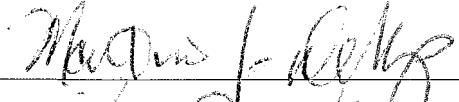


FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND THE WILL TO POWER

by

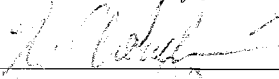
Derek T. Daskalakes
A Thesis
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Arts
Philosophy

Committee:



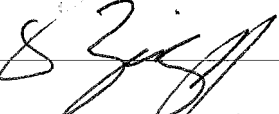
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Date: April 25, 2012

Spring Semester 2012
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Friedrich Nietzsche and the Will to Power

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at George Mason University

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Spring Semester 2012
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my mother, Carol J. Daskalakes. In life, she inspired me to be fearless in my explorations of the world and its ideas. In death, she has taught me to appreciate and savor the time I have despite the struggles and pain I will inevitably experience. That living completely means singing and dancing through the changing seasons of one's life in full knowledge that the music, one day, will stop. And, to know death, yet, not fear life was the highest expression of what it means to be human. That was her lesson; that was her gift.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people to whom I am indebted to for their contributions toward the completion of this project. First among them is my family, who never ceased to support me in the pursuit of my goals. I am grateful to my friends for understanding and forgiving my many absences. The guidance and perseverance of my Thesis Director, Dr. De Nys, made the completion of this project possible. The other members of my Thesis Committee, Drs. Cherubin and Froman, were equally invaluable to the development of my work. Dr. Hatab of Old Dominion University also generously contributed portions of his personal time towards my project. Lastly, I am grateful to the Philosophy Faculty of George Mason for accepting me into their halls and tutelage for the short time that I was there.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BT	The Birth of Tragedy
BGE	Beyond Good and Evil
GS	The Gay Science
GOM	The Genealogy of Morals
H1	Nietzsche, Volume 1
H2	Nietzsche, Volume 2
H3	Nietzsche, Volume 3
H4	Nietzsche, Volume 4
PPP	The Pre-Platonic Philosophers
PTA	Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks
TI	Twilight of the Idols
UWP	Prefaces to Unwritten Works
WTP	The Will to Power

ABSTRACT

FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE AND THE WILL TO POWER

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George Mason University, 2012

Thesis Director: Dr. Martin De Nys

“The time into which we have been thrown...disintegration characterizes this time...nothing stands firmly on its feet...everything on our way is slippery and dangerous, and the ice that still supports us has become thin: all of us feel the warm, uncanny breath of the thawing wind; where we still walk, soon no one will be able to walk.”¹

What follows will be an attempt to explore and move towards an assessment of Nietzsche’s attempt at overcoming the Western metaphysical and nihilistic tradition, with particular emphasis given to the theory of will to power. I will endeavor to examine how Nietzsche understood the theory, and in what way he intended it as an address to metaphysics and the problem of nihilism. My discussion will draw on several critical accounts of Nietzsche’s philosophy in an attempt to critically assess his theory of will to power. My ultimate aim will be to bring together the entirety of my examination in the

¹ WTP 57

form of a provisional assessment of will to power as an attempt to address the problem of nihilism by overcoming metaphysics.

This introductory discussion is intended to provide the reader with a basic framework from which to approach the remainder of my examination. In Chapter One I will focus on developing Nietzsche's understanding of pre-Socratic Greek culture and thought, and the influence I understand it to have had on the development of will to power within his thought. Pre-Socratic Greece, for Nietzsche, represented a counter-example to the manner in which meaning is conceived by the Western metaphysical tradition, as well as the comportment of life within the world on the basis of such meaning. I will examine the Greek affirmation of immanence and corporeality on the basis of art as Nietzsche understands it to be expressed in Greek culture, Greek tragedy, the Greek deities Dionysus and Apollo, and relevant portions of the philosophy of Heraclitus. I will similarly develop his understanding of metaphysics and the inception of the Western metaphysical tradition through an examination of relevant portions of the philosophies of Anaximander, Socrates and Plato. This contrast is intended to develop a larger issue regarding Nietzsche's understanding of how meaning is developed and employed within pre-Socratic Greece and the Western metaphysical tradition as it is expressed in the relation between art and truth. My examination in Chapter One is intended to provide a context from which the reader can understand the development of will to power in Nietzsche's thought, as well as his application of it as a constructive theory of meaning.

In Chapter Two I will attempt to develop the conceptual framework and philosophic import of will to power. I will begin by developing the following constellation of concepts as I perceive them to be constitutive of will to power: force, value and life. Furthermore, I will examine the way in which Nietzsche understood each concept to present a counter, or subversion, to the Western metaphysical tradition. I will then turn to examining the concepts will and power as separate and distinct terms in order to illustrate the manner in which Nietzsche attempts to transform their traditional meanings, as well as the significance intended in their unification as a singular term. I will then examine and elaborate upon will to power as a constructive theory of meaning, and the philosophic significance that obtains in relation to the Western metaphysical tradition. My purposes in Chapter Two will be to develop the specifics concerning will to power in an effort to establish a framework from which to discuss its application to the Western metaphysical tradition, to be held in the following chapter.

In Chapter Three I will undertake a close examination of Nietzsche's intended application of will to power to the Western metaphysical tradition. I will begin by examining Nietzsche's understanding of both metaphysics and nihilism. This will include an examination of the Western metaphysical forms of meaning and intelligibility, as Nietzsche understands them to be expressed in the traditional categories of truth and morality. Furthermore, I will attempt to establish in what way he understands such metaphysical categories to be problematic, in what sense nihilism is related to metaphysics, and how a resolution to the problem presented by the former requires the overcoming of the tradition grounded on the latter. That is to say I will examine in what

way Nietzsche intends to apply will to power to the metaphysical tradition, and thereby address the problem of nihilism in the form of a 'revaluation of all values.' I will conclude Chapter Three, as well as my study as a whole, by offering a provisional assessment of will to power within the context of Nietzsche's project of addressing the problem of nihilism by overcoming the metaphysical tradition.

NIETZSCHE AND THE GREEKS

My examination will begin precisely where Nietzsche began: pre-Socratic Greece. In this chapter I will attempt to examine Nietzsche's understanding of the Greeks in an effort to illumine both his interest in and retrieval of them within the context of his attempt to address the problem of nihilism by overcoming the metaphysical tradition.² My discussion will begin by illustrating the manner in which Nietzsche understood Greek culture as an incorporation and affirmation of corporeality. Next I will examine his development and usage of the concepts tragic, Dionysian and Apollonian as he understands them to represent the structure by which the Greeks affirmed and transfigured life on the basis of aesthetics. I will then examine Nietzsche's understanding of the philosophies of Anaximander and Heraclitus as I understand their confluence to have influenced Nietzsche's understanding of the Greeks and his later development of will to power. To conclude this chapter I will examine the impact that Nietzsche understands the persons of Socrates and Plato to have had on the Greek conception of life and the world, and the role they played in establishing the metaphysical tradition. My ultimate aim in this chapter will be to establish the assertion that Nietzsche's fundamental understanding and application of the Greeks in both his critique of modernity and

² Note that my reading of Nietzsche's understanding of metaphysics and nihilism will be examined in Chapter 3.

construction of will to power as a response to the problem of nihilism lies in the relation he perceives between art and truth.

I will begin by offering a series of questions for the reader to keep in mind during the reading of this chapter. In what sense is human life (hereafter, life)³ to understand the constitution of the world around it? Within the context of a determination of such, how is life to understand its relation to and orientation within it? What role, if any, does sense perception and experience play in the determination of such concepts? What role, if any, does the limited and corruptible (i.e. that which decays and dies) nature of corporeal life play in the determination of such concepts? What role, if any, does the struggling, suffering, and eventual death associated with corporeality play in the determination of such concepts? In what sense can meaning and intelligibility⁴ be understood within a context of corporeality and immanence?⁵ Such questions, as well as others, I think, lie at the heart of Nietzsche's thought and his retrieval of the Greeks.

How, then, did Nietzsche understand the Greeks and their relation to existence? He describes the Greeks as "the most human human beings," and "the most accomplished, most beautiful, most envied type of men so far, the most persuasive of

³ Note that my reading of Nietzsche's understanding and use of the concept life will be examined in Chapter 2. Here, and elsewhere in this chapter, my intended meaning is that of common parlance, and does not carry the technical connotations to be examined later.

⁴ Note my understanding and use of the terms meaning and intelligibility are meant coextensively. Where this is not the case, it will be noted.

⁵ My understanding and use of the term immanence is meant as a reference to the world of sense or phenomenal experience. My reading of Nietzsche's understanding of immanence and the connection it has with his project of overcoming metaphysics will be examined in Chapter 2.

life's seductions.”⁶ Nietzsche explains this characterization in noting, “What is amazing about... the ancient Greeks is the enormous abundance of gratitude...exuded: it is a very noble type of man that confronts nature and life in this way.”⁷ What distinguishes this ‘abundance of gratitude,’ for Nietzsche, was that “for a long time the sense of existence has only been looked for by positing it as something faulty or blameworthy, something unjust which ought to be justified...suffering was used as a way of proving the injustice of existence, but at the same time as a way of finding a higher and divine justification for it.”⁸ The Greeks, however, did not experience existence as something to be blamed, revised, or redeemed. That is to say the exigencies associated with corporeality (i.e. struggle, suffering, death) were not understood in the sense of charges to be levied against life, or iniquities to be remedied or escaped through some form of transcendental thinking. Instead, for Nietzsche, the Greeks celebrated existence in its entirety, and embraced and affirmed such exigencies as conditions inherent to and inseparable from life without division or resentment. Haar notes, “Pre-Socratic Greece, says Nietzsche repeatedly, is a ‘model of life’...It is the idea of ‘total life,’ without sundering, without chorismos, between the intelligible and the sensible, good and evil, Being and Becoming, divine and human. The notion of ‘total life’ is meant to retrieve a sense of being that precedes those divisions.”⁹ As we will see below, such a conception of life was central to Greek culture, and Nietzsche understood it to be illustrated in both their societal structure and art.

⁶ UWP 81; BT 1 (“Attempt at a Self-Criticism”)

⁷ BGE 49

⁸ Deleuze 18/9

⁹ Haar 129

One illustration of the Greek affirmation of life that was particularly important for Nietzsche was the manner in which they understood and related to the irrational aspects of corporeality (i.e. drives, passions, instincts, bodies, etc.). The Greeks, for Nietzsche, did not perceive the human world to be separate and distinct from the natural world, but rather understood that “the things named ‘natural’ qualities and those named genuinely ‘human’ have inseparably grown together. The human being, in his highest and noblest forces, is wholly nature and carries her uncanny double character in himself.”¹⁰ That is to say the Greeks did not distinguish or favor either the rational and irrational capacities of the human being. Rather, both the rational and irrational facets of the human makeup were understood as a unity to be incorporated and balanced. Such incorporation, I think, is expressed in Nietzsche’s description of the Greeks as a people possessing “a strain of cruelty, of tigerish lust to annihilate, in them,” which they sought to vent “outward completely as a serious necessity.”¹¹ For the Greeks, it was a matter of personal and cultural health to manage their drives and passions by finding outlets that allowed for their release. For Nietzsche, this was a clear indication that the Greeks had not moralized their conception of the irrational aspects of corporeality on the basis of some form of idealism.¹² Rather, it was understood to be fundamental to the human form of life, and was valued on an equal echelon with the rational.

¹⁰ UWP 81

¹¹ UWP 81/2

¹² Note that my reading of Nietzsche’s understanding of morality will be examined in Chapter 3. Within the context of this chapter, however, it is to be understood in the sense of an ‘ought,’ or preference, on the basis of which Nietzsche understands a qualitative distinction between a conceptual world and the world of sensible experience to be made.

For Nietzsche, however, the Greeks were aware of the dangerous and potentially destructive aspect of these irrational forces. He notes, “We look here into the abyss of hatred...where the Greek thought of letting his hatred stream outward..., and in such moments he alleviated the feeling that had become compressed and swollen: the tiger hurried forth, a voluptuous cruelty looked out of his fearsome eye.”¹³ In order to manage their drives in a non-destructive and non-annihilative manner the Greeks based their culture upon the concept of the “agon,” or contest, in which structured competition served as a conduit for their release. Nietzsche understood the Greek distinction to be expressed in Hesiod’s account of good and bad Eris. He writes, “One Eris as evil, namely that one which leads human beings to hostile wars of annihilation...and...another Eris as good, who as jealousy, resentment, envy entices human beings...to the action of the contest.”¹⁴ For Nietzsche, “the kernel of the Hellenic contest-idea” was essentially the tempering of the potency of the human drives and passions by posing a counterforce in the form of the competing drives and passions of an opponent.¹⁵ As such, the Greeks felt they could ‘unchain’ even their most ferocious and wildest drives without presenting a danger to society. Haar notes, “For Nietzsche, Greek culture ‘in the tragic age’ had been able to achieve a vital equilibrium, based upon the harmonious continuity within even the most frightful ‘natural instincts,’ social practices, works, institutions, acts of worship—all of which took instinctual life upon themselves and managed a cultural outlet for it. The Greeks before Socrates had the strength and courage not to denounce the

¹³ UWP 82

¹⁴ UWP 86

¹⁵ UWP 89

impulses—even wild and ‘immoral’ ones—before the court of the Virtues. Natural forces are integrated within culture without being either repressed, extirpated, or tamed from the outside.”¹⁶

To this point I have been examining the Greek conception of life as Nietzsche understood it to be illustrated through their relation to the irrational aspects associated with corporeality. This point is important for my purposes because it expresses an affirmation of immanence and the limitations experienced by life as necessarily bound up with it. The Greeks, for Nietzsche, did not understand or experience their ‘condition’ as a corporeal, or natural, being in the sense of a threat or a fault to be overcome. That is to say despite perceiving the natural world to be intimately bound up with decay, suffering, and death, their conception of life did not become negative or resentful. The Greek conception of the corporeal, and its manifestation in their cultural practices, is meant to illustrate a form of life that did not attempt to transcend finite limits via conceptual legerdemain (i.e. metaphysics). It is also meant to reflect Nietzsche’s understanding that the Greeks had affirmed the necessity of struggle and conflict as both fundamental to and inseparable from life.

It is in contrast to what Nietzsche understands as the metaphysical interpretation of life that he places his conception of Greek corporeality. The metaphysical tradition, for Nietzsche, understands corporeality as the collective vestige of animality in human life that ought to be tamed and placed in the service of the rational capacities. He

¹⁶ Haar 129

understands life to become decadent¹⁷ when it understands itself and its relation to the world in a way that serves to restrict or reject the irrational and limited facets of its constitution. That is to say life that does not acknowledge and embrace corporeality as fundamental to and conditional of itself effectively harms itself. Life, understood metaphysically, becomes “imprisoned in an iron cage of errors...a caricature of man, sick, wretched, ill-disposed toward himself, full of hatred for the impulses of life, full of mistrust of all that is beautiful and happy in life, a walking picture of misery.”¹⁸ The Greeks, for Nietzsche, represented a more complete expression of life than that of modern life because they heeded the ‘impulses of life’ in the sense that they acknowledged and lived in accordance with their corporeality.

The agonic structure of Greek culture and institutions reflected an understanding of life that was in harmony with the basic conditions of corporeality. Nietzsche, however, understood the quintessential Greek expression of such understanding to be contained in their dramatic works of art; specifically, the tragic works of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Hatab notes, “Tragedy, for Nietzsche, was far more than a literary form; it reflected and consummated an early Greek worldview that was more faithful to the finite conditions of life than subsequent developments in philosophy.”¹⁹ In their tragic dramas, Nietzsche saw a form of life that affirmed and even exalted in a terrible fate (i.e. limitedness and mortality) that could not be thrown off or dismissed. Rather than “withdrawing into quietism, pessimistic denial, or hopes for another world,” they

¹⁷ My reading of Nietzsche’s understanding and application of decadence will be examined in depth in Chapter 2.

¹⁸ WTP 397

¹⁹ Hatab 24

beautified and gilded the “dark truth” of existence through the artistic imagery of drama.²⁰ It was this “affirmative bearing in the midst of a tragic worldview” and the idea that “life forms are beautiful and meaningful, yet temporary and insubstantial” expressed in it that drew Nietzsche’s interest to Greek tragedy.²¹ As such, for Nietzsche, Greek tragedy stood as an illustration of the central role that art played in the Greek affirmation of life.

It should be noted that much of Nietzsche’s understanding of the Greek conception of life developed within the context of his analysis of Greek tragedy. As such, our brief discussion of Greek tragedy is only meant to provide a context to help the reader understand the concepts to be discussed below, as well as those that pertain to our overall examination. The primary term that Nietzsche developed and applied to describe the Greek conception of life as the ‘tragic,’ which he understood as an expression of the complete affirmation of suffering and mortality in a way that served to transfigure and beautify them. Nietzsche writes, “One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering...tragic meaning counts being as holy enough to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering.”²² That is to say he understands a distinction to obtain between tragic and metaphysical meaning based upon their respective relation to suffering. Deleuze notes the difference in writing, “On the one hand, the life that justifies suffering, that affirms suffering; on the other hand the suffering that accuses life, that testifies

²⁰ Hatab 28

²¹ Hatab 27/8

²² WTP 1052

against it, that makes life something that must be justified.”²³ For Nietzsche, the Greeks understood that life, as finite, is necessarily bound up with suffering, decay and death, and the only power life has in this malign constellation is to give meaning to it in a way that makes it endurable (i.e. transfigure).²⁴ Haar expresses this point in writing, “It (tragedy) characterizes the whole, or rather that which can be affirmed of a non-totalizable whole. Our lot is simply and exclusively to give our blessing to ‘tragic life,’ whether deceptive or non-deceptive, not to escape it, but to live it as such.” As such, the concept of the tragic, for Nietzsche, is primarily meant to express how the Greeks were able to view existence as ineluctably painful and fatal, yet affirm it as beautiful and worth the journey, nonetheless.

Nietzsche understood the conception of the tragic to be a product of the tension between two competing forces within both Greek tragedy and the Greek conception of life; which, he labeled the ‘Dionysian’ and the ‘Apollonian.’²⁵ To begin, “Dionysus was a deity of earth forces and his mythos expressed the natural cycle of birth, death, and rebirth: in various versions the god suffers a cruel death and dismemberment, but is restored to life again. The early form of Dionysian worship did not involve a belief in personal immortality, but rather an immersion in the overall power of nature that both bears and destroys its offspring.”²⁶ Dionysus embodied, for the Greeks, a cosmological dimension in that he represented the immanent cycle of becoming. As such, the deity Dionysus was identified with the “dissolving flux” of existence in the manner of “a

²³ Deleuze 15

²⁴ see BT 7, 16 and 25

²⁵ see BT 1, 2 and 4

²⁶ Hatab 24

primordial becoming that will reabsorb formed states in a continual cycle of emergence and destruction.”²⁷ Hatab notes, “Nietzsche sees this ineluctable becoming as the essence of Greek fatalism expressed in tragic drama. The early Greeks, especially in Dionysian religion, experienced nature as a fatal paradox in that the forces of life involve both self-generation and self-destruction: life begets life and yet life can thrive only by consuming other life forms.”²⁸ As such, Nietzsche understood the conception of the Dionysian to represent the dissolving and regenerative qualities of the flux of becoming that the world fundamentally is.²⁹

There is another aspect that Nietzsche recognized to be of central importance for the Greeks in the figure of Dionysus: affirmation. Nietzsche writes, “The type of a spirit that takes into itself and redeems the contradictions and questionable aspects of existence! It is here I set the Dionysus of the Greeks: the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or in part.”³⁰ He understood the Dionysian to represent the non-divisional embrace and affirmation of existence. That is to say the ‘negative’ aspects of becoming and corporeality were affirmed as inseparable from life, as the Greeks understood it. As such, for Nietzsche, life and the world are misconstrued if divided and placed into categories and echelons according to desirability or interest. Haar explains this point in writing, “The Dionysian feeling, which is also called ‘tragic wisdom,’ is that of the necessity of coexistence and mutual relativity of contraries such as

²⁷ Hatab 25; see BT 4

²⁸ Hatab 25

²⁹ see BT 2 and 4

³⁰ WTP 1052

perfection/imperfection, joy/suffering, creation/destruction.”³¹ That is to say Nietzsche understood the Greeks to recognize a “reciprocal necessity” between the Apollonian and Dionysian elements they perceived to be at work within both the world and their art.³² It follows that, for Nietzsche, the conception of the Dionysian also contains and expresses the notion of the total affirmation of life.

To continue, the counterforce that Nietzsche understood to compliment the Dionysian was what he termed the Apollonian.³³ Hatab notes, “Apollo was an Olympian god representing light, beauty, measure, prophecy, poetry, and plastic arts. For Nietzsche, Apollo expresses the ‘principle of individuation’, meant to counteract the dissolving flux of Dionysus by setting boundaries of form, the measured shaping of individual entities and selves. But because of the primal power of Dionysus that animates tragedy, the forming power of Apollo is only temporary and it must yield to the negative force of Dionysian flux.”³⁴ The Apollonian effectively represents being insofar as it can be understood within the context of the ‘Dionysian flux’ of becoming. Specifically, this means that life and meaning in all of its forms are to be understood as provisional and finite. Put another way, meaning is to be understood in terms of creation and eventual dissolution, and not universal and enduring discovery.³⁵

From what has been stated above one can readily recognize elements that will come to the fore in Nietzsche’s mature formulation of will to power. The Dionysian

³¹ Haar 146

³² BT 4

³³ see BT 1 and 2

³⁴ Hatab 25

³⁵ see BT 2, 3 and 4

clearly represents an understanding of the world as a flux of becoming that has the ultimate effect of continually subsuming all forms of life and meaning that may arise. Additionally, the Dionysian represents an affirmative relation to the limited conditions that life necessarily experiences within this context. Both of these elements are important for Nietzsche in that they serve as contrasts to what he understands as the metaphysical interpretation of the same. The Apollonian represents the attempt by life to impart shape and meaning to the Dionysian flux through the production and advancement of valuation. For Nietzsche, this will take the form of life interpreting what-is and how-it-is in a manner that allows for and facilitates its own growth and expansion. The Apollonian is meant to express both the limitations inherent to all meaning (i.e. provisional and perspectival), and the functional role it plays as the means by which life transfigures its experience of the world.

It was the interrelation between the Dionysian and Apollonian forces that, for Nietzsche, produced what he understood to be the Greeks' tragic interpretation of life. Hatab notes, "Such is the essence of tragedy, which has a greater depth and impact than pure Dionysian experience because it presents the tension between form and formlessness rather than either side by itself."³⁶ Through their interrelation, Nietzsche understood the Greeks to essentially give meaning to meaning. That is not to say that the Greeks possessed a meta-perspective regarding the essence of meaning, but that they saw value in positing meaning despite its provisional nature. He explains in writing, "Why the Dionysian Greek needed to become Apollonian; that is, to break his will to the terrible,

³⁶ Hatab 26

multifarious, uncertain, frightful, upon the will to measure, to simplicity, to submission to rule and concept.”³⁷ The Dionysian represented the possibility of nihilism in the sense that life and meaning are understood as limited and non-enduring. The Apollonian represented a temporary deliverance from a nihilistic interpretation of this context in the form “of sensuous imagery, intelligible ideas, and sympathetic emotions.”³⁸ For Nietzsche, the “ever-annihilating Dionysian flux...in itself, is indeterminate and meaningless. Meaning is achieved through the individuation of this flow, the gathering of images in the midst of perpetual becoming...tragic wisdom reflects individuation in the midst of flux, which does not attempt to still the flux.”³⁹ Ultimately, for Nietzsche, the interrelation between the Dionysian and the Apollonian understood to operate within and constitute the tragic perspective of the Greeks is more faithful to the ‘actual’ character of the world in that it “represents a finite flux of forming and deforming that never rests or aims for a finished state or preserved condition.”⁴⁰

³⁷ WTP 1050

³⁸ Hatab 26

³⁹ Hatab 31

⁴⁰ Hatab 25; see BT 4 and 7; There is a notable distinction, I think, that exists between Nietzsche’s understanding of metaphysics and nihilism expressed in his early and his later works. In his early thought, he maintains an understanding of Apollonian form and meaning in the sense of a “metaphysical consolation,” or “metaphysical supplement” in relation to the annihilative Dionysian flux (see BT 45, 95, 127; also see UWP 36, 37, 39). Such terms suggest that he maintained a metaphysical conception of meaning, albeit in a way that departed from the metaphysical tradition in the sense of a provisional and artistic construct. In his later thought, Nietzsche pursues the possibility of non-metaphysical meaning by attempting to conceive of it on the basis of immanence (i.e. will to power). That is to say in addition to being a non-enduring creation, meaning is also understood to derive from and participate in the flux of becoming. Furthermore, meaning is understood as perpetually reformulating along with becoming, so nihilism is no longer associated with this flux. This distinction is important for the reader to be aware of, as it

The most important example of Apollonian form imposed upon Dionysian becoming, for Nietzsche, is illustrated in the gods of the Greeks. Nietzsche writes, “Now the Olympian magic mountain opens itself up to us as it were and shows us its roots. The Greek knew and felt the terrors and horrors of existence: in order to be able to live at all, he had to use the brilliant Olympians, born of dream, as a screen.”⁴¹ Here, Nietzsche is expressing what he understood as the Greek recognition of the danger of nihilism in connection with the Dionysian. The Greeks understood that an existence in which suffering had no meaning for the sufferer was fundamentally inhospitable. As such, the Greeks were led to create the “middle world of the Olympians” as a means to veil the ‘truth’ of the Dionysian flux of existence.⁴² Haar notes, “The ‘gods of joy,’ the gods of the radiant sky, were called and invoked by the Greeks in order to negate such a Silenian and horrible wisdom,⁴³ this Schopenhauerian resignation, this will to die.”⁴⁴ As such, Nietzsche understood the Greeks to have developed their conception of life on the basis of aesthetics, or art. The Greeks staved off nihilism through the artistic production of a ‘world’ of meaning that served to transfigure their understanding and experience of becoming into an enduring form. Nietzsche notes, “The same drive which calls art into life as the completion and perfection of existence which seduces the living into living on,

will become more apparent as my examination progresses and Nietzsche’s later thought becomes more central.

⁴¹ BT 3

⁴² BT 3

⁴³ see BT 3

⁴⁴ Haar 167/8

also brought into being the Olympian world in which the Hellenic ‘will’ holds up before itself a transfiguring mirror. So the gods justify the life of men by living it themselves.”⁴⁵

It is important to note the transvaluative effect that Nietzsche understands to be contained within the “Apollonian-Dionysian confluence.”⁴⁶ As I understand it, Dionysian affirmation serves to transvalue the ‘terrible and questionable’ aspects of life by removing the opprobrium attached to such aspects. That is to say Dionysian affirmation represents a rejection of the possibility of determining what-is and how-it-is on the basis of positive and negative distinctions that concern the corporeal experience of becoming. Specifically, absolute affirmation amounts to the rejection of the possibility of negative meaning understood in a cosmological or ontological sense. As such, the aspects of existence that are experienced in connection with suffering and limitedness are now open to being affirmed and experienced as positive phenomena. Apollonian form and illusion represents the aesthetic veil produced by life for the purposes of transfiguring and reshaping “the horrific or absurd aspects of life into notions with which it is possible to live.”⁴⁷ That is to say by imparting meaning to the ‘horrific or absurd aspects of life’ they are thereby made endurable because they are provided an explanation. Nietzsche discusses meaning in this sense in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Apollonian form is presented as “a projected image thrown onto a dark wall.”⁴⁸ That is to say form and meaning are to be understood in the sense of artistic creation that is meant to guard the

⁴⁵ BT 3

⁴⁶ Hatab 30

⁴⁷ BT 7

⁴⁸ BT 9

Greek from the “abyss of annihilation” represented by the Dionysian flux.⁴⁹

Furthermore, he suggests that the Greeks understood such meaning to be, at bottom, illusion and art in the sense of “bright images of cloud and sky” that served to veil rather than penetrate “into the terrifying inner world of nature.”⁵⁰ That is to say meaning amounts to illusion in the sense that its contents never serve to capture or characterize what-is in a fundamental way, but rather, only to transfigure the understanding and experience of becoming in a manner facilitative of life. Apollonian transfiguration, for Nietzsche, represents the aesthetic “means of making life possible, the great seduction to life, the great stimulant of life...as the only superior counterforce to all will to denial of life.”⁵¹ Nietzsche understood the Greek gods in the sense that they amounted to an artistic context whereby meaning was imparted to Greek life. That is to say the Greek gods amounted to an artistic lens through which the Greeks were able to transform their suffering into a point of affirmation. Taken together as the summation of what Nietzsche understands as the tragic conception of life, the ‘Apollonian-Dionysian confluence’ serves to express “everything that is rich and desires to bestow and that replenishes and gilds and immortalizes and deifies life—the whole force of transfiguring virtues, everything that declares good and affirms in word and deed.”⁵² It was just this simultaneous affirmation and transfiguration noted above that allowed the Greeks to view

⁴⁹ BT 9; see BT 15

⁵⁰ BT 9

⁵¹ WTP 853

⁵² WTP 1033

existence “through the optic of the artist,” and enabled them to “experience even suffering as a pleasure.”⁵³

From the above, I think, one can conclude that Nietzsche understood the Greek conception of life on the basis of art. He writes, “This is the true artistic intention of Apollo: whose name summarizes all those countless illusions of beautiful appearance, which in each moment make existence worth living and compels us to live on to experience the next moment.”⁵⁴ As such, the Apollonian represents the aesthetic response of Greek life to address and answer the problem of nihilism as they understood it to be bound up with the Dionysian. Hatab notes that “Apollonian art forms serve to shape a world of meaning in which the Greeks could dwell, and through which they could bear the terrible truth of Dionysian deformation, thus avoiding the danger of self-abnegation.”⁵⁵ It is important to note that, for Nietzsche, the Greeks ostensibly counteracted the ‘truth’ of becoming and the nihilism associated with it through their recourse to art. As we will see below, Nietzsche understands this to clearly illustrate that the Greeks understood art to be primary in relation to truth, in the sense that their affirmation of life was founded on the aesthetic transfiguration of the ‘truth’ of Dionysian becoming. That is to say that Greek life was made possible on the basis of art and not truth.

It is important to note that by interpreting the Greek conception of life on the basis of art, Nietzsche is also advancing the claim that they understood all meaning to be

⁵³ BT 2 (“Attempt at a Self-Criticism”); WTP 852

⁵⁴ BT 25

⁵⁵ Hatab 28

provisional and fundamentally aesthetic. That is to say they understood meaning in the sense of non-enduring creation, as opposed to fundamental or essential exposition. As such, the Greeks did not understand their own conception of life in terms of discovery and endurance, but rather creation and dissolution. Hatab notes, “A significant feature of the Dionysian aspect of tragedy is that it ‘educated’ the Greeks about inevitable limits and the true meaning of ‘myth’...the Dionysian disrupted the common tendency to take religious myths as ‘real’ accounts referring to actual events or conditions...The Dionysian spirit of self-consuming flux teaches that mythical forms are creative emergences of meaning that must yield to a negative force. The truth of myth is the truth of becoming, a forming-in-the-midst-of-formlessness, and not a discovery of substantive foundations that surpass or rectify the variety and fluidity of experience.”⁵⁶ As such, Nietzsche held that the Greeks were not possessed by the desire to crystallize their conception of life into a series of universal truths. Meaning, for Nietzsche’s Greeks, always referred back to immanence as it was understood as a product of life for its own use and advancement.

The Greek need for art, for Nietzsche, stemmed from their attempt to adapt to the limitations associated with corporeality.⁵⁷ The Dionysian flux of becoming was the fated terminus of all life, and Nietzsche’s interpretation suggests that “the Ancient

⁵⁶ Hatab 29

⁵⁷ Note that in the following section I make use of some passages contained in “The Will To Power.” Despite being a much later piece of work than those reviewed for the purposes of this chapter, I feel that the passages I draw upon serve to express some of Nietzsche’s earlier ideas concerning art in a more complete way.

Greeks...seem able to withstand it because their culture is ordered with a view to art.”⁵⁸

As such, the Greeks sought to transfigure their understanding and experience of becoming by developing an aesthetic conception of life. Nietzsche explains the connection between the affirmation of life and art in the following quotation:

“The antithesis of a real and an apparent world is lacking here: there is only one world, and this is false, cruel, contradictory, seductive, without meaning—a world thus constituted is the real world. We have need of lies in order to conquer this reality, this ‘truth,’ that is, in order to live. That lies are necessary in order to live is itself part of the terrifying and questionable character of existence...To solve it, man must be a liar by nature, he must be above all an artist.”⁵⁹

Art, then, is born of a necessity to endure within the context of a world that seems to offer no consolation or reprieve from such suffering in the form of ostensible meaning or purpose. To lie, within the context of this understanding, is to veil, embellish and gild the naked flux of becoming in a way that ‘stimulates’ and ‘seduces’ life into enduring despite its tragic fate because the “truth would drive it to despair and to annihilation.”⁶⁰

Nietzsche notes, “What is essential in art remains its perfection of existence, its production of perfection and plenitude; art is essentially affirmation, blessing, deification of existence.”⁶¹

At bottom, Nietzsche notes, “Every art, every philosophy may be viewed as a remedy and an aid in the service of growing and struggling life; they always presuppose

⁵⁸ UWP 37

⁵⁹ WTP 853

⁶⁰ UWP 26/7

⁶¹ WTP 821

suffering and sufferers.”⁶² It is through art, then, that life “becomes the transfigurer of existence;” that life does not flee from existence, but bends the image of it to its will to power.⁶³ In the Greeks, Nietzsche saw a form of life that did not become resentful in the face of a world that is at every moment ushering it towards its demise. They were able to endure and flower as a people through an aesthetic conception of the ‘dark truth’ bound up corporeality and becoming. Nietzsche notes that the Greek way of life “teaches something that is stronger than pessimism, ‘more divine’ than truth...that art is worth more than truth.”⁶⁴

Greek philosophy before Socrates had long drawn the interest of Nietzsche because, like Greek tragedy, he understood elements of it to express a conception of life in concordance with becoming. Nietzsche notes, “The real philosophers of Greece are those before Socrates (with Socrates something changes).”⁶⁵ For the purposes of my examination I will be focusing on those aspects of pre-Socratic philosophical thought that I consider to have been particularly relevant to Nietzsche’s understanding of the Greeks, as well as his eventual development of will to power as an address to the problem of nihilism. Specifically, I will be examining the figures Anaximander and Heraclitus, whose thought served to influence Nietzsche along the lines noted above.⁶⁶ As we will

⁶² GS 328

⁶³ WTP 820

⁶⁴ WTP 853

⁶⁵ WTP 437

⁶⁶ Note that given the scope of my thesis it is not my intention to examine or comment on the thought of Anaximander or Heraclitus as such, but rather only on my understanding of Nietzsche’s reading of them.

see, they also represent a microcosm of the contrast that Nietzsche presents between the Greek form of life and the metaphysical tradition that followed.

To begin, Anaximander is typically portrayed as the second of the Milesian thinkers that represent the birth of philosophy in the West.⁶⁷ His primary contribution to the tradition was “the Indefinite,” which Nietzsche understood to represent “primal” and unchanging being from which all becoming both derives and returns.⁶⁸ He notes, “Anaximander says upon an occasion, ‘Where the source of things is, to that place they must also pass away, according to necessity, for they must pay penance and be judged for their injustices, in accordance with the ordinance of time.’”⁶⁹ From this passage one can deduce several important aspects of Anaximander’s meaning and application of the Indefinite. ‘The source of things’ refers to the Indefinite (i.e. ‘qualitatively undefined’), and serves to represent it as “a background unity that can be described only negatively...something that cannot be given any predicate from the actual world of becoming and so something like the ‘thing-in-itself.’”⁷⁰ Nietzsche explains this point in the following quotation:

“The fundamental idea of Anaximander was indeed that all things that come to be pass away and thus cannot be a principle; all beings with definite properties are things that come to be, thus true Being must not have all these definite properties,

⁶⁷ It should be noted that what is of central importance for my examination of the thought of Anaximander, and as a whole, is the form of account he provided for the world of becoming and experience. Furthermore, the significance Nietzsche understands such an account to hold for human life, and how these contribute to his understanding of the metaphysical tradition and the potential for its overcoming.

⁶⁸ PPP 32; PPP 36

⁶⁹ PTA 4

⁷⁰ PPP 33

for otherwise it would perish...because all determinant things perish. The immortality of the primal Being lies not in its infinitude but rather herein, that it is bare of definite qualities leading to destruction. If primal Being were definite, it would also be 'coming-to-be', but in this way it would be condemned to perish.”⁷¹

The conception of the Indefinite, I think, is meant to address two questions in reference to the world of experience. From what source or in what way does the flux of becoming arise, and how is this “stream of coming-to-be” to be understood as an eternal process (i.e. Why has it not already concluded?)⁷² Nietzsche explains that “from these questions he can save himself only by a mystic possibility: eternal coming-to-be can have its origin only in eternal being.”⁷³ As such, we see in Anaximander the first philosophical attempt to conceptually divide “a metaphysically true Being” from and in opposition to “the transient physical world.”⁷⁴

To return to the passage above, Anaximander connects the concept of becoming with that of payment, injustice and time. Whitlock explains that, for Anaximander, “all becoming, all flux, is not true being; it is a derivative, dependent borrowing of existence from an eternal being. All existent beings...exist on borrowed time.”⁷⁵ To borrow time, or to exist within the flux of becoming, is to specifically assume definite characteristics; which, as we have already seen, Anaximander directly connects with the idea of

⁷¹ PPP 36

⁷² PTA 4

⁷³ PTA 4

⁷⁴ PPP 37

⁷⁵ PPP 187

mortality. As such, it follows that the “debt incurred by borrowing time implies a guilt that must be rectified; beings make good on their debt and alleviate guilt by passing away, becoming indefinite.”⁷⁶ The pretext for life, then, is the unjust “emancipation from eternal being,” which carries with it both intrinsic ‘guilt’ and ‘debt’ that can only be repaid (presumably to being, itself) through death (i.e. by ‘becoming indefinite’).⁷⁷ The question that Anaximander is addressing here, I think, is why beings perish. His answer reflects an idea of cosmic justice in that all life necessarily must perish as a result, or in expiation, of its having existed at all. Nietzsche notes that it is in Anaximander’s thought that “existence becomes a moral phenomenon. It is not justified, but expiates itself forever through its passing...the conditions for the fall from being to coming-to-be in injustice are forever the same.”⁷⁸

In Nietzsche’s interpretation of Anaximander’s thought one can readily make out aspects that he identifies with the metaphysical tradition. He understands Anaximander to establish a qualitative distinction between the flux of becoming and a conception of eternal being, as well as attempt to explicate the natural cycle (i.e. birth and death) on the basis of injustice and guilt. The former claim represents the classic metaphysical act in that it effectively posits an ideal to stand over and against the world of becoming and finitude.⁷⁹ Nietzsche notes, “He posited prior to universal flux a final ultimate principle,

⁷⁶ PPP 187

⁷⁷ PPP 33

⁷⁸ PTA 4

⁷⁹ Heidegger would go as far as to cite Anaximander’s thought as the birth act of metaphysics in the West. Whitlock notes, “This is the birth of metaphysical thought. And so Anaximander’s fragment carries within itself the destiny of the west, Heidegger claims...(PPP 197).”

‘the final unity,’ the Indefinite...Anaximander did not conceptualize another universal qualitative thing, such as water; he hypostatized a thing-in-itself.”⁸⁰ The latter claim was significant, for Nietzsche, because he understood it to distinguish Anaximander as the “first pessimist philosopher” in posing the question of the value of human existence.⁸¹ Nietzsche compares Anaximander’s thought to the flight into “a metaphysical fortress...from which he puts a question to all creatures: ‘What is your existence worth? And if it is worthless, why are you here?’”⁸² As such, Anaximander introduced the problem of value into the Western philosophical consciousness, albeit in a manner that served to condemn life. As we will see below, Nietzsche understands Anaximander’s position to be a forerunner to the Socratic-Platonic brand of metaphysics that his own thought is aimed at combating.

Heraclitus was perhaps the most important thinker, for Nietzsche, with the possible exceptions of Schopenhauer and Socrates. Nietzsche notes, “The intuitive perception of Heraclitus is that there is no thing of which we may say, ‘it is.’ He knows only Becoming, the flowing.”⁸³ This claim expresses the outright rejection of being by denying any persistence to ‘things’ within ‘the flowing’ of the world. It follows that what is most real, for Heraclitus, is not being, but the process of becoming of which it can only provisionally be said to be a part. As such, “the things in whose definiteness and endurance narrow human minds, like animal minds, believe, ultimately have no real

⁸⁰ PPP 187

⁸¹ PPP 37

⁸² PTA 4

⁸³ PPP 62/3

existence...and prove to be a complete illusion.”⁸⁴ Nietzsche continues, “To this he adds this thought: that which becomes is one thing in eternal transformation, and the law of this eternal transformation, the Logos in all things, is precisely this One, fire.”⁸⁵ Heraclitus’ usage of the image of fire, for Nietzsche, is meant to illustrate the twin ideas of “eternal motion and the negation of all duration and persistence in the world” expressed in his philosophy of becoming.⁸⁶ His use of the term ‘Logos’ is important for our purposes because it expresses an internal logic by which the becoming of existence can be understood to operate. As we will see below, Heraclitus associates his conception of Logos with the idea of justice through strife.

The above paragraph contains two important aspects which must be unpacked for my purposes regarding Nietzsche’s interpretation and appropriation of Heraclitean thought. I will begin with the fundamentally aesthetic sense in which Nietzsche understood Heraclitus’ ontology of becoming. Nietzsche writes of the Heraclitean vision of existence:

“In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself...this playful cosmic child continually builds and knocks down but from time to time begins his game anew: a moment of contentment followed

⁸⁴ PTA 5; PPP 61

⁸⁵ PPP 62/3

⁸⁶ PPP 60

by new needs. His continuous building and knocking down is a craving, as creativity is a need for the artist; his play is a need...rejection of any teleological view of the world reaches its zenith here: the child throws away its toy, but as soon as it plays again, it proceeds with purpose and order: necessity and play, war and justice.”⁸⁷

Heraclitus, for Nietzsche, interprets the ‘coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying’ of becoming as a completely innocent phenomena. That is to say he did not interpret becoming through a moral lens, in the sense that what-is and how-it-is were not determined on the basis of an ‘ought.’ Deleuze notes, “Heraclitus had taken a deep look, he had seen no chastisement of multiplicity, no expiation of becoming, no culpability of existence. He saw no negativity in becoming.”⁸⁸ Just as a child plays with its toys, or the artist plays with appearances, so ‘the ever-living fire’ ‘plays with itself.’ As such, the world is not to be understood as something to be condemned from the perspective of the “towers of sand” that are ineluctably trampled within this scheme of cosmic play.⁸⁹

By interpreting the becoming of existence as fundamentally innocent, Nietzsche understands Heraclitus to also affirm the manifold contradictions (i.e. creation/destruction) and sufferings inherent to existence. This is what leads Nietzsche to describe him as a ‘tragic thinker,’ and his philosophy of becoming as “a purely aesthetic view of the world.”⁹⁰ Nietzsche writes, “Only in the play of the child (or that of the artist) does there exist a becoming and passing away without any moralistic calculations.

⁸⁷ PTA 7; PPP 72/3

⁸⁸ Deleuze 24

⁸⁹ PTA 7

⁹⁰ PPP 70

He conceives of the play of children as that of spontaneous human beings: here is innocence and yet, also, coming into being and destruction: not one droplet of injustice should remain in the world.”⁹¹ As such, Heraclitus stands in contrast to the metaphysical method of condemning and redeeming the becoming of existence via reference to an ideal of being; which, “according to Nietzsche,” it was “Anaximander...who gave perfect expression to this conception of existence.”⁹² Deleuze notes, “Heraclitus is the one for whom life is radically innocent and just. He understands existence on the basis of an instinct of play. He makes existence an aesthetic phenomenon rather than a moral or religious one.”⁹³

It is very clear from the above, I think, that Nietzsche interprets Heraclitus as a counter figure to both the philosophy of Anaximander and the metaphysical tradition spawned by Socrates and Plato.⁹⁴ The absolution of existence understood as necessarily bound up with destruction and finitude represents, for Nietzsche, “the deep division between Anaximander and Heraclitus: the former views the world as essentially unjust, whereas the latter gives a cosmodycy, or justification of the world.”⁹⁵ Anaximander interpreted a world of impermanence and finitude as both illusory and unjust. Heraclitus interpreted this same world as playful and innocent, and he effectively developed a ‘cosmodycy’ that was fundamentally “aesthetic, for only thus can the world be

⁹¹ PPP 70

⁹² Deleuze 20

⁹³ Deleuze 23/4

⁹⁴ To clarify, Nietzsche does not interpret Anaximander as participating in the metaphysical tradition he understood to follow Socrates and Plato. He does, however, perceive elements in the philosophy of Anaximander that he would consider classically metaphysical (i.e. conceptual division between being and becoming).

⁹⁵ PPP 207 (Whitlock)

justified.”⁹⁶ Such a distinction is made by Nietzsche, I think, in order to highlight the way in which he understands both thinkers to have developed their respective conceptions of justice in relation to the world of corporeality and becoming. That is to say the former condemns the world of sensible experience because it is impermanent and erects an ideal beyond the flux of becoming to represent justice as that which is permanent; whereas, the latter deems the same world of sensible experience to be just insofar as it participates in the fluctuations and strife that represent “an expression of the order imparted by the Logos.”⁹⁷ The affirmation of the contradictions and ephemerality inherent to the becoming of existence, as we have seen, is contained within Nietzsche’s conception of the Dionysian. Whitlock notes this connection in writing, “Heraclitus affirmed it as perfect exactly as it is. In this way we break through to a Dionysian affirmation of existence...so the Heraclitean-Dionysian connection becomes comprehensible.”⁹⁸

A further point of contrast between Heraclitus and Anaximander relevant to my discussion is the latter’s conception of an eternal being that exists outside the flux of becoming. The Heraclitean philosophy of becoming, for Nietzsche, represents an attempt to interpret the world solely on the basis of immanence.⁹⁹ As such, he also rejects any

⁹⁶ PPP 207 (Whitlock)

⁹⁷ Cited from editorial notes provided by Dr. Cherubin

⁹⁸ PPP 206 (Whitlock)

⁹⁹ Note the phrase ‘on the basis of immanence’ is intended as a reference to my understanding of Nietzsche’s method of reinterpreting metaphysical concepts. I understand his examination of metaphysical concepts and categories to be aimed at debunking or stripping them of their traditional metaphysical connotations, so that they can be reinterpreted in reference to the world of sensible experience. This topic will be examined in more detail in Chapter 2.

conception of being outside of or beyond the flux of becoming. Nietzsche notes, “He denied the duality of totally diverse worlds—a position which Anaximander had been compelled to assume. He no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one, a realm of definite qualities from an undefinable ‘Indefinite.’”¹⁰⁰ Deleuze explains that, for Heraclitus, “there is no being beyond becoming, nothing beyond multiplicity; neither multiplicity nor becoming are appearances or illusions. But neither are there multiple or eternal realities which would be, in turn, like essences beyond appearance.”¹⁰¹ As such, Heraclitus does not allow any facet of the world or any conception of it to stand outside the flux of becoming in an elevated or controlling fashion. This point is particularly important for my purposes because it places Heraclitus in direct opposition to the metaphysical tradition of Socrates and Plato.

The second element of Heraclitean thought noted above as important for my purposes was Heraclitus’ conception of Logos. Nietzsche understood the Heraclitean Logos to express an immanent logic on the basis of which to explain the flux of becoming. Nietzsche notes, “Fragment 80 names it directly: ‘It should be understood that war is the common condition, that strife is justice, and that all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife.’”¹⁰² Strife, accordingly, is to be understood as “the continuous working out of a unified, lawful, reasonable justice” through the struggle between or “opposition of different characteristics.”¹⁰³ Nietzsche writes, “For him (Heraclitus), war reveals itself as the eternal process of the world. Yet he contents himself

¹⁰⁰ PTA 5

¹⁰¹ Deleuze 23/4

¹⁰² PPP 64

¹⁰³ PPP 64; PPP 70

with an eternal universal law and, because it oversees all things, calls it Logos.”¹⁰⁴ As such, the term Logos, for Heraclitus, is meant to express the inherent logic of the flux of becoming as a struggle, or war, between opposites. Nietzsche understood Heraclitus’ Logos, analogously, on the basis of the idea of the Greek contest. He makes this connection in describing the Heraclitean Logos as “a notion that was produced from the deepest fundament of the Greek being...contests...distinguish the Greeks. Every individual competes as if it alone is justified, yet an infinitely definite standard of just judgment decides who is linked to victory. The idea of war-justice is the first specifically Hellenic idea in philosophy—which is to say that it qualifies not as universal but rather as national.”¹⁰⁵ As such, Nietzsche understands the Heraclitean Logos to express the same type of immanent lawfulness through provisional victory illustrated in the Greek contest, albeit in an expanded way (i.e. ontological).

The manner in which Nietzsche understands the Heraclitean Logos has an obvious correlate in his eventual mature formulation of will to power. The former purports to supply an internal logic to the ‘play’ of becoming on the basis of an unending struggle between predicates (i.e. light/dark, hot/cold, etc.), as well as an imminent standard of justice that serves to further affirm the innocence of becoming. There are several key aspects that separate it from the latter theory, such as the retention of metaphysical binaries, the usage of mythical illustrations (i.e. eternal fire), and the non-involvement of life in the equation of becoming. Despite these differences, it is clear that the thought of Heraclitus was integral to the development of Nietzsche’s theory of will to

¹⁰⁴ PPP 74

¹⁰⁵ PPP 64

power. Whitlock notes this influence in writing, “Nietzsche closely links Heraclitus’ Logos to the German terms Wille (will), Wollen nach Zwecken (will to ends), Kraft (force), Seele (soul), Geist (spirit), and Feuerkraft (fiery power); here the young Nietzsche circles and approximates formulations of a not-far-off principle of the will to power. This theory of the will to power, like his mature writing style, is still years in the future, but the buddings of it are decipherable here.”¹⁰⁶

To this point we have been discussing the aspects of Greek culture and thought that influenced both the development and mature formulation of Nietzsche’s conception of will to power as an answer to the problem of nihilism. As such, Nietzsche’s understanding of the birth act of nihilism in the metaphysical interpretation of life produced and advanced by Socrates and perfected by Plato has remained largely in the background of our conversation. We are now in a position, within the context of the above, to directly examine Nietzsche’s understanding of the metaphysical reversal of the Greek conception of life that occurred through the Socratic-Platonic revolution.¹⁰⁷

To begin, for Nietzsche, ‘the problem of Socrates’ essentially amounts to a revolution in epistemology, ethics and ontology through their unification. He wrote of Socrates that he “represented a moment of the profoundest perversity in the history of values.”¹⁰⁸ Nietzsche understood him to be a figure that stood in direct opposition to the tragic and aesthetic worldview of Ancient Greece; a characterization that he expressed in

¹⁰⁶ PPP 218 (Whitlock)

¹⁰⁷ Note that my discussion of Socrates and Plato is intended in the same manner noted above regarding Anaximander and Heraclitus. That is to say my intention is not to comment on the thought of Socrates and Plato as such, but rather only on my understanding of Nietzsche’s reading of them.

¹⁰⁸ WTP 430

the form of the following opposition, “The two antitheses: the tragic disposition, the Socratic disposition.”¹⁰⁹ Per my examination to this point, Nietzsche understands the ‘tragic disposition’ to be associated with an aesthetic view of meaning in the sense that it is essentially creative and limited. As such, ‘tragic meaning’ “remains even now a veil,” and does not purport to access or uncover the essence of what-is by lifting the last veil.¹¹⁰ By contrast, Nietzsche describes the ‘Socratic disposition’ as such that “derives delight and satisfaction rather from the discarded veil and...the process of unveiling,” itself.¹¹¹ Nietzsche goes on to characterize it as “a profound delusion, which first came into the world in the person of Socrates—the unshakeable belief that...thought reaches into the deepest abysses of being and is capable not only of knowing but also even of correcting being.”¹¹²

Nietzsche understands Socrates to have established the primacy of knowledge (i.e. conceptual truth) in relation to sense and corporeality, in the sense that the concept came to stand over and against life. Socrates, for Nietzsche, represented “the last exemplar of the sage...the wise man as the conqueror of the instincts by means of wisdom,” who, “struggled against desire, drives, anger, and so on” in the name of “a life ruled by thought.”¹¹³ This is what led him to characterize Socratism as “a sign of decline, of exhaustion, of ailing health, of the anarchic dissolution of the instincts” because it

¹⁰⁹ WTP 432

¹¹⁰ BT 15

¹¹¹ BT 15

¹¹² BT 15

¹¹³ PPP 150/1; PPP 145

represented a flight from the conditions proper to life by judging against them.¹¹⁴ As such, life was no longer understood as that which creates meaning, but rather, as that which has meaning ascribed to it (in accordance with reason). And, meaning, itself, is to be understood in terms of truth (i.e. logic) rather than art (aesthetic). Deleuze notes, “Socrates is the first genius of decadence. He opposes the idea to life, he judges life in terms of the idea, he posits life as something which should be judged, justified and redeemed by the idea. He asks us to feel that life, crushed by the weight of the negative, is unworthy of being desired for itself, experienced in itself. Socrates is ‘the theoretical man’, the only true opposite of the tragic man.”¹¹⁵

As the example of Anaximander illustrated, Socrates was not the first thinker to place an ideal over and against life. The aspect of Socratism that distinguished it and made it particularly virulent, for Nietzsche, was its connection with ethics. Nietzsche notes, “Now the resolution of moral instinct enters: bright knowledge should be the sole merit, but with bright knowledge humanity has virtue as well, for this is the essentially Socratic belief, that knowledge and morality conjoin.”¹¹⁶ As such, knowledge became the sole access to virtue, and the ‘theoretical man’ became the exemplar of the virtuous life with Socrates. With the equation of knowledge and virtue Nietzsche understands metaphysics to have become practical (i.e. decadence), and the rational life to have become the pragmatic path, itself. Nietzsche notes, “Thus Socratic philosophy is

¹¹⁴ BT 1 (“Attempt at a Self-Criticism”)

¹¹⁵ Deleuze 14/5

¹¹⁶ PPP 145

absolutely practical: it is hostile to all knowledge unconnected to ethical implications.”¹¹⁷

As such, the Socratic connection between truth and morality served to alter the relation that life held towards truth by redefining it in terms of a mode of existence.

There is also an ontological aspect of Nietzsche’s interpretation of Socrates that is important for my purposes in that it helps to explain his connection with Plato. With Socrates, Nietzsche understands the relation between art and truth to become reversed. Meaning was no longer derived through the aesthetic transfiguration of the ‘dark truth’ of becoming, but rather through transcending becoming altogether through dialectic. Hatab notes the difference in the following quotation:

“Socrates sought logical consistency, precise definition, and conceptual universals secured in the conscious mind. With such powers of rational thought, humans could overcome confusion, mystery, and limits, and thus come to ‘know’ the true nature of things. Now truth is no longer mythical emergences associated with a negative force, but rather general, fixed ideas that ground knowledge and surpass the life-world.”¹¹⁸

In defining knowledge as what is both rational and universally true, Socratism serves to transcend the instability and limitations bound up with the flux of becoming.

Knowledge, and no longer art, became the basis upon which life and the world were understood. Socratism serves to define more than simply the boundaries of what can be known, but also what is admitted as real. Only that which lends itself to ‘logical consistency, precise definition, and conceptual universals;’ in short, dialectic, was

¹¹⁷ PPP 145

¹¹⁸ Hatab 30

pronounced real. That is to say Socratism amounts to the attempt to transcend becoming by redrawing both epistemic and veridical lines so as to effectively admit only that which is stable and able to be controlled by life into either. As such, Socratism entails the active determination of what-is and how-it-is on the basis of rationality.

In the person of Socrates Nietzsche understands several important changes to the Greek conception of life to have been put in motion. The first is the determination of “reason” as the proper mode of access to and evaluation of existence. Subsequently, the concept “truth” came to represent the fundamental and enduring structure of what-is as grasped by “reason.” As such, rational truth was then used as the basis upon which the Greek ontology was revised, as reality became reinterpreted along strict logocentric lines. That is to say existence was henceforth determined solely on the basis of the rational, and only what could be secured by “reason” was considered in being, or truth. This revision, as I have noted, entailed primacy being placed upon truth rather than art, which served to effectively alter the aesthetic ontology of the Greeks. As such, for Nietzsche, Greek life became pessimistic in that it held an ideal reality as more real than the world of sensible experience. This pessimism became decadence with the determination of ethics on the basis of truth, as life could now understand and comport itself in a metaphysical manner. At bottom, for Nietzsche, Socrates represented the consummate decadent who succeeded in transmitting a nihilistic conception of life into a practical form by which life may flagellate itself in the name of virtue. Whitlock notes, “Nietzsche detected within him (Socrates) a self-destructive impulse to flee life...for him the real disease is life itself.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ PPP 261 (Whitlock)

Ultimately, it was from this Socratic decadence that “the philosophers of antiquity never again freed themselves.”¹²⁰

Nietzsche understood Plato to appropriate both the Socratic metaphysical division of reality according to reason, as well as its ethical import. It was in his Theory of the Forms that Nietzsche recognized Plato to develop the Socratic metaphysics into an explicit ontology on the basis of idealism. Nietzsche notes, “In Plato...the charm of the concept had grown so strong that he involuntarily honored and deified the concept as an ideal Form.”¹²¹ As such, the concept (i.e. the rational) by which life and the world were judged within the context of Socratism became hypostatized and elevated within Platonism. Hypostatized, in the sense that they were understood as real, rather than merely the lens through which the real might be judge; and, elevated in the sense that they existed beyond the flux of becoming and served as the ground of all being. As such, that which is most real (i.e. rational concepts) literally exists over and against the world of becoming; hence, the metaphysical act is complete in that the ‘other world’ has actually been constructed and accorded the status of reality. Plato imparted organization to this ideal world, or realm of the Forms, according to a hierarchical structure with the concept ‘The Good’ at its apex. Nietzsche notes, “Plato...wanted to employ all his strength...to prove to himself that reason and instinct of themselves tend toward one goal, the good, ‘God.’”¹²² As such, Platonism served to equate the ground of being with the ground of morality within a single concept (i.e. The Good).

¹²⁰ WTP 432

¹²¹ WTP 431

¹²² BGE 191

Socratism, as noted above, succeeds in altering the Greek conception of life by revising the conception of truth and placing it where art once served as the basis. The limitation inherent to Socratism, however, is that reason remained a tool or capacity to be employed by a subject (to use a modern concept). That is to say reason was the mode by which truth could be discerned and applied towards the determination of reality, as well as the form of access proper to virtue and happiness. As such, it amounted to a subjective principle in the sense of an epistemic, moral and ontological tenet that was meant to serve as the basis for the determination of what-is and how-it-is. It was Plato who expanded upon the Socratic constellation of epistemology-morality-ontology by producing a unified conception of it in *The Good* in a way that developed it into the ground of both being and morality. In Platonism, we fully extradite both truth and morality from its dependence upon life (i.e. in the sense of artistic creation) and effectively make them into things-in-themselves. As such, the aesthetic and transfiguring conception of meaning that Nietzsche associated with the pre-Socratic Greeks became ‘denaturalized’ in the sense that it was no longer understood to be a produce of life or immanence, but rather, meaning came to stand over and against the world of becoming as both its source and measure. Nietzsche notes, “This is Platonism...Plato measured the degree of reality by the degree of value and said: the more ‘Idea,’ the more being. He reversed the concept ‘reality’ and said: ‘What you take for real is an error, and the nearer we approach the ‘Idea,’ the nearer we approach ‘truth.’”¹²³

¹²³ WTP 572

It is through the Socratic-Platonic confluence that Nietzsche understands the birth act of the nihilistic tradition in the West to have occurred. It began with the Socratic revision of truth and the primacy extended to reason that served to expel art and the aesthetic quality from the Greek conception of life. This served to establish a metaphysical division whereby only the aspects given to human rationality were admitted as real and of value. As such, life was provided with the capacity to transcend the limited conditions of corporeality and becoming through the capacity to reason. Socrates also connected truth with morality by claiming that ‘virtue is knowledge,’ which transformed metaphysics into a practical philosophy of decadence. Plato appropriated and furthered this process by hypostatizing and teleologically connecting reason to morality through his formulation of idealism (i.e. Theory of the Forms) with The Good as his supreme concept. The world of concepts was effectively ‘fleshed out’ and represented the eternal and unchanging ground of all being and morality. Hatab notes that the Socratic “transformation is clinched in Plato’s designation of eternal Forms” as it serves to fully develop the latent connection between epistemology, ethics and ontology expressed in Socratism.¹²⁴

In conclusion, I will briefly retrace the steps we have taken that hold particular importance for my examination of Nietzsche’s understanding and appropriation of Greek culture and thought within the context of his eventual formulation and application of will to power. Nietzsche understood the Dionysian-Apollonian confluence, as reflected in Greek tragic drama, to represent the simultaneous affirmation and transfiguration of

¹²⁴ Hatab 30

corporeality and becoming on the basis of art. Taken separately, the Dionysian served to represent both the basic conditions of becoming (i.e. the impermanent and life-negating qualities), as well as characterize the form of life strong enough to affirm these very conditions. Heraclitus' interpretation of becoming as fundamentally innocent and aesthetic, serves to echo this affirmative stance. Both the Dionysian and Heraclitean conceptions of the world express the core of Nietzsche's own understanding of it, which effectively provides the context for his construction of and application of will to power. That is to say Nietzsche understood the world in the sense of an immanent becoming that contained no inherent meaning, goals or truths. As such, it becomes possible for life to impart form and meaning within the context of a fundamentally undefined landscape.

To continue, the Apollonian represented the possibility of form and meaning through the aesthetic transfiguration of the basic conditions corporeality and becoming. That is to say Apollonian form serves to transfigure the flux of becoming in the sense that the limitations associated with corporeality are contextualized and provided meaning. As such, it is essentially a response to limitedness and mortality in the sense that it represents an attempt by life to make the world endurable via recourse to art. Will to power will come to express a more active and aggressive understanding of meaning creation. For Nietzsche, the will to power expresses the internal logic of all life to will its own growth via the appropriation of other force. Within this context, meaning is determined on the basis of power relations between such forces; which is to say reality itself is structured immanently (i.e. by life).

Nietzsche's development of will to power also reflected an understanding of the Greek conception of war-justice in a manner that resonated with his interpretation of both the Dionysian and Apollonian elements of the Greek conception of life. As noted above, will to power expresses the internal logic of all force, on the basis of which Nietzsche purports to explain forming-deforming within the context of becoming. I understand this aspect of will to power to be derived from Heraclitus' conception of Logos as expressive of the internal logic of becoming on the basis of strife. Furthermore, the shaping and reshaping of existence through the unending war of forces is not to be understood as a moral phenomenon. That is to say form and meaning within the context of becoming are justified on the basis of an immanent standard of war (i.e. provisional victory), as opposed to meta-conceptual modes of judgment.

At bottom, for Nietzsche, both the Dionysian-Apollonian confluence and the thought of Heraclitus reflected a single principle of valuation: art. That is to say he understood the Greeks to have understood and experienced the world on the basis of this one principle. The metaphysical tradition, as Nietzsche understood it, began with the reversal of the relation between art and truth. As such, Western history since Socrates can be understood in the sense of a determination of what-is and how-it-is on the basis of truth. Nietzsche's ultimate goal in the construction and application of will to power is for it to serve as the underlying principle by which life can re-determine its understanding of and relation to meaning; thus freeing itself from the metaphysics that has led it progressively towards a state of complete nihilism for more than two millennia.

WILL TO POWER

In this chapter I will introduce and develop in detail the central concept of my work, will to power. I will begin by introducing and developing the following series of concepts as I understand them to be constitutive of will to power as a constructive theory of meaning and intelligibility: becoming, force, life and value.¹²⁵ I will then turn to examining the concepts will and power individually in order to illustrate Nietzsche's intended transformation of them, as well as the full import of their combination as a singular concept. I will then undertake a close examination of will to power within the context provided by the development of the concepts noted above. Once the structure of will to power is fully developed, I will return to the concepts force, life and value in order to further develop their meaning, as well as their philosophical significance in relation to the Western metaphysical tradition. My primary aim in this chapter is to fully develop will to power and the concepts I understand to be integral to it against the background of the Western metaphysical tradition in order to provisionally illustrate in what way Nietzsche understood the theory as a counter to the tradition. This will serve to establish

¹²⁵ The terms meaning and intelligibility, as I understand them, represent the possibility of orientation within the context of the primordial becoming of the world. My usage of them within my examination is meant to be coextensively. Furthermore, I understand these concepts to be expressed in Nietzsche's conception of value; which, will be discussed in detail below.

a framework for my discussion in Chapter 3, where I will examine the application of will to power to Nietzsche's understanding of both metaphysics and the problem of nihilism.

To begin, recall that it was noted in the previous chapter that Nietzsche's retrieval of portions of Greek thought was due to the affirmation of becoming, corporeality and finitude he understood to be expressed in it. That is to say he understood Greek tragedy and the philosophy of Heraclitus to represent attempts to establish meaning entirely on the basis of immanence. Nietzsche's own thought begins from becoming as the primordial character of the world. He also uses phrases such as "actual world" and "reality" to refer to his understanding of the world of becoming as what is most real.¹²⁶ He notes, "The world in which we are concerned...is 'in flux,' as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing."¹²⁷ That is to say the world of becoming does not possess any static and fundamental structure to be discovered and expressed in traditional philosophical concepts such as unity, purposiveness, or truth.¹²⁸ There is nothing "underneath" or "outside" of the world of becoming, which is to say it cannot be thought in terms of being.¹²⁹ For Nietzsche, meaning is to be sought on the basis of immanence, as opposed to beyond or outside of it in the form of conceptual constructs.

The concept of becoming has a specific meaning within Nietzsche's thought which is, I think, meant to transcend the basic being-becoming dichotomy. That is to say his understanding of becoming represents more than a simple counter-concept to being. Nietzsche understands becoming in the sense of real or concrete imminent relations "in

¹²⁶ WTP 51; WTP 12; see WTP 580

¹²⁷ WTP 616

¹²⁸ see WTP 12; see WTP 708

¹²⁹ WTP 12; WTP 51; see WTP 1062; see WTP 1066

which everything is bound to and conditioned by everything else.”¹³⁰ The world, for Nietzsche, can be understood as an undivided and finite “quantity of force” that is locked in a state of unending flux where the “forms and states” it assumes are determined by the relations between such forces.¹³¹ He notes, “This world: a monster of energy...a firm, iron magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself...as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces...a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back...as a becoming that knows not satiety.”¹³² As such, he understands becoming to express the world as a limited cache of force that is constantly in the process of forming and deforming on the basis of the immanent relations established between such forces.

The concept of force, for Nietzsche, represents the immanent relations that are determinative of form and appearance (i.e. being). In a broad sense, Nietzsche understands force as what is most basic or primordial to the ‘becoming’ that is ‘this world.’ Force is not to be understood as a building block or atomistic element to which all being may ultimately be reduced to.¹³³ Rather, it expresses the possibility of being on the basis of becoming in the sense of a potentiality that has not been categorically divided into beings prior to force relations. Put another way, it is the material out of which being may arise within the context of becoming, but such material, again, cannot be thought in

¹³⁰ WTP 584

¹³¹ WTP 1066; WTP 1062

¹³² WTP 1067

¹³³ see WTP 635; see WTP 1064

terms of thingness or being because its essence is flux.¹³⁴ That is to say force represents the immanent relations out of which form and being are possible without determining such form or being in advance. The full import of Nietzsche's understanding and intention of the concept force will become more apparent below in my examination of the concepts life and value.

Nietzsche gave numerous formulations of what he understood by the concept of life. He notes, "Life, as the form of being most familiar to us, is specifically a will to the accumulation of force."¹³⁵ That is to say that life can be understood as 'the form of being' that appears as a direct result of 'the accumulation of force.' Elsewhere, he notes, "Life would be defined as an enduring form of processes of the establishment of force, in which the different contenders grow unequally... a process by virtue of which dominant, shaping, commanding forces continually extend the bounds of their power and continually simplify within these bounds."¹³⁶ Nietzsche also uses phrases such as "a multiplicity of forces," "expression of forms," and "to have and to want to have more—growth" to describe the phenomena of life.¹³⁷ The significance of this formulation, I think, becomes apparent against the backdrop of the traditional conception from which Nietzsche is attempting to distinguish it from. Life is not intended as a biological reference in the sense of denoting that which has life. Moreover, life is not meant as a reference to beings in the sense of that which has thing-hood. Rather, life is a form, an expression, an affect that has become manifest out of the interplay of a multiplicity of

¹³⁴ see WTP 660; see WTP 1064

¹³⁵ WTP 689

¹³⁶ WTP 642

¹³⁷ WTP 641; WTP 706; WTP 125

forces. Life is also a reference to the process of force accumulation, itself. I do not understand any conflict to obtain between meanings; however it is important to note that Nietzsche uses the term life to refer to both provisional forms of being, as well as the process of force establishment.¹³⁸

I will now turn to examining Nietzsche's account of meaning within the context of becoming developed above. As noted above, becoming is not properly thought in terms of being or in the sense of truths or facts inherent to the world. That is to say what is and the human relation to it, for Nietzsche, are not determined in advance on the basis of any specific form of meaning or structure inherent to it.¹³⁹ Rather, meaning is introduced and ascribed to both in the form of what Nietzsche calls values. He notes, "Our values are interpreted into things. Is there then any meaning in the in-itself? Is meaning not necessarily relative meaning and perspective?"¹⁴⁰ That is to say values are introduced into the world via an interpretation that occurs from a situated and conditioned 'perspective.'¹⁴¹ Nietzsche notes, "The whole eternally growing world of valuations,

¹³⁸ It should be noted that Nietzsche does make reference to the "inorganic world" (see WTP 544, 642 and 655) in distinction from the "organic world." He further suggests they are connected through the concept of force and its participation in the process of struggle and appropriation that is will to power (see WTP 642). I understand this to suggest that Nietzsche did not recognize the concept of life to hinge on the quality of being animated or organic; but, rather, he understood life to be determined by an ability to posit values and the representation of a counterforce within the context of the force relations that he understands to compose becoming. While the specifics regarding Nietzsche's understanding of the place and connection of the inorganic with that of the organic cannot be examined here, it is enough to note that his conception of life is, I think, meant to resist the interpretation of it in terms of a definite quality that might be possessed by or determinative of a presupposed being.

¹³⁹ see WTP 481; see WTP 853

¹⁴⁰ WTP 590

¹⁴¹ see WTP 604 and 605

colors, accents, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations...whatever has value in our world now does not have value in itself, according to its nature—nature is always value-less, but has been given value at some time, as a present.”¹⁴² As such, the concept of value is meant to express Nietzsche’s understanding of meaning as fundamentally both provisional and perspectival.¹⁴³

Meaning, understood as value, assumes a more specific connotation within Nietzsche’s thought than simply a bald theory of relativity. Values serve to express “conditions of preservation and enhancement for complex forms of relative life-duration within the flux of becoming.”¹⁴⁴ That is to say values represent meaning relative to a perspective in the sense that they are developed on the basis of the interests of life (i.e. provisional forms of being) as they pertain to growth and expansion within the interplay of forces. Haar notes, “Values constitute the conditions of its existence; they are the ‘points of view’ that permit it to maintain itself and to develop itself.”¹⁴⁵ It follows that values, in addition to being grounded in a perspective, are meant to express the conditions fundamental to the ‘preservation and enhancement’ of that perspective. As such, value can be understood as meaning developed at the primordial level of force on the basis of interest in which “every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance.”¹⁴⁶ It follows

¹⁴² GS 301

¹⁴³ It is important to note that Nietzsche understands both meaning and intelligibility through the concept value.

¹⁴⁴ WTP 715

¹⁴⁵ Haar p. 10

¹⁴⁶ WTP 567

that meaning, for Nietzsche, is to be understood in the sense of a meaning-for, as opposed to meaning as such.¹⁴⁷

Within the framework established by the provisional development of the basic concepts examined above, I will now turn to directly examining the central concept of this work: will to power. I will open my examination by discussing the concepts will and power as separate and distinct terms in order to illustrate the way Nietzsche attempts to subvert their traditional meanings. To begin, the traditional conception of will, as I understand it, is intimately bound up with the concept change, which is to say it has traditionally functioned as a means to conceptually structure and explain the (human) experience of change. Haar notes, “The classical view of the will in effect turns it either into a metaphysical substance or, more commonly, into a faculty of the subject. Moreover, this view sees in the will the cause and source of our actions. Finally, it conceives of the will as a unity, an identity.”¹⁴⁸ Nietzsche rejects each of these forms of the concept will on the grounds that each represents simply a different manner of ‘replacing real relations between forces by an abstract relation.’¹⁴⁹ That is to say, he understands the classic model of the will to represent a conceptualization of force relations, or the reduction of such relations to a principle of reason. As such, will amounts to a metaphysical postulate that is determined in advance of force relations, which effectively places it in exemption from the context of becoming that Nietzsche

¹⁴⁷ see WTP 555 and 556

¹⁴⁸ Haar p. 6; Note that I understand Haar’s usage of the term ‘classical’ to mean ‘traditional’ in the sense of the modern German tradition associated with Schopenhauer, and not a reference to Ancient philosophy.

¹⁴⁹ see Deleuze p. 74

understands to be fundamental to life, value and the world. Nietzsche's revision of the concept will is meant to subvert the traditional understanding of it by attempting to explain it on the basis of immanence, which is to say in terms of the fluid and non-enduring relations established between forces.

Nietzsche notes that "all events, all motion, all becoming" arise as a result of the relations established within the interplay of forces.¹⁵⁰ That is to say change can be understood on the basis of the interaction between forces.¹⁵¹ Deleuze notes, "Nietzsche's concept of force is therefore that of a force which is related to another force: in this form force is called will."¹⁵² As such, Nietzsche understands change in terms of the effect a force has on another force; however that is not to say force can be understood in the sense of a causal agent. It means only that the impetus for change occurs at the primordial level of force and ascends to the level of provisional forms of being, which is to say change occurs most originally in the form of inter-force relations rather than rationally-based identities.

Recall that Nietzsche understands all force to be fundamentally value-positing in the sense that all life, at its most basic level, determines and orients what-is by interpreting it on the basis of its own conditions of preservation and growth. Such preservation and growth is pursued by force through the domination and appropriation of other force. Stronger force subsumes weaker force and subsequently presses them into the service of its own valuation. Nietzsche notes, "The only force that exists is of the

¹⁵⁰ WTP 552

¹⁵¹ I have in mind the following quotation: -"That will to power in which I recognize the ultimate ground and character of all change..." (WTP 685)

¹⁵² Deleuze p. 7

same kind as that of the will: a commanding of other subjects.”¹⁵³ That is to say, what the tradition has understood as effective force (i.e. change) is what he means to express with the concept will, which, is to be understood in terms of the hierarchy between forces. Nietzsche notes, “Willing’ is not ‘desiring,’ striving, demanding: it is distinguished from these by the affect of commanding. There is no such thing as ‘willing,’ but only a willing something...it is part of willing that something is commanded.”¹⁵⁴ As such, he understands willing to involve essentially the imposition of valuation by force upon other force, which has the effect of establishing a hierarchy whereby the resulting quanta of force is commanded and organized according to the valuation of its strongest component.¹⁵⁵ Willing expresses the event of a single valuation provisionally being established as the preeminent one within a given quanta of force, which is then expressed in various forms (i.e. thought, movement, etc.) as such quanta of force is essentially mobilized or pressed into the service of that valuation. Haar explains this complex process in the following quotation:

“What the individual calls his ‘will’ is a plurality of instincts and impulses in constant battle with one another to gain the upper hand...volition is composed of distinct emotions and polarities: there is that which wills and that which is willed, and then also, at the very core of the ‘individual,’ that which commands and that which obeys...what language designates by the word ‘will’ is in reality only a

¹⁵³ WTP 490

¹⁵⁴ WTP 668

¹⁵⁵ I understand the term ‘quanta’ to express a two-fold meaning within Nietzsche’s thought. The first is the degree or quantity of force inherent within a provisional form of being (see WTP 633 and 855). The second is a reference to provisional forms of being in their particularity, or as distinct beings (see WTP 635).

complex and belated feeling, which accompanies the victory of one impulse over others, or the translation into conscious terms of the temporary state of equilibrium that has obtained among the competing impulses. Indeed, the will, like consciousness itself, is for Nietzsche not a beginning but an end, not the first term but the 'last link in a chain.' The will (like consciousness and thought in general) is the distant echo of a battle that has already been fought out, the aftermath coming to the surface, or the 'code language' for a subterranean struggle of impulses. To will is to feel the triumph of a force that has cleared a way for itself quite apart from our knowing anything about it. The supreme illusion consists in taking this feeling, this sentiment, for a free causality...a plurality of elementary 'wills,' i.e., unconscious impulses, forever in conflict, alternately imposing themselves and subordinating themselves...seen with regard to these impulses, the whole of our conscious motivations comes down to a fiction, or rather, a symptom."¹⁵⁶

Nietzsche understands willing to be fundamentally inseparable from the establishment of rule at the primordial level of force, which serves as the basis for the organization and direction of a given quanta insofar as it facilitates the dominant valuation. For Nietzsche, to will is simply the expression of a primordial conflict between force, and is improperly understood as something progenative in itself. Deleuze notes, "A new conception of the philosophy of the will follows from this. For the will is not exercised mysteriously on muscles or nerves, still less on 'matter in general', but is necessarily exercised on another

¹⁵⁶ Haar p. 7

will. The real problem is not that of the relation of will to the involuntary but rather of the relation of a will that commands to a will to obeys.”¹⁵⁷

I will now turn to examining Nietzsche’s conception of power, and his reinterpretation of it on the basis of will. While he did not offer any explicit definition of the concept power, or even any statement that I think might be construed as essential, the manner in which he uses it over the course of his works provides us with a basic idea of both how he understands and attempts to transform it. I understand the concept power to be traditionally understood either in terms of potency (i.e. the capacity to effect change), or in terms of an end or a goal to be obtained. Both forms of interpretation presuppose a subject-object correlation in that power is either understood as the capacity of a subject, or an object for a subject. Nietzsche makes use of a variety of German terms over the course of his development of the concept that serve to illustrate an ongoing attempt to expand the connotations of it. These include the terms ‘Macht’ (power), ‘Machtgelust’ (desire for power), ‘Gefühl der Macht’ (feeling of power), and ‘Machtgefühl’ (power-feeling).¹⁵⁸ The appearance and succession of these terms collectively illustrates a movement in Nietzsche’s understanding and application of the concept from its traditional interpretation in terms of externalizable potential or teleological goal towards internal motivation (i.e. psychological) and phenomenal input (i.e. experience of power).¹⁵⁹ It is between the years 1882-83/5, which coincides with the publication of *The Gay Science* (with the exception of Book 5 which was not written until 1886) and

¹⁵⁷ Deleuze p. 7

¹⁵⁸ Linda L. Williams p. 2

¹⁵⁹ Linda L. Williams p. 2

Thus Spoke Zarathustra, that the German term ‘Wille zur Macht’ (will to power) is introduced and applied largely to the exclusion of the related terms noted above.¹⁶⁰ As we will see below, the interpretation of power on the basis of will represents an attempt by Nietzsche to develop the concept in a manner that transcends the basic subject-object relation at the root of its traditional conception.

The introduction of the concept will to power into Nietzsche’s thought also serves to introduce the interpretation of power on the basis of force (i.e. as he understands will in terms of force). Aydin notes, “Nietzsche’s principle of the will to power implies that relation is not an additional element of things but, rather, something that constitutes in a fundamental way what a thing is. In other words, there are no first things, which then have relations with each other; rather, things are what they are by virtue of their relations.”¹⁶¹ That is to say, again, that provisional forms of being are to be understood as relations of force that have been organized into a hierarchy according to the valuation of its dominant or commanding aspect.

Understood within the context of Nietzsche’s theory of force, power assumes the same intrinsic relational quality; which has several important consequences to be noted. First, power is not to be understood as an end or object to be pursued or obtained. Heidegger notes, “Power can never be pre-established as will’s goal, as though power were something that could first be posited outside the will...the expression ‘to power’; therefore never means some sort of appendage to will.”¹⁶² The concept power cannot be

¹⁶⁰ Linda L. Williams p. 3

¹⁶¹ Aydin p. 26

¹⁶² H1 p. 42

thought in separation from the relations of force to which it is inseparably bound because it would then constitute an ideal that existed in distinction from such force relations.

Second, power becomes understood as the determinant aspect of inter-force relations that serves to establish the hierarchy between forces that result in provisional form. Deleuze notes, “Power is the genetic and differential element in the will...the genetic element (power) determines the relation of force with force and qualifies related forces...all phenomena express relations of forces, qualities of forces and of power.”¹⁶³ This means that the hierarchy of commanding and obeying that is necessarily established upon distinct quanta of force coming into contact is a result of the quantity of force that comprise them; which, is to say power serves as the ‘differential element’ that establishes order within inter-force relations. Third, I have used the terms ‘forms of force’ and ‘expression of force’ over the course of my examination to denote Nietzsche’s understanding of the possibility of being within the context of becoming. Specifically, the terms ‘form’ and ‘expression’ are of particular importance for my purposes because they serve to connect the concept of power with that of being, insofar as any establishment of form or expression out of the interplay of force is fundamentally grounded in power (i.e. as an act of dominance). That is to say, “to become master of the chaos one is; to compel one’s chaos to become form” is, at bottom, a demonstration of power.¹⁶⁴ This means that life, or being, is fundamentally an expression of power that is predicated on the establishment and maintenance of conditions of growth and expansion (i.e. valuation). Understood on the basis of will, the concept power assumes a meaning

¹⁶³ Deleuze p. 85

¹⁶⁴ WTP 842

that transcends the subject-object correlation that determined its traditional conception. It no longer stands as a reference to the actualization of potentiality as it pertains to a subject, or to any teleological end to be obtained. Instead, it becomes the differential aspect of will that constitutes being insofar as it determines all relations of force.

I will now turn to examining the unified concept of will to power. As noted above, Nietzsche's understanding of the individual concepts of will and power serve to transform each term from its traditional metaphysical conception. As a unified concept will to power offers an account of the possibility of being, or values, on the basis of becoming. The manner in which Nietzsche understands being within the context of becoming has largely been developed already, so I will focus on developing how he understands values to be explained and oriented on the basis of will to power. Valuation pertains exclusively to the preservation and growth of perspectival force. Nietzsche notes, "All meaning is will to power (all relative meaning resolves itself into it)."¹⁶⁵ That is to say he purports to explain meaning in terms of the immanent expression of irrational force as they are understood to be oriented on the basis of will to power. Haar explains:

"The locution (will to power) applies more precisely to the inner dynamism of these forces, to the orientation that qualifies them. In fact, rather than naming these forces themselves (as new metaphysical substances of the sort that Nietzsche rejects as fictitious), the Will to Power names the polarity that orients them, structures them, and defines their meaning. It is not an absolute meaning, nor a univocal direction, nor any finality whatsoever, but a multifaceted meaning

¹⁶⁵ WTP 590

that takes its shape from the moving diversity of perspective. In its widest signification, the Will to Power designates a deployment of forces that is non-finalized but always oriented. Every force, every energy, whatever it may be, is Will to Power—in the organic world (impulses, instincts, needs), in the psychological and moral worlds (desires, motivations, ideas), and in the inorganic world itself.”¹⁶⁶

Meaning is to be understood as the willed valuation of the dominant component within a given relation of force. That is to say that meaning becomes inseparable from the power that is able to establish and advance it. Nietzsche notes, “What is the objective measure of value? Solely the quantum of enhanced and organized power...valuation itself is only this will to power.”¹⁶⁷ That is to say, again, that meaning reflects the establishment of hierarchy at the primordial level of force whereby the valuation that becomes willed is determined on the basis of power. Haar notes, “As the origin of values, and the origin also of every hierarchy of values, the Will to Power fixes the value of all values.”¹⁶⁸ Will to power, then, can be understood as the immanent principle whereby all meaning is both created and justified.

Recall that it has been noted that the concept of value is understood by Nietzsche to express the possibility of both meaning and intelligibility with the context of primordial becoming. Here, I will be concerned with the specialized nature and dynamic that the concept of intelligibility assumes within the context of will to power. Nietzsche

¹⁶⁶ Haar p. 7/8

¹⁶⁷ WTP 674

¹⁶⁸ Haar p. 10

uses the term “genealogy” to characterize and express his understanding of intelligibility in the sense of the critical assessment of values on the basis of type. It will first be necessary to examine his understanding of typology in order to establish its significance and relevance for the genealogical method. To begin, valuation is reflective of both the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the force that values. Deleuze notes, “We must remember that every force has an essential relation to other forces, that the essence of force is its quantitative difference from other forces and that this difference is expressed as the force’s quality.”¹⁶⁹ As noted above, the quantitative difference (i.e. power) between quanta of force serves as the determinative factor in establishing hierarchies of force. Deleuze notes, “Active and reactive are precisely the original qualities which express the relation of force with force...the quality corresponding to their difference in quantity as such.”¹⁷⁰ Nietzsche will also use terms such as noble, master, and aristocratic to describe active and affirmative values, and terms such as common, low, base, and plebian to describe reactive and negative values.¹⁷¹ A force’s quality is to be understood as the expression of a type of force whose valuation and position in relation to other force is determined on the basis of power. This means that a force will interpret the world on the basis of its relation to other force; which, is to say it will construe its advantage from the perspective it is able to establish by virtue of its quantitative element. Deleuze notes, “Quality is nothing but difference in quantity and corresponds to it each time forces enter into relation...in this encounter, each force receives the quality which corresponds to its

¹⁶⁹ Deleuze p. 49/50

¹⁷⁰ Deleuze p. 40

¹⁷¹ see GOM 2-5 and 7

quantity, that is to say the attachment which actually fulfills its power.”¹⁷² That is to say each force is organized into a hierarchy on the basis of quantity that is determinative of its subsequent valuation in that the conditions of its growth and expansion have necessarily altered in tow. As such, quantity, quality and valuation are fundamentally inseparable in the sense that they are determinant of one another.

Genealogy is the term Nietzsche uses to describe the method of assessing values on the basis of quality, or type.¹⁷³ Haar notes, “The ‘genealogical’ critique of values consists in relating any given value to the originary direction (affirmative or negative) of volition, in unveiling the long lineage issuing from this primordial orientation, and in unraveling the long thread weaving together encounters and invention that have since frozen into ‘values.’”¹⁷⁴ That is to say ‘genealogical critique’ amounts to “a kind of symptomatology or semiology” where values are understood as “signs of the originary direction, whether ascendant or decadent.”¹⁷⁵ Specifically, the value of a value is drawn back to its origin as the expression of conditions of preservation and enhancement of a particular type of life. Deleuze notes, “Genealogy means both the value of origin and the origin of values...genealogy signifies the differential element of values from which their value itself derives. Genealogy thus means origin or birth, but also difference or distance in the origin.”¹⁷⁶ That is to say, for Nietzsche, that the quantitative element (i.e. power) that is determinative of both hierarchy (i.e. force relations) and quality (i.e.

¹⁷² Deleuze p. 44

¹⁷³ see GOM 3

¹⁷⁴ Haar p. 9

¹⁷⁵ Haar p. 14

¹⁷⁶ Deleuze p. 2

active/reactive) is also determinative of valuation in the sense that a certain type of life will seek to ground meaning in a particular way. The particular forms of valuation he considers to be representative of active and reactive forces will be developed in more detail in the following chapter where I will undertake a close examination of his understanding of both metaphysics and nihilism.

Now that the basic framework of will to power has been introduced, I think it will be helpful to return to some of the concepts examined above in order to develop their full import within the context of will to power, as well as their relation to the Western metaphysical tradition. It was noted above that the concept of force represents the immanent relations out of which form and being are possible without determining such form or being in advance. Within the context of will to power force can be understood as primordial potentiality in the sense that such force is provisionally oriented into form on the basis of power relations. Nietzsche notes, “The will to power in every combination of forces, defending itself against the stronger, lunging at the weaker, is more correct...appropriation and assimilation are above all a desire to overwhelm, a forming, shaping and reshaping, until at length that which has been overwhelmed has entirely gone over into the power domain of the aggressor and has increased the same.”¹⁷⁷ As such, force is not to be understood as the ‘what’ that constitutes being, or the ‘what’ that speaks in meaning because in every instance being and meaning are but forms and expressions of a particular relation of force inseparable from the process of forming and deforming on the basis of will to power. That is to say force is always on-

¹⁷⁷ WTP 655 and 656

the-way, and only receives definition as a participant in a relation. Force cannot be thought in separation from the provisional relations of which it may be a participant at any given point, nor can it be reduced to such provisional relations because either case would signify the ascription of being to it (i.e. to negate becoming). Force represents the non-subjective potential to assume provisional form as a result of the fundamental dynamism of all force to will its own growth.

I understand Nietzsche's conception of force to be aimed at subverting the Western metaphysical tradition in two important ways. First, he wants to simultaneously reject and reverse what he understands as the traditional manner of structuring and orienting the human experience on the basis of reason. Such a predilection, for Nietzsche, amounts to a mere "prejudice in favour of reason," which leads to the positing of rational categories on the basis of which what-is is determined and made intelligible.¹⁷⁸ Furthermore, it stems from a "misunderstanding of passion and reason, as if the latter were an independent entity and not rather a system of relations between various passions and desires."¹⁷⁹ He rather purports to explain the rational on the basis of the movement and relation of the irrational forces that undergird all being. Nietzsche notes, "Suppose nothing else were 'given' as real except our world of desires and passions, and we could not get down, or up, to any other 'reality' besides the reality of our drives—for thinking is merely a relation of these drives to each other...as a pre-form

¹⁷⁸ TI 5 ('Reason' In Philosophy)

¹⁷⁹ WTP 387; I understand such terms as 'passion,' 'desire,' 'drive,' 'instinct,' etc., to express Nietzsche's understanding of the way in which the irrational forces that compose immanent and corporeal being to be manifested physiologically.

of life.”¹⁸⁰ As such, Nietzsche understands the irrational as both primary and constitutive of the rational.

Second, the concept of force (along with the concept of life) represents an attempt to reframe the conception of being on the basis of force relations. Being has traditionally been conceived in terms of static, unified, and universally true identities on the basis of rational categories of thought.¹⁸¹ That is to say what-is is conceived metaphysically on the basis of an essential or fundamental characterization of being that is determinative in advance, is not subject to becoming, and is accessible via reason. Within the context of will to power, being assumes a provisional and relational character in the sense that the essential determination of what-is participates in and is subject to the primordial becoming of the world. That is to say being is a product of the relations established between irrational forces and cannot be understood in separation from this process. As such, the concept being does not express the enduring and immutable essence of things, but only what has provisionally appeared out of the interplay of forces. Nietzsche notes, “If we eliminate these (conceptual) additions, no things remain but only dynamic quanta, in a relation of tension to all other dynamic quanta: their essence lies in their relation to all other quanta, in their ‘effect’ upon the same...the most elemental fact from which a becoming and effecting first emerge.”¹⁸² As such, force may be understood to provisionally compose forms of being, but being cannot be reduced to any particular form of force. This claim amounts to a reversal of the tradition in that it seeks to understand

¹⁸⁰ BGE 36

¹⁸¹ see WTP 12; see WTP 521

¹⁸² WTP 635

being on the basis of becoming (i.e. immanence) in the sense that being is grounded in force relations.

To continue, it was noted above that Nietzsche understood the concept of life to refer to the provisional forms of being that arise out of the interplay of force. Understood within the context of will to power, these forms of being become hierarchical structures of force that have been organized in accordance with the valuation of its most dominant component. He notes that “life is merely a special case of the will to power.”¹⁸³ That is to say that life is only one (albeit, unique) possible expression of force, and as such life can be characterized on the basis of the orientation of all force. Nietzsche notes, “The really fundamental instinct of life...aims at the expansion of power and...the great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power—in accordance with the will to power which is the will of life.”¹⁸⁴ As in the case of force noted above, life cannot be thought of in separation from the process of will to power. Life is never self-identical, which means it is always on-the-way in the sense that it can never be understood as a static and enduring entity because that would signify the cessation of the process of which it is a part, as well as the ascription of being to it. That is to say life, as the provisional expression of force, is always actively engaged in the process of appropriating or being appropriated, and cannot be reduced to whatever form it may take at a particular time.

I understand Nietzsche’s conception of life to represent a subversion of the Western metaphysical tradition in a manner similar to what has been noted above

¹⁸³ WTP 692

¹⁸⁴ GS 349

concerning the concept of force. It was noted above that the term life is applied in two distinct, yet complimentary ways in Nietzsche's thought, and both deserve mention here as they serve to support and extend the revision of the concept being examined in part above. The first sense refers to beings in their particularity, which are not to be taken as enduring entities because they are provisional expressions of force that remain engaged in the primordial struggle between forces. That is to say that form or appearance within the interplay of forces is grounded in provisional relations. The ascription of being to beings would amount to an extrication from immanence, or primordial becoming, in a metaphysical manner. The second sense refers to the process of force accumulation that has the effect of producing provisional forms. Life is not to be understood as some thing separate and distinct from the process of power relations between quanta of force that effectively compose it. Rather, for Nietzsche, life is the 'enduring form of processes of the establishment of force,' of which the specific forms 'most familiar to us' are a product. Considered in combination, Nietzsche has produced a conception of life that is inseparable from and even identical with primordial becoming. This is what Nietzsche means in writing, "a new definition of the concept 'life' as will to power."¹⁸⁵ That is to say within the context of will to power life assumes a provisional, relational, and process-character.

To continue, it was noted above that Nietzsche understood values to be grounded in immanent force relations, as well as to be fundamentally artistic in the sense that valuation is creatively generated. Understood within the context of will to power, values

¹⁸⁵ WTP 617

become construed solely in terms of the primordial directedness of all force toward growth and expansion. That is to say all value, all meaning, is to be understood on the basis of power. Nietzsche notes, “All ‘purposes,’ ‘aims,’ ‘meaning’ are only modes of expression and metamorphoses of one will that is inherent in all events: the will to power. To have purposes, aims, intentions, willing in general, is the same thing as willing to be stronger, willing to grow—and, in addition, willing the means to this...valuation itself is only this will to power.”¹⁸⁶ As such, meaning becomes inseparable from the internal logic of all force to will its own growth and expansion in that it serves to express the conditions necessary for it. Note that Nietzsche does not mean to say that valuation amounts to a kind of calculated and reflective plan for growth on the part of force. In functioning as the differential element within the relation of all force, will to power itself determines value by determining hierarchy on the basis of power. Nietzsche notes, “The will to power interprets...it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power. Mere variations of power could not feel themselves to be such: there must be present something that wants to grow and interprets the value of whatever else wants to grow.”¹⁸⁷ As such, the will to power is determinant of the perspective from which a given force values by dictating its position within the hierarchy of force. That is to say that the will to power ‘fixes the value of all values’ by establishing the hierarchy of all force and value.

Nietzsche’s conception of meaning on the basis of will to power represents a departure from the metaphysical tradition in several ways that should be noted. First, Nietzsche understands meaning to be established at the primordial level of force. He

¹⁸⁶ WTP 675

¹⁸⁷ WTP 643

notes, “When we speak of values we do so under the inspiration and from the perspective of life: life itself evaluates through us when we establish values.”¹⁸⁸ That is to say meaning is not to be understood on the basis of the rational, but, on the contrary, meaning at the level of reason can only be understood as an expression or product of the irrational. Second, all meaning is fundamentally interested in the sense that it expresses the conditions that both enable and facilitate the preservation and growth of a provisional form of being. That is to say value expresses a perspectival-seeing on the basis of the potential to dominate and grow within the vision of the world that correlates to that valuation (i.e. force sees only a world it can dominate). For Nietzsche, value “always appears in the shape of a will and way to greater power,” and all meaning necessarily refers back to what he calls “the original phenomenon...to desire to incorporate everything.”¹⁸⁹ Third, it follows from the previous point that Nietzsche’s understanding of meaning in terms of value necessitates a rejection of the possibility of universal meaning. He notes, “A ‘thing-in-itself’ is just as perverse as a ‘sense-in-itself,’ a ‘meaning-in-itself.’ There are no ‘facts-in-themselves,’ for a sense must always be projected into them before there can be ‘facts.’ The question ‘what is that?’ is an imposition of meaning from some other viewpoint...at the bottom of it there always lies ‘what is that for me?’ (for us, for all that lives, etc.).”¹⁹⁰ He adds, “Hence man alone among the animals has no eternal horizons and perspectives.”¹⁹¹ Meaning, for Nietzsche, is to be understood as both limited and provisional, as opposed to the traditional

¹⁸⁸ TI 5 (Morality as Anti-Nature)

¹⁸⁹ GOM 12; WTP 657

¹⁹⁰ WTP 556

¹⁹¹ GS 143

interpretation of it as objective, eternal, divine and/or foundational. Fourth, Nietzsche understands meaning on the basis of art, as ‘every center of force’ essentially creates a vision of reality as it coincides with its own ‘conditions of preservation and enhancement.’ Nietzsche notes, “We make up the major part of our experience and can scarcely be forced not to contemplate some event as its ‘inventors’... we who think and feel at the same time are those who really continually fashion something that had not been there before...all this means: basically and from time immemorial we are...much more of an artist than one knows.”¹⁹² As such, he understands meaning in terms of creation in the sense that provisional forms of being actively determine actuality by way of interpretation.

It was noted above that the traditional conception of intelligibility was redefined within the context of will to power. That is to say the conditions that allow for the possibility of intelligibility were reinterpreted on the basis of a typological, or qualitative, assessment of force and life that Nietzsche called genealogy. Recall that quality is a function of quantity in the sense that the quantitative difference (i.e. power) between forces is determinative of their relational hierarchy. The position forces are able to establish on the basis of such difference determines the perspective from which they value, which is to say their conditions of preservation and growth will be formulated and posited from a position of either dominance or subservience in relation to other forces. The concept of quality, for Nietzsche, is meant to characterize values on the basis of the type of force that posits them, and the discernment of such type is intended to confer the

¹⁹² BGE 192; GS 301

sense or intelligible character of such values on the basis of will to power. Genealogy is the critical method by which the sense of values are discerned as the expression of advantage from a certain qualitative perspective. That is to say the intelligible character of a value is interpreted on the basis of its value for life, which is to say on the basis of will to power.

Nietzsche's conception of intelligibility represents a departure from the Western metaphysical tradition in the sense that the very model of thought is reframed. The traditional model of thought is grounded in universally valid rational categories, which are governed by the rules of logic. That is to say thinking is determined in advance by metaphysical categories grounded in reason and logic. Nietzsche rejects such ideal grounds of thought and attempts to re-ground thinking on the provisional power-based relations between irrational forces.¹⁹³ That is to say thought is to be understood as determined and animated by the immanent forces that take hold of it.¹⁹⁴ Deleuze notes, "A new image of thought means primarily that truth is not the element of thought. The element of thought is sense and value. The categories of thought are not truth and falsity but the noble and the base, the high and the low, depending on the nature of the forces that take hold of thought itself."¹⁹⁵ Thought, then, is not the mechanical or rote activity of a faculty, nor is it determined in advance by reference to ideal structures.¹⁹⁶ Rather it is the provisional product determined on the basis of force relations, and the quality of forces that become expressed in thought constitute its intelligible character. As such,

¹⁹³ see BGE 36

¹⁹⁴ see Deleuze p. 104

¹⁹⁵ Deleuze p. 104

¹⁹⁶ see Deleuze p. 108

intelligibility becomes redefined within the context of will to power in the sense that it is grounded anew on the forces determinative and conducive to life.¹⁹⁷

Each of the concepts examined in this chapter represents an attempt by Nietzsche to subvert and reframe its traditional metaphysical conception on the basis of immanence. That is to say the possibility and philosophical import of being is reinterpreted on the basis of becoming. For Nietzsche, the metaphysical tradition is rooted in “the taste for replacing real relations between forces by an abstract relation which is supposed to express them all as a measure.”¹⁹⁸ His intention in reframing the concepts and categories noted above on the basis of immanence is to reject both their traditional metaphysical import and relation to life, while introducing a new conception of them grounded in life and the forces that condition it. Nietzsche describes his own efforts as an attempt “to translate man back into nature; to become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of homo natura.”¹⁹⁹ The ideal and rational categories that have hitherto served as the metaphysical foundation for the orientation and comportment of beings are to be reinterpreted on the basis of immanence and becoming. That is to say, again, the conditions for and significance of such categories and structures must be reexamined and their need reassessed on the basis of the force relations that constitute

¹⁹⁷ My understanding of Nietzsche’s revision of the traditional metaphysical model of thought will be developed further in Chapter 3, where I will examine the metaphysical conception of truth.

¹⁹⁸ Deleuze p. 74

¹⁹⁹ BGE 230

life, or will to power. To do so requires that Nietzsche perform a critique of the Western metaphysical tradition, which I will undertake to examine in the following chapter.

METAPHYSICS AND NIHILISM

In this chapter I will attempt to apply the conception of will to power developed in the previous chapter to both the Western metaphysical tradition and the problem of nihilism as Nietzsche understands them. I will begin by introducing and developing his understanding of metaphysics, and the manner in which his theory of force affects the form his question and answers will assume. I will then turn to establishing the connection he understands to obtain between metaphysics and the problem of nihilism, as well as the influence they have had on the course of Western history. Next, I will examine Nietzsche's understanding of the metaphysical conception of truth and morality, and their connection with the Western metaphysical tradition and the problem of nihilism. I will conclude this chapter by examining his revision of the above concepts on the basis of immanence, which ultimately has the effect of dissolving the conceptual distinctions that he considers fundamental to both metaphysics and the problem of nihilism. My main purpose in this chapter will be to examine Nietzsche's application of will to power to the tradition that preceded him in an effort to establish a basis from which to provisionally assess his project of addressing the problem of nihilism by overcoming the metaphysical tradition.

For Nietzsche, metaphysics is the method by which life has developed and structured its understanding of and comportment within the world on the basis of

rationalism or idealism.²⁰⁰ That is to say what properly constitutes reality, the intelligible character of such reality, and the meaning proper to it is determined on the basis of reason.²⁰¹ Metaphysics, for Nietzsche, has traditionally taken the form of a division between the world of experience (i.e. “apparent world”) and an ideal or conceptual world (i.e. “true world”).²⁰² The “true world” is to be understood as any conceptual or ideal construct posited over and against the world of experience, corporeality and change, in a way that serves to reduce the latter to the status of a merely “apparent world.”²⁰³ Nietzsche notes, “The apparent world is not counted as a ‘valuable’ world; appearance is supposed to constitute an objection to supreme value. Only a ‘true’ world can be valuable in itself.”²⁰⁴ It follows that metaphysics, for Nietzsche, amounts to a doctrine of two worlds in the sense of a belief in a world separate from that of experience that is both unchanging and true in itself.²⁰⁵

The central issue Nietzsche has with metaphysics is that it transcends and rejects life and the conditions proper to it. That is to say the conceptual or ideal constructs of the metaphysical tradition are not understood to be conditioned by or dependent upon life or immanence in any way. Rather, they are torn from the conditional and perspectival ground of immanent life where they were created and alone hold significance.²⁰⁶ Furthermore, metaphysical constructs stand over and against life in the sense that they

²⁰⁰ see WTP 574, 576 and 584

²⁰¹ see WTP 584

²⁰² see WTP 507; see Haar p. X

²⁰³ see WTP 583

²⁰⁴ WTP 583

²⁰⁵ see Haar p. IX-X

²⁰⁶ see WTP 430

represent both a rejection and correction of immanence. That is to say the “apparent world” is deemed false on account of the “properties that constitute its reality: change, becoming, multiplicity, opposition, contradiction, war.”²⁰⁷ The “true world,” as the metaphysical ground of being, serves as the basis for such a rejection, while also providing its correction in the form of a conceptual structure that “possesses all the attributes that life does not have: unity, stability, identity, happiness, truth, goodness.”²⁰⁸ As such, Nietzsche understands the metaphysical tradition to have determined what-is and how-it-is on the basis of conceptual and ideal categories that are fundamentally independent from and in opposition to life and the conditions proper to it. Life, then, becomes dependent upon metaphysics for meaning, as opposed to life and immanence being the proper ground of such concepts.²⁰⁹

Within the context of Nietzsche’s thought, particularly his characterization of the world as a primordial becoming oriented on the basis of will to power, the question of metaphysics assumes a dual form. That is to say the question of ‘what is metaphysics’ becomes conjoined by the corresponding question of ‘what does metaphysics express’ in the sense of a valuation elicited by a particular type of force. I understand the former question to be concerned with the characterization of philosophical concepts and ideals on the basis of their relation to the world of experience, change and suffering; whereas,

²⁰⁷ WTP 584

²⁰⁸ WTP 12

²⁰⁹ To reiterate, my usage of the term meaning is meant to be understood coextensively with the terms intelligibility and value. This usage is reflective of my understanding that Nietzsche understands and uses such terms in the same manner in the sense that he expresses the possibility of both meaning and intelligibility within the context of becoming through the concept value.

the latter question asks after the meaning and significance of such concepts and ideals on the basis of their relation to life. Both aspects, I think, contribute to Nietzsche's overall conception of metaphysics. The former question has been provisionally developed above, and the latter will be the subject of my examination below.

It was noted in the previous chapter that the quality of a force was determined by its quantity, and valuation necessarily reflects this situated and interested context. Recall that the terms active and reactive (or noble, base, etc.) are meant to express roles of dominance and subservience, and that which is active is such because it has forcibly appropriated and subjugated that which is reactive. Furthermore, the qualitative difference between forces is meant to express the idea that there is something essential to force that necessarily has the effect of distinguishing and separating the strong from the weak. This 'distinguishing and separating' is meant to express what we have hitherto referred to as the establishment of hierarchy between forces on the basis of power. The hierarchy that results due to the interaction between forces establishes what Nietzsche calls an 'order of rank.' Nietzsche notes, "What determines rank, sets off rank, is only quanta of power, and nothing else...order of rank as order of power...what determines your rank is the quantum of power you are."²¹⁰ That is to say the concept of rank expresses a correlation between power and the relational position a given force must assume within a context of competing forces. Rank represents the possibility of immanent justice in the sense that what is active, what is dominant, what rules is

²¹⁰ WTP 855

warranted by the expression of power that one ‘naturally’ is.²¹¹ Nietzsche’s conception of justice will be examined in more detail below as part of my discussion concerning metaphysical truth. It is enough at the moment to note that Nietzsche’s conception of an inherent order of rank between forces on the basis of power serves to illustrate the inescapable context for reactive force within his thought. Reactive forces are such because they are made to be so by inherently stronger force; which, is to say on the basis of immanence (i.e. will to power) reactive forces are natural slaves and can be no other. For Nietzsche, the quality or type of a given force expresses its relation to other force, but when examined within the context of the concept of an order of rank it becomes the inherent and unavoidable expression of ‘what’ constitutes a given force (i.e. power). As such, quality expresses a relation, but it is a ‘natural’ relation where force achieves the rank proper to the quanta of power that it is.

Within the context of the above, I will now examine how reactive force develops and pursues its valuation in response to its domination by active force. Nietzsche understands active force in terms of “the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions,” and by contrast, he understands reactive force as “exhausted force which does not have the strength to affirm its difference, a force which no longer acts but rather reacts to the forces which dominate it.”²¹² The phrase ‘affirm its difference’ is important for my purposes because it serves to illustrate the fundamental stance that reactive force assumes towards its subservience.

²¹¹ I have in mind the following quotation: “Equality for equals, inequality for unequals’ – that would be the true voice of justice: and, what follows from it, ‘Never make equal what is unequal’ (TI 48 (Expeditions of An Untimely Man)).”

²¹² GOM 12; Deleuze p. 11

Reactive force cannot make the qualitative difference that determines its reactive nature a point of affirmation; which, is to say it becomes a point of negation. Deleuze notes, “It is characteristic of reactive forces to deny, from the start, the difference which constitutes them...only such a force brings to the foreground the negative element in its relation to the other. Such a force denies all that it is not and makes this negation its own essence and the principle of its existence.”²¹³ As such, we can understand the valuation of reactive force on the basis of negating and undermining that which is active.

The question of ‘what does metaphysics express’ can now receive a provisional answer. For Nietzsche, metaphysics is nothing other than the reactive valuation that seeks to negate the active force that subjugates it. Metaphysics can be understood as the valuation of reactive force, which is to say it serves to express the conditions of growth and expansion proper to the subservient perspective. The immanent ground from which active force derives its value does not allow for the prospect of growth for reactive force, and the latter is subsequently led to posit another, wholly fictitious, ground of value. The reactive ground of value is established through elevating the rational (i.e. conceptual, ideal) above the immanent (i.e. irrational, corporeal, phenomenal) in a way where the former serves to ground all meaning regarding the latter. The reactive ground of value is what Nietzsche understands as the “true” or “real world,” which amounts to “a world that possess all the attributes that ‘life’ does not have: unity, stability, identity, happiness, truth, goodness, etc.”²¹⁴ The “true world” expresses a fundamental rejection of the ground of valuation of active force, which is to say the world of experience (i.e.

²¹³ Deleuze p. 11 and p. 56

²¹⁴ Haar p. 12

“plurality, becoming, contradiction, suffering, illusion”) is reduced to what Nietzsche terms the “apparent world.”²¹⁵ For Nietzsche, metaphysics is the mode by which reactive force revalues immanence by positing a conceptual structure (i.e. “true world”) that stands over and against it. As such, Nietzsche understands metaphysics in the sense of a ‘doctrine of two worlds,’ whereby reactive force has created the grounds to both negate active force and provide the means for its own growth and expansion.

I will now turn to examining the manner in which Nietzsche understood metaphysics to be connected with the problem of nihilism. Nihilism is a multifaceted concept that has several important applications within the context of his thought. He applies the term as a characterization of the history of the West, as well as what he understands as the necessary terminus of the values that constitute this history. More generally, nihilism is meant to characterize any claim that serves to ground meaning in a supranatural or supratemporal source as fundamentally empty and meaningless. Metaphysics, understood as the valuational form posited by reactive force, represents the attempt to determine both what-is and how-it-is on the basis of a conceptual structure that is not, at bottom, intrinsic to immanence. That is to say Nietzsche characterizes metaphysics as fundamentally nihilistic because it understands value on the basis of ideals that are distinct from and even antithetical to the conditions proper to life. In negating the grounds of active value reactive force actually negates itself as an immanent force that participates in provisional relations of forces established on the basis of will to power. Nietzsche characterizes the form of being that adheres to the reactive valuation as

²¹⁵ Haar p. 12

decadent, which is to say it actually harms itself in establishing what it understands to be its advantage. Note that the reactive valuation is still to be understood as a will to power; albeit, one that is fundamentally formulated on the basis of negation. Haar notes, “The decadent will that refuses to ‘admit the fundamental conditions of life’ remains nonetheless a will...in this case, the direction of the will is reversed: growth becomes advance in decadence.”²¹⁶ That is to say the reactive valuation amounts to willing the antithesis of one’s advantage, or to will one’s own disintegration and decay.

It was noted above that the concept nihilism is applied by Nietzsche to characterize the history of the West, as well as the inevitable terminus of the metaphysical values that have defined this history. That is to say he understands the reactive valuation expressed and maintained in the Western metaphysical tradition to have structured (i.e. established the horizon of meaning) life in the West since Plato. Nietzsche describes this history in noting:

“So monstrous a mode of valuation stands inscribed in the history of mankind not as an exception and curiosity, but as one of the most widespread and enduring of all phenomena. Read from a distant star, the majuscule script of our earthly existence would perhaps lead to the conclusion that the earth was the distinctively ascetic planet, a nook of disgruntled, arrogant, and offensive creatures filled with a profound disgust at themselves, at the earth, at all life, who inflict as much pain on themselves as they possibly can out of pleasure in inflicting pain.”²¹⁷

²¹⁶ Haar p. 8/9

²¹⁷ GOM 11

Specifically, he means that the orientation of human life has been solely understood in terms of negation, which is ultimately inseparable from ‘self’ negation. Nihilism, then, can be understood to express what Nietzsche understands as the history of Western life as it has developed itself on the basis of embracing its own negation. Furthermore, the history of nihilism, for Nietzsche, will inevitably lead to the dissolution of and disbelief in all meaning. Nietzsche notes, “For why has the advent of nihilism become necessary? Because the values we have had hitherto thus draw their final consequence; because nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals.”²¹⁸ He adds, “What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves.”²¹⁹ For Nietzsche, the different faces (i.e. ideological interpretations) that constitute the history of nihilism are brought about due to the inevitable reckoning of their nugatory essence. That is to say the fundamental incongruence between “the world we revere and the world we live and are” is inevitably revealed, and it is at the point of recognition that the reactive valuation has historically undergone reinterpretation and reinstatement.²²⁰ This history, as Nietzsche understands it, is established and given quintessential form in Platonism, which is then subsequently reinterpreted in the form of Christianity, Kantianism, Positivism, etc.; however, it remains fundamentally nihilistic in that it is rooted in negation.²²¹ I will discuss Nietzsche’s understanding of the specific lever that moves this history ever closer to complete nihilism below as part of my examination of metaphysical truth.

²¹⁸ WTP 4 (Preface)

²¹⁹ WTP 2

²²⁰ WTP 69 (Footnote)

²²¹ see Haar p. 12

It is my understanding that Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical tradition is reducible to a critique of the metaphysical concept of truth. That is to say metaphysics, for Nietzsche, amounts to the presentation of the metaphysical concept of truth as the counter and correction to immanence and corporeality. Nietzsche notes, "The 'real world' has been constructed out of the contradiction to the actual world."²²² That is to say the "real world" is posed as a counter to the "actual world" in that it serves to reduce the latter to the status of error and mere appearance, while establishing the ideal as the proper seat of meaning. The "true world" is essentially the expression of a negative will to power that seeks to revalue and reorient on the basis of the ideal, thus relegating the source of active valuation to the status of appearance and inherent falsehood. Deleuze notes, "He who wills the truth always wants to depreciate this high power of the false: he makes life an 'error' and this world an 'appearance.' He therefore opposes knowledge to life and to the world he opposes another world, a world-beyond, the truthful world...thus the opposition of knowledge and life, the distinction between worlds."²²³ For Nietzsche, metaphysical truth functions as the foundation for the "distinction between worlds," and the preeminence of the reactive valuation within the history of the West.

The metaphysical conception of truth has traditionally relied on the assumed priority of reason to both discover and distinguish that which is most real on the basis of essential conceptual divisions. That is to say metaphysical truth is the basis upon which the world has traditionally been structured and oriented according to rational categories. Heidegger notes, "Insofar as all customary thinking is always grounded in a form of

²²² TI 6 ('Reason' In Philosophy)

²²³ Deleuze p. 96/7

metaphysics, everyday and metaphysical thinking alike rest on 'trust' in this relation, on the confidence that beings as such show themselves in the thinking of reason and its categories, that is to say, that what is true and truth are grasped and secured in reason. Western metaphysics is based on this priority of reason."²²⁴ Metaphysical truth presupposes the priority of the rational in relation to immanence (i.e. irrational, corporeal, phenomenal), as well as the adequacy of interpreting the latter on the basis of the former. Nietzsche notes, "'Truth' is...to classify phenomena into definite categories. In this we start from a belief in the 'in-itself' of things (we take phenomena as real)."²²⁵ That is to say the being of beings, or the qualitative essence fundamental to them, allows for the division of reality on the basis of the rational. Heidegger notes, "What is true is what is held in being, as thus and thus in being what is taken to be in being. What is true is being."²²⁶ As such, being and truth are to be understood as coextensive terms as they both serve to express that which is determinative and constitutive of reality proper.

It follows from the above that a reinterpretation of the traditional conception of truth is central to Nietzsche's project of overcoming the metaphysical tradition. In doing so his aim is to dissolve the distinction between true and apparent worlds by reinterpreting truth on the basis of immanence (i.e. will to power). For Nietzsche, truth does not represent or express the essential structure or character of the world. Rather, truth serves only to express the conditions of growth and expansion of a certain type of life. Nietzsche notes, "The valuation 'I believe that this and that is so' as the essence of

²²⁴ H3 p. 50

²²⁵ WTP 517

²²⁶ H3 p. 36

truth...truth in reason and its categories, in dialectic, therefore the valuation of logic proves only their usefulness for life, proved by experience—not that something is true.”²²⁷ That is to say the concept truth serves to express life facilitating conditions in that to ‘believe that this and that is so’ is tantamount to construing what-is and how-it-is on the basis of advantage for a certain type of life. Nietzsche uses the term “judgement” to express and characterize his understanding of truth as fundamentally a holding-something-to-be-true. He notes, “Judgment is our oldest belief, our most habitual holding-true or holding-untrue, an assertion or denial, a certainty that something is thus and not otherwise, a belief that here we really ‘know.’”²²⁸ He adds, “Knowledge is judgment! But judgment is a belief that something is thus and thus! And not knowledge.”²²⁹ As such, for Nietzsche, truth is fundamentally an expression of valuation.

It follows from what has been noted above that Nietzsche understands truth to be both perspectival (i.e. relative) and decisional, as opposed to universal. Nietzsche notes, “Every belief is a considering-something-true...every considering-something-true, is necessarily false because there simply is no true world.”²³⁰ Truth is fundamentally error because it always involves ascribing being to a context that is essentially and primordially a becoming. As noted above, truth can be understood on the basis of valuation; which, is to say truth expresses the conditions that allow for the continued duration and expansion of provisional forms of being. Nietzsche notes, “Truth is the kind

²²⁷ WTP 507

²²⁸ WTP 531

²²⁹ WTP 530

²³⁰ WTP 15

of error without which a certain species of life could not live. The value for life is ultimately decisive.”²³¹ That is to say truth is intrinsically error, such error is integral to the perdurance of ‘a certain species of life,’ and valuation on the basis of power (i.e. type) is decisive in determining the specific forms of error truth may take. Nietzsche explains:

“The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment...the question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating. And we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments...are the most indispensable for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live—that renouncing false judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life. To recognize untruth as a condition of life.”²³²

As such, truth “works as a tool of power” in the sense that where the distinction of truth is applied amounts to the active shaping of reality.²³³ For Nietzsche, it is through the concept truth that “a species grasps a certain amount of reality in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service.”²³⁴ That is to say “reality” becomes interpreted on the basis of valuation, which means what is considered real is always a reflection of the power that establishes and enforces such a conception. As such, truth becomes a medium through which what-is is both determined and reduced to a series of formulas that can be

²³¹ WTP 493

²³² BGE 4

²³³ WTP 480

²³⁴ WTP 480

readily managed and controlled. Nietzsche notes, “In order to think and infer it is necessary to assume being: logic handles only formulas for what remains the same...the fictitious world of subject, substance, ‘reason,’ etc., is needed--: there is in us a power to order, simplify, falsify, artificially distinguish.”²³⁵ In order to establish a measure of control, it is necessary for life to falsify and restrict the determination of what-is and how-it-is in ways that make it answerable to the mode and categories of thought proper to it (i.e. reason). At bottom, for Nietzsche, truth is the vehicle through which life “arranges for itself a world in which it can live” by essentially determining reality on the basis of a perspectival valuation.²³⁶ That is to say truth is the means by which “we have projected the conditions of our preservation as predicates of being in general. Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the real world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being.”²³⁷

As noted above, for Nietzsche, the concept truth is an expression of a will to power. He notes, “The methods of truth were not invented from motives of truth, but from motives of power, of wanting to be superior.”²³⁸ That is to say if valuation is to be understood as grounded in a relation of force on the basis of power, then truth is also to be understood in this manner. Nietzsche notes, “The concept ‘truth’ is nonsensical. The entire domain of true-false applies only to relations, not to an in-itself—there is no essence in itself (it is only relations that constitute an essence).”²³⁹ As such, the concept

²³⁵ WTP 517

²³⁶ GS 121

²³⁷ WTP 507

²³⁸ WTP 455

²³⁹ WTP 625

truth is reducible to the interplay of force in which relations are provisionally oriented on the basis of will to power.

Nietzsche uses the term ‘perspectivism’ to characterize his conception of truth as the conditioned and situated judgment of what-is (i.e. reality) on the basis of valuation. Truth understood in the sense of perspectivism is meant to express two interrelated points regarding his revision of the concept on the basis of will to power. First, truth can only be understood in a restricted sense (i.e. non-universal), as “there is only a perspective seeing, or a perspective ‘knowing.’”²⁴⁰ That is to say truth can no longer be taken to express or characterize the universally valid essence of the world, but only an advantage as it is perceived and pursued from a relative position. Second, Nietzsche wants to characterize truth as that which is actively determined from a situated and conditioned point. A perspective becomes the site from which “every center of force—and not only man—construes all the rest of the world from its own viewpoint, i.e., measures, feels, forms, according to its own force.”²⁴¹ He adds, “Every center of force adopts a perspective toward the entire remainder, i.e., its own particular valuation.”²⁴² Taken together, perspectivism serves to express the limited nature of knowledge, as well as its essence as a creation.

Nietzsche’s characterization of truth as fundamentally a creation is particularly important for my purposes because it brings to the fore the relation between truth and art that was noted in the previous chapters. He notes, “Will to truth is a making firm, a

²⁴⁰ GOM 12

²⁴¹ WTP 636

²⁴² WTP 567

making true and durable, an abolition of the false character of things, a reinterpretation of it into beings. Truth is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that must be created...introducing truth, as a processus in infinitum, an active determining—not a becoming conscious of something that is in itself firm and determined. It is a word for the ‘will to power.’”²⁴³ Truth, then, is reducible to the expression of a will that lays claim to reality by determining ‘what’ and ‘how’ it is on the basis of valuation. For Nietzsche, truth only becomes explicable on the basis of art; or, more specifically, truth is the supreme form of art through which provisional duration is made possible for life. Nietzsche notes, “Man projects his drive to truth, his ‘goal’ in a certain sense, outside himself as a world that has being, as a metaphysical world, as a ‘thing-in-itself,’ as a world already in existence. His needs as creator invent the world upon which he works, anticipate it; this anticipation (this ‘belief’ in truth) is his support.”²⁴⁴ It follows “that art is worth more than truth” because truth is merely the name under which art has operated in its most vital form.²⁴⁵

There is an additional dimension of Nietzsche’s understanding of truth to be examined, and that is the concept’s fundamental moral quality. As noted above, he understands truth to fundamentally be a ‘holding-to-be-true’ in the sense that it stands as an expression of valuation proper to a certain type of life. That is to say truth amounts to an imperative concerning what ‘ought’ to count as true. Nietzsche notes, “I understand by ‘morality’ a system of evaluations that partially coincides with the conditions of a

²⁴³ WTP 552

²⁴⁴ WTP 552

²⁴⁵ WTP 583

creature's life."²⁴⁶ Morality, like truth, represents an interpretation of the world in the service of a will to power. By interpreting truth in terms of an ought, or essentially a series of moral principles, Nietzsche wants to emphasize the situated and conditional manner in which he understands the concept truth. Specifically, the critique of the concept truth requires the critique of the type of force that wills a given form of truth.

Deleuze explains:

“The most curious thing about this image of thought (i.e. metaphysical) is the way in which it conceives of truth as an abstract universal. We are never referred to the real forces that form thought, thought itself is never related to the real forces that it presupposes as thought...but there is no truth that, before being a truth, is not the bringing into effect of a sense or the realization of a value. Truth, as a concept, is entirely undetermined...the truth of a thought must be interpreted and evaluated according to the forces or power that determine it to think and to think this rather than that...a new image of thought means primarily that truth is not the element of thought. The element of thought is sense and value. The categories of thought are not truth and falsity but the noble and the base (i.e. active), the high and the low (i.e. reactive), depending on the nature of the forces that take hold of thought itself...the concept of truth can only be determined on the basis of a pluralist typology...it is a matter of knowing what region such errors and such truths belong to, what their type is, which one formulates and conceives them.”²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ WTP 256

²⁴⁷ Deleuze p. 103-5

Truth is reducible to an expression of the type of force that creates and maintains it as the conditions of its preservation and expansion. It is not to be understood as eternal or immutable, but fundamentally situated in the provisional relations of forces that are determined on the basis of will to power. That means truth can never properly be accessed in terms of a ‘what,’ as it is fundamentally a ‘what for an X.’ Deleuze notes, “Thus the opposition of knowledge and life, the distinction between worlds, reveals its true character: it is a distinction of moral origin, an opposition of moral origin.”²⁴⁸ That is to say truth is posed as the counter and correction to immanence and corporeality, which amounts to the proclamation or desire that the world ought to be conceived in such a way as to benefit the reactive form of life.

The determination of which truths, or values, become dominant is always determined on the basis of power, which can be traced back to the relations of force from which such valuation springs as a perspectival mode of advantage. Nietzsche uses the term “justice,” albeit sparingly, to refer to and characterize the establishment of truth on the basis of power. He writes of, “Justice as will to power,” which I take to mean that the establishment of form and meaning within the context of becoming is always just or warranted in that it is grounded in power.²⁴⁹ That is to say there is no ought that exists external to the power that can will it to be so. Heidegger notes, “Justice, then, is the ability to posit right, thus understood; it is the ability to will such a will. This willing can only be as will to power.”²⁵⁰ Note Heidegger’s usage of the term “ability,” as it serves to

²⁴⁸ Deleuze p. 96/7

²⁴⁹ WTP 59; WTP 375

²⁵⁰ H3 p. 244

connect truth with a capacity to assert and maintain truth within a context of competing forces. Heidegger adds, “If beings are grasped as will to power, the ‘should’ which is supposed to hang suspended over them, against which they might be measured, becomes superfluous. If life itself is will to power, it is itself the ground, principium, of valuation. Then a ‘should’ does not determine being; Being determines a ‘should.’”²⁵¹ That is to say the moral ought that serves to sanction metaphysical truth dissipates when understood on the basis of will to power in that life is ultimately determinative of value. It is the fundamental decisiveness of power in establishing and maintaining truth that Nietzsche understands as justice.

With the basic framework of Nietzsche’s understanding of the metaphysical valuation in place I will return to a topic alluded to above regarding precisely how Nietzsche understands the progression of nihilism in the West. It was noted above that he understood metaphysics to essentially be founded on the distinction between the rational and immanence (i.e. irrational, corporeal, phenomenal) on the basis of what I have been referring to as the metaphysical conception of truth. That is to say the “true world” is distinguished from and elevated above the “apparent world” on the presupposition that it is inherently more real. For Nietzsche, it is this very ideal of truth that serves to erode the illusion that metaphysics refers to any form of substantive meaning. He notes, “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...what, in all strictness, has really conquered...God?... ‘Morality itself, the concept of truthfulness taken more and more

²⁵¹ H1 p. 32

strictly, the confessional subtlety of the Christian conscience translated and sublimated into the scientific conscience, into intellectual cleanliness at any price.”²⁵² Specifically, he means that the refinement of the metaphysical conception of truth ultimately led to the rejection of the supreme value and guarantor of the “true world:” God. With the death of God, morality, or what ought to count as true, no longer has any sanction for its claims to represent being as such.²⁵³ Nietzsche notes, “Once the belief in God and an essentially moral order becomes untenable... nihilism appears at that point... because one has come to mistrust any ‘meaning’ in suffering, indeed in existence. One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain.”²⁵⁴ As such, “nihilism represents the ultimate logical conclusion of our great values and ideals” because they are all founded on the ideal of truth, which is fundamentally an expression of negation and does not refer to anything substantive.²⁵⁵ The incongruence between the values that serve to structure and explain the world on the basis of truth, and the manner in which life experiences this context inevitably leads to such values being called into question. For Nietzsche, this process cannot continue indefinitely, and the death of God signifies that there are no values that remain to continue the Western history of nihilism under a different guise. It is at this point that Nietzsche thinks life is faced with a dilemma: abandon the possibility of all meaning or experience the nihilism that has become

²⁵² GOM 160

²⁵³ WTP 69 (Footnote)

²⁵⁴ WTP 55

²⁵⁵ WTP 4 (Preface)

inevitable in Western history; thus, allowing for the possibility of a “revaluation of all values.”

Such a re-grounding of meaning is precisely what Nietzsche’s project of overcoming the metaphysical tradition aims at achieving. His attempt at a “revaluation of all values” has a “double character” in that it is intended “as both a critique of former values and traditional modes of valuation, and also a development of a substantive alternative to them.”²⁵⁶ By rejecting metaphysical truth he opens up the possibility of reinterpreting meaning on the basis of immanence. That is to say by rejecting the traditional manner of understanding the world on the basis of the rational, he allows for the reinterpretation of it on the basis of the forces constitutive of and fundamental to life (i.e. will to power). Heidegger notes, “Will to power is the ground upon which all valuation in the future is to stand. It is the principle of the new valuation, as opposed to the prior one which was dominated by religion, morality, and philosophy.”²⁵⁷ Nietzsche attempts to re-naturalize the fundamental constitution and orientation of the world by rejecting the “the former place in which values could be posited” in the sense of above, beyond or over and against life.²⁵⁸ It was noted in the previous chapter that will to power effectively “fixes the value of all values,” which is to say it serves to orient and establish the relation of all forces which in turn establishes the hierarchy of all values.²⁵⁹ As such, Nietzsche understands all meaning to derive from immanent relations of force established on the basis of power. Heidegger notes, “Nietzsche is saying that...values are bound to

²⁵⁶ Schacht p. 347

²⁵⁷ H1 p. 72

²⁵⁸ H3 p. 49

²⁵⁹ see Haar p. 10

will to power; they depend on it as the proper essence of power. What is untrue and untenable about the highest values hitherto does not lie in the values themselves, in their content...what is untrue is the fact that these values have been mistakenly dispatched to a realm 'existing in itself,' within which and from which they are supposed to acquire absolute validity for themselves, whereas they really have their origin and radius of validity solely in a certain kind of will to power."²⁶⁰ That is to say the manner in which the world is oriented is always conditional in that it is always grounded in an immanent relation of forces established on the basis of power. The revaluation of such orientation on the basis of will to power is meant to re-ground it in the forces that are constitutive and facilitative of life. That is to say, for Nietzsche, value is returned to its proper sphere, which is in the service of life. This has the intended consequence of dissolving the distinction between the "true world" and "apparent world" in that the possibility of essential or fundamental meaning is summarily rejected. This means reason becomes reframed as the product of irrational forces and can no longer be understood to represent the privileged access to the fundamental structure of the world. As such, immanence is redeemed by wiping away the horizon of concepts that Nietzsche understands to have represented the decadent negation of it by reactive force.

The problem of nihilism, for Nietzsche, represented the possibility of complete meaninglessness and disorientation as a result of the manner in which they have been defined since Plato. That is to say the metaphysical valuation fundamentally expressed the negation of immanence and corporeality; or, put another way, the negation of the

²⁶⁰ H3 p. 50

forces that constitute life by life, itself. For Nietzsche, the dominance of the metaphysical valuation signaled that the will to nothingness had established the upper hand over the will to life.²⁶¹ Specifically, he means life prescribed to an orientation that contained no substantive referent, or that such an orientation had no basis in reality. The metaphysical tradition was established and maintained through determining what-is and how-it-is on the basis of being, which is to say on the basis of reason. Will to power serves as the principle by which both being and reason are reinterpreted on the basis of immanent relations of forces, which serves to reject their traditional metaphysical meaning while allowing for their possibility under different conditions. As the immanent principle that serves to orient the relation of all forces and thereby establish the value of all values, will to power represents the possibility of meaning as grounded in the basic character of the world. That is to say value is reinterpreted to refer to the substantive (i.e. immanent) forces that are both constitutive and determinative of life. As such, the problem of nihilism is addressed by redefining the possibility of meaning as that which has its origin and sole validity in reference to life.

At this point in my examination I will attempt a provisional assessment of Nietzsche's theory of will to power as a counter to the Western metaphysical tradition and an address to the problem of nihilism that he understood to result from it. Recall that he understood metaphysics in the sense of a doctrine of two worlds that was developed on the basis of a presupposed priority towards reason and the concept. Furthermore, nihilism was inseparable from the metaphysical tradition in the sense that to conceive of

²⁶¹ see WTP 685

meaning and intelligibility in terms of ideals places them in exemption from becoming, as well as over and against life. Poggeler notes, “For Nietzsche, nihilism is the ‘Platonism’ which finds what is true in the transcendental idea, an idea which shows itself to knowledge only when the latter has freed itself from sensibility. The application of the transcendental idea as the true being slanders embodying life; it weakens and empties it and is, therefore, nihilism.”²⁶² That is to say he understood metaphysical truth, or being, to be conceived by the Western tradition to be developed in direct opposition to immanence and corporeality and grounded in the supratemporal. As such, the overcoming of both metaphysics and nihilism requires a reinterpretation or regrouping of the fundamental concepts of truth and being on the basis of immanence. Haar explains:

“To overcome metaphysics for Nietzsche amounts to shedding this illusion, moving entirely within immanence, returning fully to the earth, reaffirming the uniqueness of the world as the Greeks had done before Plato and Socrates...to project the genealogy of metaphysics amounts to laying bare the forces which elicit and are satisfied by the values metaphysics promotes; namely: permanence, self-identity, happiness, safety, etc. It amounts to showing why man needs that utopia or ‘fable’ of a better or perfect world, that transcends becoming, evil, suffering, contradiction, sensibility, as well as sensuality. It amounts to transforming the purely theoretical or propositional sense of metaphysics in order

²⁶² Poggeler 94

to make it into the symptom or the symbol of certain types of forces or types of existence.”²⁶³

In order to achieve the “shedding” of the illusion of metaphysics, Nietzsche sought to reinterpret thought and many of the foundational concepts upon which the traditional model of thinking relied. The basis for his reinterpretation was immanence and the model provided by Heraclitus and the Dionysian Greeks. Within the context of immanence, meaning and intelligibility were to be understood as provisional and creative or artistic products grounded in life, as opposed to enduring or immutable ideals that inform existence in distinction from life. The specific forms meaning and intelligibility take can be traced back to and interpreted on the basis of force relations, and the typological valuation expressed therein. Furthermore, life, itself, is only the provisional orientation of forces established on the basis of power. Will to power, then, is essentially intended to provide an account for beings, truth, and thought within the context of becoming. That is to say it is meant to explain the ‘what-it-is’ and ‘how-it-is’ of existence without determining either in advance, or in separation from the provisionality and limitedness representative of immanence or corporeality.

Within the positive account of Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome metaphysics and nihilism on the basis of will to power developed above, there are some difficulties that should be noted. First, his formulation of will to power seems to presuppose an understanding of immanence on the basis of his theory of force. That is to say despite his characterization of immanence with reference to phenomenal or experience-based aspects

²⁶³ Haar XI

such as change, multiplicity, contradiction, and conflict, he attempts to explain such experience with recourse to the concept of force; which eludes direct experience altogether. As such, it would appear that will to power involves a metaphysical postulate in the sense that force is not demonstrable nor can it be directly experienced in the sense of the phenomenal aspects noted above. It might be argued that Nietzsche anticipated such counterpoints by noting that the presupposition of beings is a limitation inherent to thought, itself, and “to let it go means being no longer able to think.”²⁶⁴ It might also be argued that force is, in fact, not a metaphysical postulate because it participates in the becoming of the world. Given the fundamental position the concept of force assumes within Nietzsche’s conception of will to power and his project of overcoming metaphysics and nihilism, the examination of such positions would undoubtedly prove beneficial in determining in what sense he may or may not have succeeded.

Another point of concern to be noted is in what sense can will to power be understood as the arch-principle of meaning and intelligibility, yet remain non-metaphysical? Nietzsche’s position is placed in its best light, I think, if we argue, with Deleuze, that will to power is an “essentially plastic principle that is no wider than what it conditions.”²⁶⁵ That is to say that will to power is neither separable from nor superior to the force relations it determines; hence, it cannot be understood as enduring or unchanging in the mold of traditional metaphysics.²⁶⁶ On the other hand, Nietzsche often applies the term will to power as a characterization of both life and the world. This

²⁶⁴ WTP 269; also see WTP 283 and 517

²⁶⁵ Deleuze p. 50

²⁶⁶ see Deleuze p. 50

occurs most notably in Will to Power 1067, where he states, “This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!”²⁶⁷ This point is further obscured by the fact that Nietzsche nowhere provides a succinct and definitive formulation of will to power. Given the concerns noted to this point, I think a case can be made that will to power effectively fulfills the functions of traditional ontology.

A third point of concern to be noted regards Nietzsche’s method of reinterpreting traditional metaphysical concepts on the basis of his understanding of immanence and will to power, while retaining the concept itself. This raises the question as to whether it is possible to overcome metaphysics while retaining the language of metaphysics.²⁶⁸ Such a problematic, I think, is illustrated in Heidegger’s expressed difficulties in completing the project he established for himself in *Being and Time*.²⁶⁹ While I do think it can be argued that Nietzsche did succeed in stripping the concepts he addressed of the moral connotations that he recognized in them, it certainly presents an obstacle for his project of overcoming metaphysics.

I think each of the three concerns noted above collectively point to a fourth concern, which is the relation of Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysics to the Platonism that he understood to be metaphysics par excellence. That is to say, given the concerns noted above, in what sense does will to power represent an overcoming of metaphysics

²⁶⁷ WTP 1067

²⁶⁸ see Haar p. X

²⁶⁹ “He (Heidegger) was unable to complete this project (*Being and Time*), however, because as he himself explained, the language in which he had to think and write was shaped and constrained by the very metaphysical categories he sought to overturn.” (Gillespie 426).

understood in the sense of Platonism? It was Nietzsche, himself, that described his philosophy as “Platonism overturned.”²⁷⁰ Is the result, as Heidegger argues, merely a reversal of Platonism, and not a twisting free of it? Does this overturning “take us back toward a metaphysics of immanence?”²⁷¹ Such concerns ultimately lie beyond the scope of what can be pursued within these pages.

In conclusion, the assessment of will to power within the context of Nietzsche’s project of addressing the problem of nihilism by overcoming the metaphysical tradition is reliant, I think, on further examination aimed exploring the concerns noted above. It should be noted, however, that Nietzsche’s ideas concerning metaphysics, nihilism, and the potential for their overcoming have had a significant influence over the development and understanding of such concepts within the Western philosophical consciousness. Furthermore, it can be argued that will to power represents the possibility of an alternative framework from which human life might conceive of and orient within the world. That is to say will to power can be understood as both a principle of criticism and an alternative model of thought (i.e. relational) to the Platonic duality (i.e. “true being and lesser being”) that Nietzsche understood to have served as the template for the Western metaphysical tradition.²⁷²

²⁷⁰ Haar p. 47

²⁷¹ Haar p. XIII

²⁷² Haar 4; see also Haar 49

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Curriculum Vitae

Derek T. Daskalakes grew up in Woodbridge, Virginia. He attended Old Dominion University, where he received his Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy in 2005. During his time at George Mason, he has worked in both the Engineering and Education fields. He is currently working as a Special Education Teacher.