustra.

In order to develop this reading of Nietzsche’s double naming, I begin by clarifying the similarities and differences to noble and slavish acts of naming. Noble naming is the lordly right to affirm an appearance.¹³⁵ It is the product of the noble economy of suffering, which is to say that the name produces affirmation in the imposition of domination. Such naming can be an overcoming of previously esteemed gestures, but it is never a self-overcoming through which the very manner that the noble signifies valuations is itself called into question.

But the moral slave names differently. Slavish naming always involves devaluation as a primary element, and thus it always implies two components. In the act of bequeathing a new name, the slave constructs a second name for that which is to be devalued. One cannot speak of the will to truth without differentiating it from its mere shell, the pose of the weary ascetic who says a great deal about renunciation but who has

¹³⁵GM I, §2, a passage we examined in the first chapter.

much to gain by her gestures. As soon as Nietzsche interprets the will to truth to be the kernel of the ascetic ideal, the church becomes boorish, the priest becomes beast of prey, art and philosophy become so many poses. The will to truth is elevated in the destruction of its most proximate forms. And in the naming of the “will to truth” as the kernel of the ascetic ideal, a name must also be given to this residue. The naming of the will to truth requires an interpretation of the gestures that this will overcomes. Noble naming, with its indifference to its other, only understands “bad” as an afterthought and hence does not need to classify the gestures that the noble name displaces. But the naming of the will to truth requires as a necessary condition a name for what it overcomes.

During the dominance of the ascetic ideal in its dogmatic form, there is of course no demand for distinction between ascetic expressions and those that convey the force of the will to truth. The ascetic need not speak about truth in the spiritualized scientific-atheistic sense (e.g. in Schopenhauer’s sense), because the integrated forcefulness of the will to truth was still manifested in the dogmatic language of future salvation or of the interiority of sin and soul. The power of this will had not magnified past the point where the ascetic ideal can contain it. The ascetic ideal was not yet a mask. And at this point, the name “ascetic ideal” could not possibly be recognized by the moral slave. For at this stage of development, dogmatic practices were valued not because of their asceticism in itself (Tertullian is a clear example), but because of their rejection of those practices associated with the primitive nobility.

Thus when Nietzsche names the will to truth we also sense the passing of its dominance. He does not issue the name during the period of its uncontested command over all competing ideals, but only names the will to truth through the movement of this

will that is on the verge of its self-overcoming. This chapter has developed the integral forcefulness of the will to truth against every one of its possible gestures, as well as the contradictory demand of this will for the recognition of its (latest and most spiritual) gestures. This tension is expressed in the naming of the will to truth. At this moment this will is delimited; its gestures are demarcated and hence made visible. The same effect that the naming of the will to truth had upon the ascetic ideal also follows from the very naming of the will to truth itself.

The will to truth is the productive force of the slavish economy of suffering. The proliferation of signs produced by this economy reduces the meaning of any visible gesture while at the same time devaluing this very negative movement by attaching to every valuation some gesture to oppose. When the will to truth is named it becomes the gesture of gestures, the inevitability of the pose beneath every sign of the spirit and projection of the future. The product of the slavish economy of suffering is that the will to truth is named and that the will to truth names itself. The will to truth is self-naming and in this self-naming is self-overcoming.

In the midst of this self-overcoming self-naming, the act of naming is incomplete. Recall that the naming of the ascetic ideal as the residue of the will to truth required the naming of some kernel of that ideal. What is the name for the kernel of the will to truth? Nietzsche must conclude the genealogy by seeking this kernel – he finds it to be a will to nothingness. This will to nothingness indicates the negating force of all gestures of the will to truth, but also indicates a willing beyond nothingness in this very movement of integrated forcefulness. A will to nothingness, insofar as it is a will, is a will beyond nothingness.

Thus Nietzsche interprets the destructive and negating gestures of the will to truth as an expression of a longing for affirmation.

Apart from the ascetic ideal, man, the human *animal*, had no meaning so far. His existence on earth contained no goal; “why man at all?” – was a question without an answer; the *will* for man and earth was lacking; behind every great human destiny there sounded as a refrain a yet greater “in vain!” *This* is precisely what the ascetic ideal means: that something was *lacking*, that man was surrounded by a fearful *void* – he did not know how to justify, to account for, to affirm himself; he *suffered* from the problem of his meaning.¹³⁶

Not truth, no-saying, retreat, deferral, but rather yes-saying, visibility, instinct, and immediacy are the objectives of the ascetic ideal and the will behind it, but only through the magnification of slave moral force in the integrated forcefulness of its projection towards a future reversal of all valuations. Nietzsche’s new name for the kernel of the will to truth emphasizes this productive tension.

He also suffered otherwise, he was in the main a sickly animal: but his problem was *not* suffering itself, but that there was no answer to the crying question, “*why* do I suffer?” Man, the bravest of animals and the one most accustomed to suffering, does *not* repudiate suffering as such; he *desires* it, he even seeks it out, provided he is shown a *meaning* for it, a *purpose* of suffering. The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* suffering itself, was the curse that lay over mankind so far – *and the ascetic ideal offered man meaning!* It was the only meaning offered so far; any meaning is better than none at all; the ascetic ideal was in every sense the “*faute de mieux*” *par excellence* so far. In it, suffering was *interpreted*; the tremendous void seemed to have been filled; the door was closed to any kind of suicidal nihilism. This interpretation – there is no doubt of it – brought fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering. It placed all suffering under the perspective of *guilt*. But all this notwithstanding – man was *saved* thereby, he possessed a meaning, he was henceforth no longer like a leaf in the wind, a plaything of nonsense – the “senseless” – he could now *will* something; no matter at first to what end, why, with what he willed: *the will itself was saved*. We can no longer conceal from ourselves *what* is expressed by all that willing which has taken its direction from the ascetic ideal: this hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and more still of the material, this horror of the senses, of reason itself, this fear of happiness and beauty, this longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from longing itself – all this means – let us dare to grasp it – *a will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most

¹³⁶ GM III, §28

fundamental presuppositions of life; but it is and remains a *will!* . . . And, to repeat in conclusion what I said at the beginning: man would rather will *nothingness* than *not* will. —¹³⁷

The will to nothingness names the excess of the will to truth, but in such a way that also names the constraints (the direction towards nothingness) upon that force. The will to nothingness arises when the will to truth demands honesty regarding itself, when the will to truth openly affirms the destructive gestures by which it reduces the value of all gestures.

This new perspective indicated by the naming of the will to nothingness paradoxically marks the culmination of the force of the will to truth but also the rupture of this force. It brings us to a negative answer to the second problematic of the will to truth regarding the value of this will for life. We can say that the will to truth impedes its own affirmative powers, that it affirms appearances only by devaluing appearances, that it says Yes only by speaking an unbroken succession of No's. The will is not the problem – as willing nothingness is still willing. But this will is brought to its rupturing crisis insofar as will and truth are brought to a point of irreconcilable tension. The will cannot will truth insofar as it affirms. Truth cannot be the deferred value of will insofar as all will is itself an act of valuing.

But again this designation remains negative, and it is not Nietzsche's complete expression for the future product of the tension of the will to truth. "Will to nothingness" shows the present impossibility of faith in will to truth. But what shall come in its stead? We have at this point prepared the way for Nietzsche's name for the will that displaces will to truth and positively responds to the second problematic of the will to truth. In

¹³⁷ GM III, § 28

what concrete ways, in what appearances and gestures, can the will affirm honestly? The answer to this question concerns will to power, which is the domain of the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

WILL TO POWER

Despite the textual chronology, Zarathustra begins where the *Genealogy* concludes. To be clear, I am speaking of the eponymous character and not the text. Zarathustra's endeavors – his going under, his anxiety and eventual affirmation of the eternal recurrence – are expressions of the will to truth at the threshold of its self-overcoming. Zarathustra's task is the attempt to understand and embody the affirmative excess of the will, which leads him to develop particular expressions of the will that no longer depend for their meaning, value, or force on an ideal of truth and the interior and temporal valuations that the will to truth demands. Thus his project is an extension of the *Genealogy* insofar as the *Genealogy* is a systematic and integral development of the self-overcoming character of will to truth, which Zarathustra then puts into action.

I begin by addressing Zarathustra's encounters with the saint in the woods and with the crowd in the marketplace. They orient his project as an extension of the *Genealogy* by indicating Zarathustra's distance from every embodiment of the will to truth. The saint and the crowd represent the polarities on the continuum of the development of this will. The former is a highly developed expression of this will, in many ways akin to the philosophical mask of the ascetic ideal. The latter represent the

comic and most disingenuous masks. I develop this link to the *Genealogy* in the sections titled “Zarathustra and the Saint” and “Zarathustra and the Marketplace.”

The encounter with the saint and crowd force Zarathustra to reconsider his audience. In the section “The Three Metamorphoses” I examine this well-known allegory which indicates to whom Zarathustra wants to bring his teachings. Further, the allegory describes the self-destructive component of the self-overcoming movement of the will to truth through the image of the lion, and the creative excess of force in all willing in the image of the child.

The next section, “On Self-Overcoming,” continues the development of self-overcoming in the text of *Zarathustra* by examining Zarathustra’s claim that all will to truth is expressive of a will to power, and that this will to power emerges after the self-destruction of the will to truth.

After developing the meaning of self-overcoming, Zarathustra worries that all will to power remains bound by the reactionary negativity of will to truth. In the section titled “Nausea,” I address his formulation of this concern, which finds a temporal expression. Insofar as the will is impotent to affirmatively will backwards, all willing must reject the past dominance of the will to truth and in this way merely repeat its negating gesture. Zarathustra also worries that the proximity of the greatest and smallest human beings is an expression of this incapacity to move beyond the negating gestures of the will to truth. In order to overcome his nausea, Zarathustra must learn this affirmative backwards willing, expressed as the affirmation of the eternal recurrence.

In the following section, “The Affirmative Moment,” I analyze Zarathustra’s convalescence through his encounter with the higher men. Through their celebration of

the ass festival, Zarathustra is able to affirm even the hold of the will to truth on these higher men, but only to the extent that they seek to break its bonds through its great power. In doing so, Zarathustra affirms the eternal recurrence. He accepts all woe for the sake of his moment of joy; he wills the past and all of the suffering of the past infinitely, and in this moment Zarathustra accomplishes an act of creative power inaccessible to all will to truth, which is expressed only in gestures of negation. Zarathustra exercises his will to power in this act of the most powerful affirmation.

Zarathustra's affirmation of the eternal recurrence, and hence the meaning of will to power itself, cannot be understood within the parameters of either slavish or noble valuations. Unlike the slave, Zarathustra affirms. But unlike the noble, Zarathustra directly affirms suffering. Like the slave, the meaning of Zarathustra's gestures stretch into the most distant past and future. But as with the noble, they affirm the present. This incomprehensibility of Zarathustra's will within any extent valuational mode is the topic of the section titled "The Eternal Recurrence as the Excess of Noble and Slavish Valuations."

The concluding section, "Zarathustra's Will to Power," addresses the meaning of will to power with regard to the concepts of self-overcoming, will to truth, and the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra's will to power is expressed as both the culmination of the negative and destructive movement of the self-overcoming of the will to truth and the affirmative excess that breaches the dominance of this will. The affirmation of eternal recurrence is the gesture by which this self-overcoming is expressed.

Zarathustra and the Saint

Zarathustra's first encounter is with a reclusive saint who embodies the virtues of the will to truth. A paradigmatic ascetic, the saint is characterized by his rejections. The very first sentence that introduces the saint mentions his bodily self-denial (Zarathustra meets him as he scavenges for roots in the woods). But as was the case with the *Genealogy's* ascetics, his rejections are most fundamentally oriented towards *other* people. The saint reveals to Zarathustra the following reason for his solitude:

“Why,” asked the saint, “did I go into the forest and the desert? Was it not because I loved man all-too-much? Now I love God; man I love not. Man is for me too imperfect a thing. Love of man would kill me.”¹³⁸

The reason for the saint's disillusionment is articulated with great brevity – he says only that humankind is imperfect. But this is enough. The word “imperfect” is negative, and here we have the connection to the masks of the ascetic ideal that Nietzsche examines in the third essay of the *Genealogy*. Little is said regarding the love of God itself; rather this guiding love of the saint's life is the name for the saint's rejection of humankind. He loves God because he cannot love humankind. The saint distinguishes himself by his rejections, and these rejections are the secret to his courage to stand alone.

The saint responds cynically to Zarathustra's intent to leave his solitude in order to share his wisdom, citing the incapacity of humankind to receive spiritual gifts:

“Then see to it that they accept your treasures. They are suspicious of hermits and do not believe that we come with gifts. Our steps sound too lonely through the streets. And what if at night, in their beds, they hear a man walk by long before the sun has risen – they probably ask themselves, Where is the thief going?”¹³⁹

¹³⁸ TSZ, Preface 2.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

Superficially considered, in this exchange Zarathustra seems young and hopeful, the saint jaded and experienced. But as we have seen in the *Genealogy*, even gestures of cynicism can themselves be expressions of a qualified kind of affirmation. This is revealed to be true of the saint when Zarathustra asks him how he spends his solitude, and the saint responds:

“I make songs and sing them; and when I make songs, I laugh, cry, and hum: thus I praise God. With singing, crying, laughing, and humming, I praise the god who is my god.”¹⁴⁰

The saint has his joys. Indeed his gestures are not nearly as subterranean as the philosopher’s. It is perhaps their simplicity that moves Zarathustra to immediately bid the saint farewell in fear that he might destroy the latter’s affirmations, saying:

“What could I have to give you? But let me go quickly lest I take something from you!”¹⁴¹

Whereas Schopenhauer had the delight of his malice, the holy fool has his songs to birds. Here we have an honest incarnation of the ascetic ideal, one that perhaps exceeds the philosophical mask in its subtlety if not in its intellectual development. The saint says a simple Yes among the birds and bears of the forest, and in this gesture there seems no room for the negating opposition of the moral slave. His words are neither black-green nor bilious. But the condition of his gestures remains his lack of love towards humankind. This is why Zarathustra hastens to depart. Like Nietzsche, Zarathustra still honors the genuine ascetic who can find happiness in the roots of the woods and the songs of his solitude. But Zarathustra’s teachings of the Overman and the Eternal Return

¹⁴⁰ TSZ, Preface 2.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

project past the horizon of the self-overcoming of the will to truth, while the saint remains a representative of this will.

Respectful, but recognizing his fundamental difference, Zarathustra speaks to himself as he leaves:

“Could it be possible? This old saint in the forest has not yet heard anything of this, that *God is dead!*”¹⁴²

Zarathustra’s expression here inhabits the world of the saint. “God” is the saint’s name for the object of his love, but Zarathustra understands the meaning of this name to be negative. “God” means not-humankind. His perfection means their imperfection. God expresses a will to a beyond, a slandering of the earth, a devaluation of all externality and presence. Thus Zarathustra could likewise have wondered to himself, if he instead spoke the language of the *Genealogy*, how it was possible that the saint had not yet heard that the will to truth is a will to nothingness. The saint’s departure to his metaphoric desert is not done out of love of an ideal, but out of rejection and *ressentiment*. The saint does not love truth or God. He lacks love of humankind. No songs to the birds, however innocent their sound, can overcome this origin. We find in the final section of the book that the saint in the woods passes away – Zarathustra is informed of this by the higher man referred to as the retired Pope. And Zarathustra praises the integrity of this messenger: “Is it not your piety itself that no longer lets you believe in a god? And your overgreat honesty will yet lead you beyond good and evil too.”¹⁴³ Zarathustra will have much to say to the higher men who understand the problem of the self-overcoming of the will to truth, but with the saint he necessarily remains silent.

¹⁴² TSZ, Preface 2.

¹⁴³ TSZ, “Retired.”

Zarathustra and the Marketplace

Whereas the saint at least represents the qualified virtues of the ascetic ideal, Zarathustra is wholly disappointed by his encounter in the marketplace. Here he finds only the comedians of this ideal. Zarathustra's attempt to teach the overman is inevitably misunderstood because the crowd in the marketplace feels no compulsion to engage in the kinds of lacerating introspection demanded by the ascetic ideal. They are self-satisfied and incapable of projecting themselves towards a future valued for its opposition to the present. That is, they are incapable of the demands of the will to truth and hence useless as companions for a journey beyond this horizon.

Zarathustra introduces himself in the guise of an ascetic. His first expression is the negative pronouncement of the overman, which he delivers as a rejection of every present achievement and reality of humankind.

*I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? All beings so far have created something beyond themselves; and do you want to be the ebb of this great flood and even go back to the beasts rather than overcome man? What is the ape to man? A laughing-stock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment.*¹⁴⁴

Zarathustra's words are as thoroughly belittling of human deeds as the most vitriolic passages in Schopenhauer or Scripture. Here Zarathustra mimics the prophetic-moral tone that places primacy on No-saying. The overman says "No" to man.

But the crowd in the marketplace is incapable of this "No," because it cannot say "No" to itself. After Zarathustra's teachings of the overman are met with mockery, he reflects upon the reasons for this rejection:

¹⁴⁴ TSZ, Preface 2.

They do not understand me; I am not the mouth for these ears . . . They have something of which they are proud. What do they call that which makes them proud? Education they call it; it distinguishes them from goatherds. That is why they do not like to hear the word “contempt” applied to them.¹⁴⁵

The defining feature of the comedian of the ascetic ideal is her incapacity to internalize cruelty. The comedian is averse to self-contempt; she is incapable of the great ascetic gestures that seek to abolish the value of the gesture itself in various forms of self-laceration. She cannot say No to her own poses. She inevitably understands education as she would understand any mark of distinction – as a simple sign that collapses esteem and force, and which distinguishes her from the moral goatherds of the world. The marketplace is peopled with the moral provocateur, the dogmatic Churchmen, and the anti-Semite. Nietzsche emphasizes the impotent hatred that weds them to such visible signs as well as the simplicity of their gestures of derision in Zarathustra’s final observation of the crowd:

And now they look at me and laugh: and as they laugh they even hate me. There is ice in their laughter.”¹⁴⁶

Zarathustra’s two initial encounters with the saint and in the marketplace reorient his project. He now realizes that he seeks select companions. The language of the *Genealogy* is helpful here. Zarathustra cannot expect to be understood by those with an underdeveloped will to truth, as his fundamental encounter is with the dominance and overcoming of this will. The marketplace is not the place to honestly engage this dominance, for the crowd is only capable of miming its gestures. Nor can Zarathustra find companions among the genuine ascetics, who still believe they affirm this will.

¹⁴⁵ TSZ, Preface 5.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

They are relics of the passing age. Like Wagner or Schopenhauer, they still believe their ascetic gestures to constitute the rupture between noble and slave. But Zarathustra knows of God's death and the attenuated force of the will to truth. Zarathustra's task begins at the point of the second problematic of the will to truth. And rather than emphasize its negative function (as a will to nothingness), he seeks an affirmative expression of the will.

The Three Metamorphoses

Zarathustra's search for a new audience is initially expressed negatively. He cannot speak to ascetics, and certainly not to the crowd. But this realization compels him to a positive expression. "On the Three Metamorphoses" develops the companions that Zarathustra seeks, who must embody aspects of both the lion and the child.

The first form of the spirit's metamorphosis – the camel – remains significant because of its continuities with the form of the lion. The defining feature of the former is the endeavor to endure hardship.

What is difficult? asks the spirit that would bear much, and kneels down like a camel wanting to be well loaded. What is most difficult, O heroes, asks the spirit that would bear much, that I may take it upon myself and exult in my strength? Is it not humbling oneself to wound one's haughtiness? Letting one's folly shine to mock one's wisdom?¹⁴⁷

We are of course standing before the ascetic here. Zarathustra, like Nietzsche, recognizes that a substantial transformation is required even to reach this stage. The crowd in the

¹⁴⁷ TSZ, "On the Three Metamorphoses."

marketplace was incapable of any self-inflicted wound; only the saint had the overflowing strength that turned inwards. But this strength stagnates when it repeats the same gestures. The saint in the woods no longer bears the heaviest burden by merely serving penance for the sins of humankind.

The second metamorphosis of the spirit is expressed by a new rejection, more demanding than the ascetic denials. The lion devalues moral valuations themselves. This rejection – insofar as it remains a negation – is continuous with the ascetic form of the camel. Yet it also opens the possibility of a new kind of gesture. The continuity and rupture with the ascetic is intertwined in Zarathustra’s figuration of the lion.

Who is the great dragon whom the spirit will no longer call lord and god? “Thou shalt” is the name of the great dragon. But the spirit of the lion says, “I will.” “Thou shalt” lies in his way, sparkling like gold, an animal covered with scales; and on every scale shines a golden “thou shalt.” Values, thousands of years old, shine on these scales; and thus speaks the mightiest of all dragons: “All value of all things shines on me. All value has long been created, and I am all created value. Verily, there shall be no more ‘I will.’” Thus speaks the dragon . . . To create new values – that even the lion cannot do; but the creation of freedom for oneself for new creation – that is within the power of the lion. The creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred “No” even to duty – for that, my brothers, the lion is needed. To assume the right to new values – that is the most terrifying assumption for a reverent spirit that would bear much . . . He once loved “thou shalt” as most sacred . . .¹⁴⁸

The most sacred “thou shalt” was the foundation of meaning and value. The lion’s triumph over the dragon is not the bold conquest of one beast over another, but rather the lion’s self-conquering and self-laceration. The moral pose is the ascetic’s love, and the spirit is transformed when it denies itself this love.

For this self-laceration is also a self-conquering. Zarathustra expresses this in the transition from the language of obligation to the language of will. Whereas the dragon

¹⁴⁸ TSZ, “On the Three Metamorphoses.”

prohibits, the lion wills. This will, expressed in the lion, is still negative. The lion's will is still a will to truth. The lion applies the standard of truth to the very value of the ascetic pose and finds the latter to be a lie – a grand and golden dragon hidden beneath the humble ascetic's robes. But this rejection at least expresses a will and a culmination of the spirit that bears much and reserves its most resounding No for that which it loves most. The lion requires all the power of a will that integrates its force towards a singular goal, and not the fractured strength of the ascetic that is diverted to its sundry poses.

Whereas the difference between the lion and camel could not be articulated without an expression of their continuity, the final metamorphosis is introduced strictly by the difference between the two forms of the spirit. Zarathustra says, "But say, my brothers, what can the child do that even the lion could not do?"¹⁴⁹ This introduction is appropriate because the child is a leap beyond the self-overcoming of the will to truth. Her particular actions cannot be envisaged from the standpoint of the lion other than to say that the lion could not accomplish them. Whereas the lion's No-saying was but the integrated force of the camel's gesture of negation, the child is a new beginning.

Why must the preying lion still become a child? The child is innocence and forgetting, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred "Yes." For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred "Yes" is needed: the spirit now wills his own will, and he who had been lost to the world now conquers the world.¹⁵⁰

The metamorphosis from lion to child is the overcoming of a temporal deficiency. The lion initiates a rupture with all past values (ascetic values), but is incapable of the creation of new values to replace them. The lion can open the horizon to the future but cannot initiate a future. Insofar as the lion iterates the gesture of the camel, this form of

¹⁴⁹ TSZ, "On the Three Metamorphoses."

¹⁵⁰ Ibid.

the spirit can only project the reversal of previous valuations into the future without being able to bring this about by a gesture of its own. Zarathustra's characterization of the child should thus be interpreted as a reversal of this impotence. The child is not pure innocence, but the innocence of forgetting and leaving behind the asceticism of the spirit. The child is not a first movement in an unqualified sense, but is rather a self-propelled wheel that, once put into free motion by the lion's rejection, can then move beyond this rejection.

Zarathustra culminates such expressions by saying that the child "wills his own will." Superficially, the expression sounds circular. But in the context of the development of Nietzsche's thought (including its chronological extension past the text of *Zarathustra*), this formulation suggests a transformation of established valuations and an opening to future ones.

The *Genealogy* concludes with the claim that the will to truth is a will to nothingness. The will to truth is fundamentally devaluing, and in this form dishonestly perpetuates the present by the impossible promise of a future in which valuations are reversed. The expression of a will that wills its own will is not meant to be a final formulation that clarifies the self-overcoming of the will to truth. Instead it indicates that nothingness as the object of the will is to be replaced, and that such a task requires a rupture greater than that between the lion and camel, which is only the first movement of the self-overcoming of the will to truth. The cultivation of this new will is developed in Zarathustra's elaboration of the meaning of self-overcoming in book 2.

On Self-Overcoming

The will that wills itself is no longer a will to nothingness. But towards what does this will strive? Zarathustra suggests that all will to truth is really will to power. Such a will is in one sense opposite to the will to truth, which devalues every gesture that indicates present and external force. The will to power on the other hand seeks its own forcefulness. Yet Zarathustra emphasizes that this will is not productive of the noble signs of concurrent force and esteem by developing will to power as a culmination of the self-overcoming of will to truth. Thus the gestures of the will to power affirm even what they reject, and in so doing suggest much more nuanced meanings than those noble expressions that collapse force and esteem.

Zarathustra's interpretation of the will to truth exceeds Nietzsche's conclusions in the *Genealogy*. This is not to say that one text is superior or inferior to the other. The reason that Nietzsche stops by naming the kernel of the will to truth as a will to nothingness is to bring to completion his development of the excess force that is expressed in all willing. And Zarathustra cannot prove to the saint why the will to truth must necessarily overcome itself; only the *Genealogy* does this. But Zarathustra must also take up a task that goes beyond the scope of the *Genealogy* in his active advocacy of the will. Zarathustra goes under. As such, he must venture a name for the projection of this will. He says that will projects towards power.

“Will to truth,” you who are wisest call that which impels you and fills you with lust? A will to the thinkability of all beings: this *I* call your will. You want to *make* all being thinkable, for you doubt with well-founded suspicion that it is already thinkable. But it shall yield and bend for you. Thus your will wants it. It shall become smooth and serve the spirit as its mirror and reflection. That is your whole will, you who are wisest: a will to power- when you speak of good and

evil too, and of valuations. You still want to create the world before which you can kneel: that is your ultimate hope and intoxication.¹⁵¹

Here Zarathustra names the projection of the excess of force produced in the will to truth.

The will to truth is a will to the transformation of the world in one's own image. This creativity is fundamentally an expression of power. But Zarathustra, like Nietzsche, recognizes the prior necessity of the destruction of the old temples. The perspective necessary to understand will to power emerges in the self-overcoming of the will to truth.

Whatever I create and however much I love it – soon I must oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it. And you too, lover of knowledge, are only a path and footprint of my will; verily, my will to power walks also on the heels of your will to truth.¹⁵²

This destructive movement by which the will opposes what it loves is the same movement developed with great clarity in the *Genealogy*. Here Zarathustra adds a name for the will that emerges out of this self-overcoming. Zarathustra characterizes this will to power by the violence of its valuations.

Verily, I say unto you: good and evil that are not transitory, do not exist. Driven on by themselves, they must overcome themselves again and again. With your values and words of good and evil you do violence when you value; and this is your hidden love and the splendor and trembling and overflowing of your soul. But a more violent force and a new overcoming grow out of your values and break egg and eggshell.¹⁵³

The will to power is more violent, more forceful. The force of this will is magnified through its manifestation as the will to truth. Will to power names the most destructive will (“and whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values”)¹⁵⁴, and this superlative force is at this point its identifying

¹⁵¹ TSZ, “On Self-Overcoming.”

¹⁵² Ibid. Some nuance is lost in the English translation. The word translated as “heels” here is *Füssen*. The German verb *füssen* means “to be based on.”

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

feature. But Zarathustra is only at the beginning of an understanding of this will insofar as he recognizes its force negatively in relation to what it overcomes. He characterizes this will by its forcefulness, but this force still remains measured by what it destroys. This limitation is the cause of Zarathustra's concern about the impotence even of will to power, which manifests itself as his nausea.

Nausea

Zarathustra's exuberant declaration of the will to power behind all will to truth is threatened by his encounter with the soothsayer. (The German for "soothsayer" is *Wahrsager*; the term shares a root with *Wahrheit*, or "truth.") The words of this representative of the will to truth force Zarathustra to realize that his affirmative joy in his destructive power was premature. The soothsayer speaks:

—And I saw a great sadness descend upon mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: "All is empty, all is the same, all has been!"¹⁵⁵

These words unsettle Zarathustra and initiate a period of weariness and distress. "All is empty, all has been" is the refrain of the will to truth, which devalues every gesture by the repeated dissociation of force and esteem. Each new gesture arises only to be destroyed, and Zarathustra's concern is that even the movement of self-overcoming is insufficient to generate a rupture with the nihilism of this will. Since the will to truth promises a valuational reversal in the future but can only perpetuate its present mode of valuation, must not all will to power remain bound by its past, by its larval form as will to

¹⁵⁵ TSZ, "The Soothsayer."

truth? Must not every gesture of force be measured only by its destruction? If so, all will to power remains impotent in its confrontation with the past insofar as it is only a repetition of the will to truth.

Zarathustra interprets his distress temporally:

To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all “it was” into a “thus I willed it” – that alone should I call redemption. Will – that is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer; thus I taught you, my friends. But now learn this too: the will itself is still a prisoner. Willing liberates; but what is it that puts even the liberator himself in fetters? “It was” – that is the name of the will’s gnashing of teeth and most secret melancholy. Powerless against what has been done, he is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that he cannot break time and time’s covetousness, that is the will’s loneliest melancholy.

The temporal impotence of the will is an affliction of all willing. The projection of this will – whether it moves towards truth or power – is not specified here. But Zarathustra soon distinguishes between the historical consequences of this impotence and his future hopes for the redemption of the will. Regarding the former, Zarathustra interprets the dominion of the ascetic ideal and the will to truth as a response to the will’s enervation.

The spirit of revenge, my friends, has so far been the subject of man’s best reflection; and where there was suffering, one always wanted punishment too. For “punishment” is what revenge calls itself; with a hypocritical lie it creates a good conscience for itself. Because there is suffering in those who will, inasmuch as they cannot will backwards, willing itself and all life were supposed to be – a punishment. And now cloud upon cloud rolled over the spirit, until eventually madness preached, “Everything passes away; therefore everything deserves to pass away.”¹⁵⁶

The slavish economy of suffering is the framework for the interpretation of suffering as punishment. Through the proliferation of signs produced in this economy, every gesture is eternally devalued in its deepest interiority. Thus the conclusion that “everything deserves to pass away,” when understood as both a slavish product and a response to the

¹⁵⁶ TSZ, “On Redemption.”

temporal impotence of the will, also must entail that existence is an eternal punishment for a debt that cannot be discharged. Suffering is the product of the will's incapacity, and the moral slave magnifies the meaning of this suffering until it is an eternal punishment. The brute fact that everything passes away becomes not only a justification of this passing, but the deepest devaluation of finitude and becoming itself. The "bad" fact has been interpreted as a sign of "evil."

No deed can be annihilated: how could it be undone by punishment? This, this is what is eternal in the punishment called existence, that existence must eternally become deed and guilt again. Unless the will should at last redeem himself, and willing should become not willing.

The resolution to such a problem (from the perspective of the will to truth) is the will to nothingness. It is no accident that Schopenhauer, that honest and courageous ascetic, is referenced here. Within the domain of the will to truth, the will cannot overcome its impotence.

The only possibility for resisting the soothsayer's melancholy prophecy is through a kind of willing that esteems and interprets differently than the will to truth. Such a will must actively affirm everything past, and in this affirmation create a new power.

All "it was" is a fragment, a riddle, a dreadful accident – until the creative will says to it, "But thus I willed it." Until the creative will says to it, "But thus I will it; thus shall I will it." But has the will yet spoken thus? And when will that happen? Has the will been unharnessed yet from his own folly? Has the will yet become his own redeemer and joy-bringer? Has he unlearned the spirit of revenge and all gnashing of teeth? And who taught him reconciliation with time and something higher than any reconciliation? For that will which is the will to power must will something higher than any reconciliation; but how shall this be brought about? Who could teach him also to will backwards?¹⁵⁷

The will to power is explicitly linked to creativity as opposed to destruction. Though the erection of every new temple requires first that a temple be destroyed, though "whoever

¹⁵⁷ TSZ, "On Redemption."

must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values,¹⁵⁸ this destructive force must be a stage that is overcome in the metamorphosis of the will. Such destructive force is only the lion's gesture.

But how can one affirm the long shadow of the ascetic ideal, its nihilistic consequences at the pinnacle of its power, and what is perhaps most difficult of all, the crowd in the marketplace that lives under the shadow of this ideal without comprehending it? This is the practical challenge that orients Zarathustra's endeavors throughout the remainder of the text, and which he meets with the thought of the eternal recurrence.

Zarathustra does not underestimate the difficulty of his task. The way to the creative and affirmative will to power requires a confrontation with what Zarathustra calls his "most abysmal thought." He is referring to an aspect of the eternal recurrence, the nihilistic threat of this thought that produces Zarathustra's nausea. This nausea indicates two things. The first is Zarathustra's difficulty in wiling the long history of the dominance of the ascetic ideal. The second is the limitation that this past history places on the present and the current forms of willing, or in other words, the influence of the will to truth on all will to power.

Zarathustra challenges this aspect of the eternal recurrence in the same breath that he names himself as the advocate of the circle.

Zarathustra, the godless, summons you! I, Zarathustra, the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle; I summon you, my most abysmal thought! Hail to me! You are coming, I hear you. My abyss speaks, I have turned my ultimate depth inside out into the light. Hail to me! Come here! Give me your hand! Huh! Let go! Huhhuh! Nausea, nausea, nausea, woe unto me!¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ TSZ, "On Self-Overcoming."

¹⁵⁹ TSZ, "The Convalescent."

As the advocate of the circle, Zarathustra is not threatened by the circularity of time itself. Insofar as he advocates this, he could only be nauseated by its opposite, by some obstruction to this circularity. Indeed Zarathustra's difficulties arise from his efforts to say yes to that which resists the affirmation of the eternal recurrence.

The first such difficulty is the affirmation of the past dominance of the will to truth.

This is my pity for all that is past: I see how all of it is abandoned – abandoned to the pleasure, the spirit, the madness of every generation, which comes along and reinterprets all that has been as a bridge to itself.¹⁶⁰

Zarathustra seeks to make humankind into a bridge to the overman, but he observes the opposite as the dominant tendency of the past. The will to truth interprets all of history as a bridge to itself. It incorporates all competing ideals and perpetuates itself in the mutual referencing of the interior and futural sites of valuation. The will to truth is futureless, for it requires the repetition of the same devaluing gesture – we have already seen that the particular form of this gesture is insignificant. Tertullian, Wagner, and Schopenhauer all make the same gestures of negation, despite the fact that they all believe their particular form of No-saying to be a culmination of the past. Or rather, it is precisely because they believe that their particular ascetic gestures to distance themselves from past negations that they merely repeat them.

Time, from the vantage point of the will to truth, is linear. Each successive moment produces an increasing distance between present and past. What is past can only be “justified” by way of negation, by banishing it forever to the has-been and incorporating it with the present only by its negation. “Reconciliation” is the highest

¹⁶⁰ TSZ, “On Old and New Tablets.”

achievement that this type of justification can achieve, a resigned acceptance of a past to which one never wants to return. .

This No-saying memory is at least the honest expression of the will to truth. The other possibility for linear time is a complete eradication of the past.

This, however, is the other danger and what prompts my further pity: whoever is of the rabble, thinks back as far as the grandfather; with the grandfather, however, time ends. Thus all that is past is abandoned: for one day the rabble might become master and drown all time in shallow waters.¹⁶¹

Rather than confront the past in an attempt to banish it, the “rabble” forgets it entirely. This requires none of the ascetic’s courage; at least the camel seeks to test itself by bearing much. But in the end the distinction that seems so significant to the ascetic is minimal to Zarathustra (who leaves behind both saint and crowd). For Zarathustra cannot affirm linear time. The past cannot be erased by amnesia or opposition. The thought that chokes him with nausea is that he must affirmatively say yes to the past, to will it to again become present and to be repeated infinitely into the future. Zarathustra must advocate the circle, even those expressions within the ring of becoming that occlude the circularity of time.

This brings us to Zarathustra’s problem. How is he to overcome the limitations that this will has cast over all willing? How can Zarathustra overcome the devaluation of the past and the interpretation of the will to truth as merely a bridge to the overman? Is he not limited to a reconciliation with the will to truth, to an acceptance of it only on the condition that its temples be destroyed? Zarathustra expresses his concern by emphasizing the proximity of what he calls the greatest and smallest man.

¹⁶¹ TSZ, “On Old and New Tablets.”

Naked I had once seen both, the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest all-too-human. All-too-small, the greatest! – that was my disgust with man. And the eternal recurrence even of the smallest – that was my disgust with all existence. Alas! Nausea! Nausea! Nausea!¹⁶²

In the linear time of the will to truth, the distance between moments perpetually widens. But in the circular time that Zarathustra envisions, each point leads away from itself as it bends back towards itself. The distance produced between times concurrently increases from the point of departure and decreases towards the point of return. Zarathustra laments that the greatest and smallest stand on too small an arc on the circle of time, there is not enough movement between them. And the way to produce this movement is to affirm even its lack. Zarathustra cannot will the overman as he did in the marketplace, strictly through the devaluation of humankind in its extant forms of life. But this means that every expression of Zarathustra's task seems caught in a paradox. Zarathustra's nausea is the realization that he must say Yes even to the proximity of the small and the great. Yet this affirmation widens the distance between Zarathustra's great gesture of affirmation and all that has hitherto been willed as will to truth. But yet again, in producing this distance Zarathustra affirms the infinite recurrence of its absence.

This task demands new values and the creative will, for it is not the endeavor of the noble or slave. The signficatory abundance of the slavish economy of suffering affirms only gestures of negation, but Zarathustra must exceed the negation of the past. But he is not seeking a return to the simple noble economy either, for he seeks to affirm all gestures, and not only those brutish signs of crude noble force. Zarathustra wants to say Yes, so he cannot be a slave. And he wants to say Yes more deeply and expansively than the noble could fathom was possible. He wants to say Yes even to the suffering that

¹⁶² TSZ, "The Convalescent."

only the slave could comprehend. Zarathustra's strategies for doing so are revealed when he achieves his own convalescence and the convalescence of the higher men.

The Affirmative Moment

In order to confront his most deeply rooted nausea Zarathustra must seek the greatest men so that he can teach them to affirm even their proximity to the smallest, which at the same time means to cultivate an affirmative power that will bring them to the heights of their greatness. This is his task in the final book of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

The cries of distress that reach Zarathustra atop his mountain draw him to the higher men, whom Zarathustra initially finds to be adherents of the will to truth.

Consider for instance his analysis of the magician:

You wicked old magician, this is what is best and most honest about you, and this I honor: that you wearied of yourself and said it outright: "I am not great." In this I honor you as an ascetic of the spirit; and even if it was only a wink and a twinkling, in this one moment you were genuine.¹⁶³

This honest asceticism is what constitutes the elevation of the higher men. As we saw in the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche praises the ascetic ideal in its most advanced forms,¹⁶⁴ for they magnify the force of the will to truth and hence serve to bring this will to the point of its self-overcoming.

¹⁶³ TSZ, "The Magician." We noted previously in the chapter that Zarathustra also praises the retired Pope for the integrity of his will to truth.

¹⁶⁴ The exclamation we examined before was: "All honor to the ascetic ideal *insofar as it is honest!*" (GM III, 26)

Of course, according to the very condition of this praise, Zarathustra must also rebuff them for being remnants of the ascetic ideal, for not being fully capable of the negating gesture of the lion. These higher men are incapable of rejecting this ideal.

Only as signs have you come to me, that those higher than you are even now on their way to me: *not* the men of great longing, of great nausea, of great disgust, and that which you called the remnant of God; no, no, three times no! It is for others that I wait here in these mountains, and I will not lift my feet from here without them; it is for those who are higher, stronger, more triumphant, and more cheerful, such as are built perpendicular in body and soul: *laughing lions* must come!¹⁶⁵

Here we are introduced to a missing link in the parable of the three metamorphoses. Bridging the gap between the child (who recall is defined by the capabilities that the lion lacks) and the lion is the *laughing* lion. What the lion had inherited from the camel was the renouncing spirit. As the lion rejects that which it loves most, it endures its greatest hardship. But the laughing lion completes this gesture without being burdened by the spirit of gravity. Zarathustra seeks to overcome the will to truth and to laugh while doing so. And if he can get the higher men to laugh as well, then he will begin to distinguish them from the smallest by teaching them this joy in negation.

The convalescence of the higher men in Zarathustra's cave is marked by an unsteady succession of advancements and regressions. They too experience nausea induced by their incapacity to break the hold of the will to truth, but they are also simultaneously intoxicated by it. In Zarathustra's company they at times appear to be on the verge of overcoming this nausea, but Zarathustra's departures initiate periods of melancholy and nostalgia for the only ideal they have hitherto known. In one such episode, the one referred to as the conscientious man praises scientific practice – which Nietzsche in the *Genealogy* names as the vanguard of the will to truth – and recommends

¹⁶⁵ TSZ, "The Welcome."

it for its capacity to sublimate primal fear. That is, the conscientious man praises the will to truth as it is manifested in scientific practice.¹⁶⁶

For fear is the original and basic feeling of man; from fear everything is explicable, original sin and original virtue. From fear my own virtue too has grown, and it is called: science. For the fear of wild animals, that was bred in man longest of all – including the animal he harbors inside himself and fears: Zarathustra calls it “the inner beast.” Such long old fear, finally refined, spiritualized, spiritual – today, it seems to me, this is called *science*.¹⁶⁷

This is an abbreviated form of the now familiar argument that Nietzsche develops in considerable depth in the *Genealogy*, where he claims that ascetic expressions of the will to truth are motivated by the rejection of what is considered beastly in humankind. Noble gestures are denigrated as animalistic, and their opposite esteemed. But unlike Nietzsche, the conscientious man understands this as the terminal development of the will to truth.

Zarathustra, upon returning and hearing the conscientious man’s speech, repudiates it for its fundamental negativity. Truth does not stop simply at rejection; the will to truth, even as a will to nothingness, remains a will. Science, as a vanguard expression of the will to truth, cannot only be a no-saying reaction against what is feared. For the will to truth to be overcome, one must affirm the origin of this will. Thus Zarathustra reverses the account of the conscientious man and says to him:

What did I hear just now? Verily, it seems to me that you are a fool, or that I am one myself; and your “truth” I simply reverse. For *fear* – that is our exception. But courage and adventure and pleasure in the uncertain, in the undared – *courage* seems to me man’s whole prehistory. He envied the wildest, most courageous animals and robbed all their virtues: only thus did he become man. *This* courage, finally refined, spiritualized, spiritual, this human courage with eagles’ wings and serpents’ wisdom – *that*, it seems to me, is today called –¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ The conscientious man is responding to the magician’s attempt to lure the higher men back to the standard of truth by portraying truth as an intoxicating passion. The conscientious man, by contrast, thinks that truth leads away from such dangers.

¹⁶⁷ TSZ, “On Science.”

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

The omitted word could be “science,” or it could be “truth” itself. Zarathustra’s claim is that the highest and most spiritualized expressions of truth do not originate merely out of opposition, but rather through affirmation. Thus Zarathustra understates the significance of his speech, for he is not merely enacting a simple reversal. Though courage is the opposite of fear, the important difference in Zarathustra’s account is that he affirms even the origin of the will to truth (an affirmation which foreshadows Nietzsche’s own development of the affirmative character of the ascetic ideal in the third essay of the *Genealogy*.) Zarathustra, with the intention of breaking the hold of the will to truth in the higher men, here affirms its origin and its particular virtues. And the response of the higher men, as one might expect in those whom Zarathustra wants to turn into laughing lions, is laughter.

“*Zarathustra!*” all who were sitting together cried as with one mouth, and they raised a great laughter that rose above them like a heavy cloud.”¹⁶⁹

What Zarathustra has accomplished here, and the higher men as well to the extent that they can sustain their laughter, is an act of willing backwards. Zarathustra does not resign himself to the past dominance of the ascetic ideal but instead lauds its virtues. Zarathustra’s will strives for something higher than any reconciliation. Such a will is fundamentally different from all will to truth, which can only devalue. In this moment Zarathustra and his guests are ripe for the affirmation of the eternal recurrence. Zarathustra wills the dominance of the will to truth and affirms it. In this affirmation he ruptures the mode of willing and valuation that defined the will to truth. By affirming the past, Zarathustra crosses the bridge to the future. By moving away from the ascetic ideal, Zarathustra arcs back toward it on the ring of time. He simultaneously wills that the

¹⁶⁹ TSZ, “On Science.”

ascetic ideal has been dominant and that its dominion be ruptured by the very affirmation of this dominance.

Yet Zarathustra still has reservations. Immediately after the great laughter at Zarathustra's words, the magician receives applause from the higher men for a clever speech in which he defends himself for having attempted to seduce the higher men to the will to truth in Zarathustra's absence. Zarathustra again departs, encouraged by his disciples' growing ability to affirm ("*This* I take to be the best sign: they become grateful"),¹⁷⁰ but concerned about the object of their affirmations.

Shortly after, Zarathustra reenters his cave to find the higher men celebrating the ass festival (the higher men's anointment and genuflection before the donkey that carried the belongings of the two kings, the first of the higher men Zarathustra encounters). This episode clearly has comic elements, but Nietzsche carefully chooses the higher men's words. Their veneration is expressed in a deliberate mixture of traditional expressions of piety (e.g. "He carries our burden, he took upon himself the form of a servant"¹⁷¹) with tributes to the affirmative capacity that they imagine the beast to possess. The latter, misapplied as they are, at least indicate a form of worship distinguishable from the ascetic manner. For instance, the higher men say, "He does not speak, except he always says Yea to the world he created: thus he praises his world."¹⁷² This is in part an opportunity for a jest, but it is expressions such as this that allow Zarathustra to affirm the ass festival for what it is. For although Zarathustra is initially dismayed, he comes to praise the higher men for the festival they have created.

¹⁷⁰ TSZ, "The Awakening."

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

. . . you strange higher men, how well I like you now since you have become gay again. Verily, you have all blossomed; it seems to me such flowers as you are require *new festivals*, a little brave nonsense, some divine service and ass festival, some old gay fool of a Zarathustra, a roaring wind that blows your souls bright. Do not forget this night and this ass festival, you higher men. *This* you invented when you were with me and I take that for a good sign: such things are invented only by convalescents. And when you celebrate it again, this ass festival, do it for your own sakes, and also do it for my sake. And in remembrance of *me*.¹⁷³

In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche claims that the noble interpreted all acts of cruelty as festival spectacles. And while recognizing that such brutality is entirely too stupid a thing to celebrate today, Nietzsche developed the advantages of the noble economy of suffering despite the fact that these noble gestures themselves can no longer be affirmed. Zarathustra praises the higher men for similar reasons. Despite the stupidity of their festival, they are at least festive. Their signs no longer require the devaluation of everything present and external.

This generation of a new expression of esteem, no matter how foolish, is a creative power. It is at least their invention, an affirmative production that will be remembered, and in this grateful memory can be repeated for its own sake as it is done in remembrance of Zarathustra and his teaching. The ass festival, accessed by grateful memory, can recur eternally. Thus the ugliest man says:

For the sake of this day, *I* am for the first time satisfied that I have lived my whole life. And that I attest so much is still not enough for me. Living on earth is worth while: one day, one festival with Zarathustra, taught me to love the earth.¹⁷⁴

The rest of the higher men also become conscious of their convalescence in Zarathustra's care, at which point Zarathustra reveals to them his vision of the eternal recurrence. The meaning of their affirmative moment at the festival, of their laughter at Zarathustra's

¹⁷³ TSZ, "The Ass Festival."

¹⁷⁴ TSZ, "The Drunken Song."

reversal of the genealogy of truth, of every affirmative moment in Zarathustra's cave, is the affirmation of the whole cycle of becoming:

Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you wanted one thing twice, if ever you said, "You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!" then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored – oh, then you *loved* the world. Eternal ones, love it eternally and evermore; and to woe too, you say: go, but return! *For all joy wants – eternity.*¹⁷⁵

The last man says that he is grateful for the whole of the past because of his affirmative moment with Zarathustra. Thus the last man wills backwards. But Zarathustra teaches that in this affirmative moment one wills not only all of the past, but all of the past *again*. Not simply that it happen for the sake of the present (this would remain a reconciliation), but that it happen again infinitely and for its own sake as a point upon the ring of becoming. Zarathustra teaches that willing backwards is willing the future repetition of the past. Such a willing is creative, because it gives birth continually to the affirmations of the eternal recurrence.

The Eternal Recurrence as the Excess of Noble and Slavish Valuations

The affirmation of the eternal recurrence is impossible to think within the noble or slavish economy of suffering. What is the value of the moment in which one says Yes to a single joy? The creation of affirmative values is originally associated with the noble economy of suffering, but Zarathustra does not affirm in the noble manner. His affirmation is not the collapse of force and value into the simplest gesture. Rather,

¹⁷⁵ TSZ, "The Drunken Song."

Zarathustra says that a single Yes affirms all moments. The meaning of every gesture proliferates through the entire ring of becoming; the laughter in Zarathustra's cave or remembrance of the ass festival affirms all future and all past. The noble gave no consideration to suffering; she banished it by actively forgetting it in a displacing gesture of strength. Or, in the most extreme cases, she banished it to the realm of nonsense. But for Zarathustra it is the brave nonsense of the ass festival that affirms even suffering. This is a fulfillment of the promise of the moral slave, who sought the most distant futural meanings in every signification of value. Zarathustra's affirmations exceed noble ones by virtue of the proliferation of their meanings across all times. In this sense Zarathustra's gestures exceed the meaning of noble gestures in the manner of the slavish gesture.

But yet his gestures are not slavish. What is the value of suffering to the moral slave? The production of a valuational reversal in the future. Gestures only indicate value by negating evil. But suffering is affirmed as part of the eternal recurrence, as inseparable from any moment of joy. Were it not, then Zarathustra could only reconcile himself to the past in the name of a negation of the will to truth, which would be but a perpetuation of the will to truth. He would, like the ascetic, the artist, or the philosopher, will nothingness. Zarathustra says "once more" to the whole of life; the moments of affirmation are not ecstatic but integrated. Joy wants eternity, but not the eternity of a self-contained moment. The meaning of the demand "Abide, moment!" is to want both joy and woe, to seek an infinity of moments, inclusive of all suffering.

*What does joy not want? It is thirstier, more cordial, hungrier, more terrible, more secret than all woe; it wants itself, it bites into itself, the ring's will strives in it; it wants love, it wants hatred, it is overrich, gives, throws away, begs that one might take it, thanks the taker, it would like to be hated; so rich is joy that it thirsts for woe, for hell, for hatred, for disgrace, for the cripple, for world – this world, oh, you know it!*¹⁷⁶

What then does joy not want? Nothing. The will that wills the eternal recurrence is the opposite of the will to nothingness. But this will is also the opposite of all noble will. For it responds to the problem of suffering, it proliferates the meanings of every sign to infinity, and overcomes woe by being overrich.

Zarathustra's will has become creative. Zarathustra creates a new affirmation, a new value, which can only be produced by exceeding noble and slavish modes of valuation. Insofar as Zarathustra wills the eternal recurrence, he exercises the child's will. He achieves this will by become a laughing lion, by making his rejection joyously in a way that affirms even what he negates. For the will to truth is overcome by the act of affirmation.

The text does not end with Zarathustra's affirmation of the eternal recurrence. There is one last episode after Zarathustra's final words to the higher men, in which a lion comes to rest at Zarathustra's feet. Zarathustra interprets its arrival as a sign of what has been and what is to come.

“The sign is at hand,” said Zarathustra, and a change came over his heart. And indeed, as it became light before him, a mighty yellow animal lay at his feet and pressed its head against his knees and out of love did not want to let go of him, and acted like a dog that finds its old master again. But the doves were no less eager in their love than the lion; and whenever a dove slipped over the lion's nose, the lion shook its head and was amazed and laughed.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁶ TSZ, “The Drunken Song.”

¹⁷⁷ TSZ, “The Sign.”

The lion responds to the dove (also a symbol of the Holy Spirit) with laughter. And this laughter is the bridge between the lion-gesture which negates out of the camel's desire to bear much and the gesture that negates out of affirmation. Zarathustra interprets the lion's appearance thus:

About all this Zarathustra spoke but a single sentence: "*My children are near, my children.*"¹⁷⁸

But who are Zarathustra's children? And what does it mean that the text ends with Zarathustra's attempt to interpret a sign, and not with his affirmation itself?

These questions are not independent. The question of Zarathustra's children is the question of the meaning of affirmation. How and to whom will he advocate the eternal recurrence by affirming it? Zarathustra's reflections will be instrumental in providing an answer.

And once more Zarathustra became absorbed in himself, and he sat down again on the big stone and reflected. Suddenly he jumped up. "Pity! Pity for the higher man!" he cried out, and his face changed to bronze. "Well then, *that* has had its time! My suffering and my pity for suffering – what does it matter? Am I concerned with *happiness*? I am concerned with my *work*. Well then! The lion came, my children are near, Zarathustra has ripened, my hour has come: this is *my morning, my day is breaking: rise now, rise, thou great noon!* Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave, glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains."¹⁷⁹

Outside of the moment when Zarathustra actively affirms all suffering, he is not concerned with his joy or happiness. He is concerned with his work. Affirmative moments within the eternal recurrence are rare, even after the "first" has been discovered. Thus Zarathustra returns to his task.

¹⁷⁸ TSZ, "The Sign."

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

But Zarathustra does think that he has broken the dominance of pity over his valuations. His nausea over the proximity of the greatest to the smallest, his worry that all willing was bound to devaluation and the will to truth, has been definitively overturned. Has he broken the hold of pity in the higher men? If so, they are his children, and they are near to him, still resting in his cave. Perhaps though Zarathustra has different children in mind. He had said to the higher men earlier that they are not his final concern:

My mind and my longing are directed toward the few, the long, the distant; what are your many small short miseries to me? You do not yet suffer enough to suit me! For you suffer from yourselves, you have not yet suffered *from man*.¹⁸⁰

If the higher men can only pity themselves, then they do not yet affirm like Zarathustra does. They affirm the whole of their lives, but not yet the whole of becoming.

Zarathustra's children are then temporally near; having enacted the lion's gesture, Zarathustra's children are now on the horizon, lured by his laughter and roar. Ultimately it doesn't matter whether the higher men themselves become Zarathustra's children or whether they are a bridge, for in overcoming his pity for them Zarathustra wills them to be as they are infinitely.

Zarathustra has finally exceeded all will to truth. He has for the first time fulfilled the promise of the will to truth by opening the future to the possibility of new valuations. He has magnified the power of the noble will by affirming what the noble could not affirm. But he is no longer within his midnight moment of affirmation. The affirmative moment is not the *telos* of Zarathustra's will, which does not cease when he affirms all of eternity in his singular joy. Zarathustra is back to his work. And it is at this reflective

¹⁸⁰ TSZ, "The Sign."

moment that we ask about the kind of will that can effect such an overcoming. What sort of will has Zarathustra cultivated?

Zarathustra's Will to Power

The will that wills the eternal recurrence is a will to power. The eternal recurrence cannot be thought within the slavish or noble economies of suffering; it is inaccessible to the simple signs of the noble world and incomprehensible to all will to truth. Only a creative will can generate the new values expressed in the eternal recurrence. And the generative force of this will exceeds the will to truth, which is impotent to create new values, as well as all noble willing, which affirms only the crudest and smallest gestures.

Nietzsche approaches the will to power in two ways. First, the will to power is reached negatively. The will to power names the power-hunger behind every ostensive ascetic gesture. The will to truth lies – every representative of the ascetic ideal was found to be an affirmer of her own gestures of negation. Thus, what every bearer of the will to truth really seeks is power. Will to power is the name for this will at the point of the self-overcoming of the will to truth, at the moment when the will to truth executes its final denial and says No even to itself. Will to truth has only been will to power all along; every pretension to the sanctity of moral valuations is a lie. The slave too wants only to enact the gestures of her domination.

But this sense of will to power remains nihilistic. Power replaces truth only because truth was found to be a deception. Will to power is an expression of the self-overcoming of the will to truth because it is the expression that destroys the will to truth.

It is the culmination of the destructive force of such a will. Thus will to power is the true interiority at the core of the will to truth, and this essence is cultivated, raised up, and expressed in its purest form.

Such an expression sounds morally metaphysical. And indeed it is. For this expression associates the force of the will to truth in its interiority with its culminating *telos* in a linear time. This doesn't mean that this expression does not indicate anything of the character of the will to truth. It only means that if this negative formulation expressed the entirety of the relationship between will to truth and will to power, then Nietzsche's thought cannot exceed morality and this will to truth.

The concern that will to truth cannot be ruptured is expressed by Zarathustra's worry that he cannot will backwards. If Zarathustra cannot affirm all that has been, then he merely perpetuates the will to truth by reconciling the past to the future only by its difference. If the future is valued for its atonement for the past, then one remains within the valuational framework of the will to truth.

But Zarathustra affirms his midnight moment and declares that his joy seeks even woe. He affirms the suffering that the noble ignored. He affirms the suffering that the slave interprets as an argument against life. This affirmation is a new valuation; its generation requires a creative power heretofore unknown. This affirmation can only be willed by a will to power. Will to truth is not powerful enough for it.

Nietzsche gives us the character of Zarathustra as the embodiment of will to power. In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche references Zarathustra only once, at the crucial moment at the end of the second essay when he asks the question of whether the negative character of his project ("What are you really doing, erecting an ideal of knocking one

down?) is also its absolute limit, or whether he can create a new ideal. Zarathustra is the key to the latter task:

At this point it behooves me only to be silent; or I shall usurp that to which only one younger, “heavier with future,” and stronger than I has a right – that to which only *Zarathustra* has a right . . . ¹⁸¹

Nietzsche remains relatively quiet about the creative will in the *Genealogy*, insofar as his project there is the development of the force that the will to truth brings to bear on itself, and then only afterwards the first revealing of the affirmatively excessive force behind such a will. Inevitably, the more systematic development of the necessity of the self-overcoming of the will to truth must have less to say about the furthest horizons beyond this act of culminating destruction. Again, Nietzsche’s primary task in that text is the destruction of a temple. But the character of Zarathustra is a living being. His task is not to develop a genealogical account of the will but to stand at the most advanced vanguard of willing. His task is different. Zarathustra simply bypasses the saint and the crowd in the marketplace, and the remnants of the ascetic ideal that he encounters (the higher men) are already seeking to overcome their will to truth.

So how does Zarathustra, favorably positioned as he is, generate this new valuation that exceeds all will to truth? What is the formula for his will to power? By what operation does one affirm the ring of becoming? Or in other words, how do we express the positive character of the will to power? How do we express its creative surplus by which the will to truth is overcome?

There is no formula for this affirmation. It strikes Zarathustra at the culmination of a ritual that had the appearance of a reversion back to ascetic forms. The will to power

¹⁸¹ GM II, §25.

is powerful in its capacity for absolute rupture. The will to power affirms what has never before been affirmed. In this way it is “a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred ‘Yes.’” Such an origin cannot be demonstrated or proven, but only lived.

And yet this rupture is not arbitrary. If it were, Nietzsche would be a relativist in the most superficial sense. He would simply be offering a different perspective in an ineffective attempt to unseat our deepest moral habits. For this rupture remains grounded in the negative force of the will to truth that finally directs it its nausea inwards, which becomes sick of itself as it asks the question of the value of truth.

Every attempt to express will to power negatively, as a function of the self-destructive force of the will to truth, remains trapped within the will to truth. Every attempt to express the will to power positively, in its pure affirmative character, requires the genealogy of the will to truth and the negating gesture by which the will to truth subsides. Zarathustra needs Nietzsche; Nietzsche needs Zarathustra.

In this way the determination of the will to power traverses a circle. Will to power cannot be thought without the destructive negation of the self-overcoming of the will to truth. But this self-overcoming is not destructive without the affirmative creativity of the will to power. As the affirmative creativity of the will to power departs from the reactivity of the will to truth, it strives back towards it in order to affirm even this reactivity. As with the moments of the eternal recurrence, each departure is a return.

Concretely, this movement is expressed in Zarathustra’s final proclamations that his children are near, and that he is concerned with his work. This means, according to the eternal recurrence, that his children are also present, and that they have been. When the future is no longer conceived as a site for the reversal of all valuations, the coming of

Zarathustra's children is no longer a redemptive promise, but is instead a present affirmation. Zarathustra's children have arrived. Yet their arrival extends into the infinite future, a temporal depth inaccessible even to the moral slave. The affirmation of their arrival is expressed as the preparation for their return in a recurring future. Their arrival presages the preparation for their return. Thus Zarathustra says he is concerned with his work and not his happiness. He does not affirm the infinitely recurring presence of his children, but prepares for their arrival anew. He works towards them. His work, and the temporal extension of his being, collapses to the moment of affirmation. And the moment of affirmation extends Zarathustra's will in ways inexpressible within the boundaries of all will to truth.

CONCLUSION

Perhaps it seems odd to claim that the meaning of the will to power cannot be expressed directly and succinctly, that its meaning has to be referenced back to the self-overcoming of the will to truth and the crisis of the dominance of this will. That its very expression strains the limits of our understanding, heirs as we are to only noble and slavish values, supposing that we lack the creative power of Zarathustra. After all, Nietzsche himself is at times direct and succinct. In the well known passage that concludes *The Will to Power*, he straightforwardly says that the world and everyone in it is will to power and nothing else besides. He describes the world as a flux of Dionysian energy, as a play of forces in perpetual contestation.

And I don't think such descriptions of will to power are unhelpful. But they are only partial. For what is lost in these articulations that lack the carefully developed context of Nietzsche's published works is their relationship to the entirety of Nietzsche's project of the revaluation of all values. Supposing that such a description of the universe as will to power is accurate, how does this description relate to the question of the possibility of affirmation in the shadow of the will to truth? What place does it have in Nietzsche's work?

There are hints in the aforementioned passage of the valuations expressed by such an interpretation of the world. This world-as-will-to-power is “. . . affirming itself . . . blessing itself as that which must return eternally, as a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness.”¹⁸² This world is affirmative, this world is free from the resentful weariness and disgust of the moral slave.

¹⁸² WP §1067.

But how is such an interpretation reached? Zarathustra achieves it by affirming even the weariness and disgust itself. He has no pity for the higher men; he affirms them even when they are in proximity to the lowest. Zarathustra says Yes to all the figurations of Apollo, even to the weariest forms and gestures. The world is a flux of Dionysian energy. But Dionysus needs Apollo.

Another way to state the same point is to say that the eternal recurrence is not just a cosmology. The latter is a simple description of the universe as one finds it, independent of how one integrates oneself to it. But Zarathustra is active, his will is creative. He doesn't make the universe into the recurring circle, but it is only by affirming the eternal recurrence that he joins his will to the ring of becoming. The world is will to power and nothing besides. But Zarathustra would never know it without the creative affirmation of his will.

As a keeper of notebooks myself, I have some experience of venturing thoughts into concrete form without cautiously checking, refining, and especially resisting them. This resistance is most important, recalling Nietzsche's claim from the preface to the *Genealogy* that the integrity of his thoughts was the most encouraging sign of their value. What any simple and cosmological interpretation of will to power lacks is this full integrity. To address the will to power one must go back to the will to truth, even further back to the crude noble, and all the way forward to the most creative acts of self-overcoming reserved for Zarathustra's children. Otherwise they cannot be integrated into Nietzsche's fundamental concern with valuations.

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