

**"THE CENTRE IS EVERYWHERE": NIETZSCHE'S OVERCOMING OF
MODERNITY THROUGH MUSICAL DISSONANCE**

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation argues that musical dissonance is a master metaphor in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche claims that musical dissonance constitutes the “foundations of all existence.” I contend that it forms the foundation of a radical, life-affirming, and dynamic epistemology. Musical dissonance provides Nietzsche with the means to “overcome” the ascetic, life-denying, metaphysical philosophies that he believes have enervated and depleted Western civilization since the advent of Platonic and Judeo-Christian thought. An analysis of Nietzsche’s major works through the lens of musical dissonance reveals that it constitutes a powerful extended metaphor throughout his writings, and inspires his understanding of tragedy, science, eternal recurrence, the *Übermensch*, the will to power, *Bildung*, and other concepts. The theoretical approach taken is informed by Arnold Schoenberg’s concept of the “emancipation of the dissonance,” which he claims to be the guiding principle of his twelve-tone system of musical composition. Nietzsche “emancipates” dissonance from the constrictions of metaphysical philosophies—a category that includes modern science in Nietzsche’s outlook—in order to facilitate a complete “revaluation of all values,” a project that Nietzsche outlines in his late works, which I contend involves the continual rethinking of all values with respect to a musical, dissonant epistemology. Musical, dissonant thinking does not rely upon a central authority for deriving truth and meaning, but rather a dynamic and pluralistic method of understanding that is without a unitary, fixed centre. This study demonstrates how Nietzsche’s fascination with musical dissonance in his early texts inspired the “revaluation of all values”—an act that represents the overcoming of modernity—through a close reading of *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Ecce Homo*. Gilles Deleuze, Claude Lévesque, Sarah Kofman, and Bruce Benson are among the other key thinkers whose works inspire the framework for my analysis. The concluding section explores the far-reaching implications of Nietzsche’s musical, dissonant philosophy and aesthetics in the twentieth century through an exploration of its legacy in the writings of Thomas Mann, Theodor Adorno, and Arnold Schoenberg.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviations used in this study refer to multivolume editions of Nietzsche's work, as well as frequently cited translations. Abbreviations of works by Nietzsche:

- eKGWB* *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* ed. Paolo D'Iorio.
- GS* *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann.
- KSA* *Sämtliche Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari.
- KGW* *Nietzsche Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari.
- PP* *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, ed. Greg Whitlock.
- PTG* *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. Marianne Cowan.
- BWN* *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann.
- TNR* *The Nietzsche Reader*, eds. Keith Ansell-Pearson and Duncan Large.
- TPN* *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann.
- UM* *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale.
- WP* *The Will to Power*, ed. Walter Kaufmann.

Parenthetical citations of passages from the *KSA* and *KGW* contain the volume number and page number(s) for completed and published works, e.g., (*KSA* 4, 64), which refers to volume 4, page 64. For citations of excerpts from the *Nachlass* (Nietzsche's unpublished notes, essays, and miscellanea), the volume number is followed by the page number(s), and in brackets, the number of the notebook and textual unit used to label the passage, e.g., (*KSA* 11, 237[26:329]), which refers to volume 11, page 237, notebook number 26, textual unit 329. This information can be used to cross reference any edition of the *Nachlass*, in any language, that has been published in accordance with Colli and Montinari's standard editions of Nietzsche's works.

When I cite a book for the first time, I provide the publication date in parentheses. In the case of Nietzsche's works, I provide the date(s) he *completed* his works, as some of his important works were not published during his lifetime, or at least not until after his mental collapse in 1889.

My analyses rely upon close readings of the original German text of Nietzsche's writings, as well as canonical translations, particularly those of Walter Kaufmann. The reader of this study may cross-reference citations in readily obtainable editions of Nietzsche's works in English. Therefore, unless otherwise noted, all translations of Nietzsche's major works are Walter Kaufmann's and can be found in *The Portable Nietzsche*, *The Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, and *The Gay Science*. Translations of some of Nietzsche's shorter works, including "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense," and "Homer's Contest," are taken from *The Nietzsche Reader*, edited by Keith Ansell-Pearson. However, where I feel that published translations are inadequate or do not accurately represent the original German text, I provide my own. These include the songs from *The Gay Science*, for which I provide literal, albeit unpoetic translations, and many passages from the *Nachlass* (unpublished fragments).

Whenever I provide a translation of a German or French text, I make note of it in the citation. The original text for all passages in these languages is provided in the footnotes, with the exception of very short passages, which I place directly into the body of the text.

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DEDICATION

For my parents, Adele and Victor, as well as my brother Stephen, my niece Anna, my grandmothers, Katherine and Sarah, and the rest of my family, whose love, encouragement, and support have always been inspiring.

“The centre is everywhere.”

„Die Mitte ist überall.“

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra, KSA 4, 273)

INTRODUCTION

READING MUSICAL DISSONANCE IN NIETZSCHE'S WORKS

Overview: "Without Music, Life Would Be an Error"

It is impossible to perform a close reading of Friedrich Nietzsche's (1844–1900) works without considering the importance of music. Nietzsche discusses the significance of music on his life, philosophy, and the world around him throughout his writings. His most passionate exaltation of music resides in a short epigram from *Twilight of the Idols* [*Götzen-Dämmerung*] (1888). Virtually every contribution to the scholarship on Nietzsche and music cites it: "How little is required for pleasure! The sound of a bagpipe. — Without music, life would be an error. The German imagines even God singing songs" ["*Wie wenig gehört zum Glücke! Der Ton eines Dudelsacks. — Ohne Musik wäre das Leben ein Irrthum. Der Deutsche denkt sich selbst Gott liedersingend*"] (trans. mine, KSA 6, 64). While this epigram contains ironic, critical overtones about the state of nineteenth century European music—particularly German music—the third phrase portrays the vital relationship between the human being, its environment, and the life-affirming, dynamic, primal force that Nietzsche calls "music." Without it, Nietzsche claims that life would be an error. However, an "error" is precisely how Nietzsche characterizes modernity.

In a famous aphorism from *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "How the 'True World' Became a Fable: The History of an Error" ["*Wie die ‚wahre Welt‘ — endlich zur Fabel wurde: Geschichte eines Irrthums*"], Nietzsche describes how modern civilization is literally based upon an "error" [*Irrthum*] (KSA 6, 80-81). He structures the aphorism as a six-point call to arms. The "error" refers to humanity's obstinate adherence to metaphysical ways of thinking since the age of Plato and Socrates. Nietzsche cites philosophies, sciences, and religions, which privilege "another world" as a central authority of meaning, and not the mercurial and dangerous reality of "this world"—or quite simply the world of "life" in the most violent and primal sense of the word. Thus, Nietzsche maintains that the "true world"

of everyday human existence, suffering, and constant transformation has become a “fable” that can be explained away by metaphysical abstractions. According to Nietzsche, we have relied upon metanarratives that privilege the comforting stability offered by utopic, otherworldly and metaphysical abstractions for so long, that we have mistaken them for “reality” and “truth,” and denigrated the living, dissonant world of the here and now as imperfect, illusory, and merely transient. Nietzsche concludes the aphorism with an appeal to his readers to stop perpetuating this execrable error. For Nietzsche, modernity is a fallacy, which has resulted from a serious flaw in philosophical judgment. Modernity is an error that must be “overcome” by gradually eroding the metaphysical, otherworldly philosophies that form its foundation. The time is ripe for a philosopher-hero like Zarathustra to lead the way! The final phrase of “How the True World Became a Fable” reads “*INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA*” (quite simply: *ZARATHUSTRA BEGINS!*) (TPN 485; KSA 6, 81).

This study demonstrates that the cause of the fatal error that Nietzsche identifies in Western philosophy has been the gradual banishment of musical dissonance from our epistemology. Reference books define the word “epistemology” as a “branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope, and general basis” (Honderich 242) and a “philosophical theory of knowledge—of how we know what we know” (Scott and Marshall 221). In classical Greek, “epistemology” simply means the “study of knowledge”; “episteme” refers to “knowledge,” while the suffix “ology” derives from the Greek word *logos*, which not only means “study,” but also “argument,” “word,” “thought,” and “reason,” all of which express different ways of understanding and giving an account of knowledge. Thus, “epistemology” can be interpreted as referring to different ways of *interrogating, organizing, studying, and, using* knowledge.

Platonic and Judeo-Christian philosophies suggest that epistemology should be linked to an otherworldly, metaphysical authority for deriving a theory of knowledge. These philosophies presume the *à priori* existence of immutable, rigid tables of values that

transcend “this world”—that is, the tangible, sensual world of nature and life. In Nietzsche’s texts, however, *logos* does not defer to a realm of *things*—immutable or otherwise—but rather an epistemological foundation of *processes* that govern the sensual existence of *this world*. I argue that Nietzsche portrays these processes through the extended metaphor of musical dissonance; the development of this metaphor begins with his early works of the 1870s and reaches its zenith with his final works of the late 1880s. For Nietzsche, the rise and proliferation of monolithic, all-encompassing, yet seductive metaphysical philosophies in the West, such as Platonism and Judeo-Christianity, has gradually banished musical dissonance—that is, this-worldly, life-affirming ways of understanding knowledge and truth—from human civilization.

To use the word “epistemology” in such a broad sense stands in contradiction with its conventional use in modern philosophical and scientific discourse. The manner in which I use the word suggests a conflation of meanings traditionally associated with other terms, including “ontology” and “meaning.” Yet this usage reflects Nietzsche’s radical approach to philosophy, which subverts, questions, and even ignores contemporary philosophical systems and terms, and the boundaries between philosophy, other academic disciplines, and literature. As Richard Schacht observes in a chapter entitled “Truth and Knowledge” in his book on Nietzsche, “when Nietzsche speaks of ‘truth’ and ‘knowledge,’ these terms do not have a single sense and reference in all of their occurrences. In some cases they are to be understood as referring to what ordinarily passes for ‘truth’ or ‘knowledge’ among non-philosophers” (52). Schacht’s analysis underscores the fact that Nietzsche’s approach toward “philosophical” issues is not only radical, but also that it offers a plurality of different, often discordant approaches and perspectives. In “Truth and Knowledge,” Schacht attempts to justify his own claim that Nietzsche’s works represent a movement “toward a naturalistic epistemology” (to quote the title of the first section of “Truth and Knowledge”), despite the fact that Nietzsche does not explicitly announce such a plan. According to Schacht, Nietzsche’s works treat “epistemological issues” in a “naturalistic”

sense. By “naturalistic,” Schacht merely refers to Nietzsche’s desire to reorient philosophy to a this-worldly perspective, and correct the error committed by philosophers who defer to otherworldly authorities for deriving meaning and truth:

Nietzsche observes that most previous philosophers, in dealing with epistemological and other philosophical questions, have tended to treat man and the elements of his conscious life as a being and a set of activities to be understood in terms altogether different from those appropriate to entities and processes occurring in the world of nature. And he regards this as a mistake [...]. He writes: “To translate man back into nature. . . — that may be a strange and insane task, but it is a *task* — who would deny that? Why did we choose this insane task? Or, putting the matter differently: ‘Why have knowledge at all?’” (BGE 230). His answer to the question he raises here is indicated by the way in which he puts it: it is only if a man is “translated back into nature,” at least initially, that we and our various activities can be properly understood. (55)

Schacht quotes passages from *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886) and Nietzsche’s late notebooks to emphasize that his project is about “translating man back into nature.” He cites a passage from the chapter entitled “Our Virtues” [“*Unsere Tugenden*”] in which Nietzsche challenges his readers to “translate man back into nature” and “become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled over and painted over that basic text of *homo natura*” (BWN 351).¹ This “natural man”—a rather ironic appellation that is neither “Naturalistic” according to nineteenth century scientific discourse, nor idyllic and pastoral as extolled by Rousseau and many Romantics—refers to a type of human being who is “deaf to the siren songs of old metaphysical birdcatchers” [“*taub gegen die Lockweisen alter metaphysischer Volgelfänger*”]. The “siren songs” represent the seductive allure of philosophies that derive meaning from a metaphysical world in an attempt to associate humanity with that other world (BWN 351; KSA 5, 169). As summarized by Schacht, Nietzsche wants to reverse the damage caused by metaphysics by gradually translating “man” and his knowledge into nature. However, this process requires that we rethink the concept of “knowledge” as well; we must “translate”

¹ Den Menschen nämlich zurückübersetzen in die Natur; über die vielen eitlen und schwärmerischen Deutungen und Nebensinne Herr werden, welche bisher über jenen ewigen Grundtext *homo natura* gekritzelt und gemalt wurden [...]. (KSA 5, 169)

knowledge back into nature. This process requires that we question the terminology and systems that we use to theorize and use knowledge.

A notion in modern philosophical discourse that typifies the musical, dissonant epistemology that I describe is that “hermeneutics is epistemology” (416), as outlined by Merold Westphal. Citing Rorty, Heidegger, Gadamer, Derrida, and Nietzsche, Westphal claims that an epistemology based on the science of hermeneutics—textual exegesis and interpretation—“is a species diametrically opposed to foundationalist epistemologies, but it belongs to the same genus, precisely because like them it is a meta-theory about how we should understand the cognitive claims of common sense” (416). Yet, this alternative conception of epistemology—that blurs the line between knowledge and truth, data and theory—does not abolish epistemology but effects a “replacement of one type of epistemology with another” (416). In Nietzsche’s epistemology, we can locate a method of producing, theorizing, and using knowledge and truth about the world of life—a method that is guided by musical, dissonant thinking. Although it defies accepted and traditional philosophical systems, it serves a similar purpose: to provide a “theory” and framework for human knowledge—even if that theory is fundamentally discordant and unstable.

In this study, I argue that Nietzsche’s solution to the “error” that humanity has been committing for millennia is to reinfuse epistemology, and thinking in general, with the vitality of musical dissonance. In essence, modernity is an “error” and a failure because it has indeed lived without *healthy* music where it needs it the most: in its science, philosophy, and spirituality. We have had enough *unhealthy music*, in which consonance has subjugated dissonance, in the same way that we have had enough *unhealthy philosophy*, in which people privilege otherworldly truths instead of this-worldly truths. In Nietzsche’s works, the portrayal of music in which dissonance has free reign is a metaphor for this-worldly philosophies, whereas music that privileges consonance as a central authority for deriving meaning is a metaphor for metaphysical philosophies.

As Schacht points out in his recent study on music in Nietzsche's works: "the resonance of our nature to music likewise has the consequence that music at its worst can have a detrimental effect upon the character and quality of one's humanity surpassing the consequences of the sheer absence of any music at all in one's life. If he is right, the corruption of music can mean not merely the impoverishment but also the corruption of life" (125). In his classic 1922 study entitled *Nietzsche: Attempt at a Mythology* [*Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie*], Ernst Bertram sums up Nietzsche's attitude toward good, healthy music beautifully in a passage in which he claims that Nietzsche's life represents "perhaps an overcoming of music, a longing, desire, summons for super-musical, formative powers" (105). Yet, he adds, that these formative powers would only be possible if music "remain[ed] the 'more natural' breathing element of his soul"; to abandon this soul would transform life into a "hideous 'mistake'" (105). Bertram emphasizes that it is not simply "music" that Nietzsche loves. He desires a specific kind of music: one that "overcomes itself" and thereby facilitates the "overcoming" of *oneself* and perhaps even of humanity.

As Bertram observes, to live according to any other standard or goal would be tantamount to committing an "error." Bertram cites a letter by Nietzsche, dated January 15, 1888, addressed to his friend Heinrich Köselitz—a musician who went by the pseudonym Peter Gast—in which he exclaims: "Life without music is simply an error, a drudgery, a exile!" [*"Das Leben ohne Musik ist einfach ein Irrthum, eine Strapaze, ein Exil"*] (trans. mine, *Gesammelte Briefe* 4, 349). Frederick Love, begins "Nietzsche, Music, and Madness" with this quote, and maintains that the vicissitudes in Nietzsche's moods and the tone of his letters and writings—and perhaps even his final descent into madness—parallel his inability to find a reliable source of healthy, enlivening music to nourish his spirit. These comments emphasize Nietzsche's belief that life-affirming music is important to an individual's vitality and creativity, but that of a civilization as well. Music represents an important connection to a natural, primal force that can be harnessed by individuals and civilizations alike. As I emphasize in the introductory paragraph to this study, life-affirming music represents a

corrective force that can be applied to one's life, but also to a society, a culture, or even a civilization.

My argument derives inspiration from a famous quotation from the end of *The Birth of Tragedy* [*Die Geburt der Tragödie*] (1872), which calls upon its readers to “imagine dissonance become man” [“*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*”] (BWN 143; KSA 1, 155). Kaufmann's translation is well known and memorable, but it does not reflect the subtleties of the German text. I prefer to incorporate Babette Babich's more accurate, interesting, albeit less catchy translation of the phrase—“becoming-human of dissonance”: “Might we imagine a becoming-human of dissonance” [“*Könnten wir uns eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz denken*”].² This phrase describes a *process* of humanization and implies a truly radical new understanding of what it means to be human, to think like a human being, and to exist in the world as a human being. Even more significantly, it describes a process that can inspire humanity to become *even more* human. That is, it represents a process of *Bildung*, a word that connotes “self-formation,” “self-education,” “culture,” as well as “growth,” and other organic forms of development. As I describe in detail throughout this study, the phrase “*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*” demands that we understand the foundation of existence as violent, musical, dissonant *processes*. This dissertation argues that Nietzsche's works represent a thorough and far-reaching exploration of the implications of the phrase “*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*.”

I contend that Nietzsche's works portray a musical, dissonant epistemology. The phrase “*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*” from the end of *The Birth of Tragedy* depicts the foundation for a method of producing knowledge about the world in which we live. Musical dissonance helps Nietzsche to outline a “revaluation of all values” that will overcome modernity and thus correct the great “error” in philosophy that sent humanity off-course during the age of Plato and Socrates. Nietzsche employs the phrase “the

² See Babich's *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, page 61, and Chapter One of this dissertation, especially pages 59-60.

revaluation of all values" [*"Umwertung aller Werthe"*] throughout his late texts, including *Twilight of the Idols* and *Ecce Homo* (1888) to capture the spirit of his entire life's work as a philosopher and thinker. The revaluation of all values will pave the way for humanity to create a *new, revitalized* modernity from the shattered fragments of the one it has overcome—one that is a representation of living, musical dissonance. Nietzsche's critique of modernity does *not* suggest that modernity is the natural result of metaphysics. On the contrary, it emphasizes that a modernity predicated upon metaphysics is one of many possible manifestations of modernity. Nietzsche's philosophical works reflect the sense of the word "modernity" as it was used during the Renaissance: to emphasize that something reflects the "present time" (*Oxford English Dictionary*). As portrayed in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a philosophy that privileges the "present moment" is one that *rejects* metaphysical thinking, and encourages people to redeem themselves with respect to the vibrant, constantly changing, world of the present moment, and not *another world* that transcends the reality of the here and now (see Chapter Three, especially pages 208-209). The past and future are only relevant insofar as they affirm the present moment. Thus, a philosophy based on a musical, dissonant epistemology is a "modern" philosophy in that it reflects the concerns of the present moment in the sensual world.

Many books and articles contribute to our understanding of Nietzsche's life-long fascination with music, including the scholarship of Sarah Kofman, Claude Lévesque, Kathleen Higgins, Babette Babich, David Allison, Georges Liébert, Bruce Benson, as well as Ernst Bertram and Frederick Love, whose works I have already discussed. Georges Liébert's *Nietzsche and Music* (2004) outlines Nietzsche's encounters with music and musicians throughout his life, Babette Babich discusses the relationship of music and science throughout her writings on Nietzsche's works, while Bruce Benson actually suggests that music constitutes an organizing force in Nietzsche's thought, which he calls *musical askêsis*. These studies and many others offer important contributions to the field of Nietzsche studies, yet few of them attempt to identify music—or a specific aspect of music—as an

extended metaphor that pervades Nietzsche's extensive oeuvre of published and unpublished works and notes. Most of these studies attempt to locate the significance of music in Nietzsche's works by carefully documenting the references to musicians, musical vocabulary, and musical compositions in Nietzsche's letters, notebooks, and philosophical texts. However, most of them do not venture far beyond Nietzsche's explicit discussion of musical topics to explore the musicality of Nietzsche's actual texts, concepts, and styles, even where overt descriptions of music and musical themes are absent. Chapter One of this study begins with a close, exegetical reading of the language, semiotics, styles, and narratological strategies of Nietzsche's early works, specifically with respect to musical dissonance, which I argue constitutes a master metaphor in his writings and major concepts, such as the *Übermensch*, the "gay science," and the will to power. I draw from these and other studies of Nietzsche's works, in an attempt to synthesize my argument. The essayistic style of this dissertation reflects my interpretation of Nietzsche as an artist-thinker whose dissonant, musical writings resist historicism and the narratives of the Enlightenment.

One critique that stands apart from the scholarship on Nietzsche and music is Claude Lévesque's 1981 book, *Dissonance: Nietzsche à la limite du langage* [*Dissonance: Nietzsche at the Limit of Language*]. In *Dissonance*, Lévesque hypothesizes that Nietzsche's early writings are inspired by a new philosophy of language that is rooted in musical dissonance. *Dissonance* is a unique study that attempts to locate the foundation of Nietzsche's unusual philosophy of language using the far-reaching, yet powerful metaphor of musical dissonance. The book is one of a handful of contributions to Nietzsche scholarship that delineates how a specific aspect of music functions to inspire his philosophical thought. Lévesque seeks to identify the function of musical concepts—specifically musical dissonance—as an extended metaphor in the complex, discursive layers of Nietzsche's texts. Rather than documenting Nietzsche's encounter with music from a literary historical perspective, he sticks close to the text and attempts to locate examples of "dissonance" and "discord" in the semiotic dimensions of Nietzsche's texts. According to

Lévesque, Nietzsche attempts to describe a new and powerful paradigm of communication that incorporates the tragic effect he portrays in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Specifically, Lévesque focuses upon the dynamic interplay between the Apollonian and Dionysian drives that Nietzsche believes forms the foundation of our aesthetic experience of the world.

During the time in which he wrote *Dissonance*, Lévesque was an important voice in the French Deconstruction movement in Québec while a professor at the University of Montréal (1960–2002). Lévesque’s arguments derive inspiration from Derrida’s concept of *différance*, Lyotard’s concept of the *différend*, and Blanchot’s readings of Nietzsche in *The Infinite Conversation* [*L’Entretien infini*] (1969), which emphasize the limits of language and philosophy to provide us with stable and precise points of reference for deriving meaning.³ These writers claim that philosophers and semioticians must devote more attention to the gaps, incommensurabilities, and dynamism in meaning, and be suspicious of paradigms that privilege the notion of “absolute truth” and synchronic perspectives. Nietzsche’s theories about music inspired Lévesque to envision a framework for philosophy and semiotics in which *musical dissonance* serves as an authority for deriving meaning. In an article published in 1989, Lévesque contends that Nietzsche’s descriptions of the “Dionysian” in *The Birth of Tragedy* represent a radical rethinking of the concept of “origin” from something stable, consonant, and comfortable, to something dynamic, dissonant, and painful, yet fundamentally life-affirming:

[...] the Dionysian allows itself to be thought of as arch-dissonance and as common matrix of this pleasure engendered by musical dissonance and tragic duplicity. This arch-dissonance would be at the non-original origin of that which is most musical in music, the most language-like in language: harmony and the scream (“Language to the Limit” 53)⁴

³ These concepts are outlined in Lyotard’s book *Le Différend* (1983) and Derrida’s essay *Différance* (1979).

⁴ Lévesque contributed this essay to an anthology entitled *Nietzsche and the Rhetoric of Nihilism* published by Carleton University Press, 1989. Although it bears the same title as an essay he published for the journal *Études françaises* in 1981, the text contains some substantive differences. Lévesque’s first book, *L’Étrangeté du texte: essais sur Nietzsche, Freud, Blanchot et Derrida* [*The Strangeness of the Text: Essays on Nietzsche, Freud, Blanchot and Derrida*]

Lévesque posits dissonance as a disruptive and destabilizing force. He contends that this force is encapsulated by Nietzsche's description of Dionysus' "shriek" ["*Schrei*"] portrayed in *The Birth of Tragedy* and Nietzsche's unpublished notes from the late 1860s and early 1870s. Lévesque frames his book with an epigraph that contains a fragment from Nietzsche's early notebooks: "*Cri et contre-cri: la force de l'harmonie*" ["Shriek and counter-shriek: the force of harmony" trans. mine].⁵ For Nietzsche, the "shriek" represents the reinfusion of language with the "force of harmony," which includes "rhythm" ["*die Rhythmik*"] and "dynamism" ["*die Dynamik*"]. The "shriek" does not represent a random noise, but the utterance of a passionate singer—whom Nietzsche calls the "man of nature" ["*Naturmensch*"]—who intones songs with the power to constantly transfigure human language and challenge the limits of the human senses through musical dissonance. Lévesque postulates that Nietzsche's philosophy of language taps into the dynamic and explosive force symbolized by the *cri*: the otherwise inexpressible representation of the "will" [*der Wille*] that exists at the core of nature. According to Lévesque, this "will" also constitutes the origin of humanity's faculty of communication and expression.

As indicated by the language of this fragment from Nietzsche's early notebooks, this type of singing produces musical, contradictory, dissonant utterances. Nietzsche asserts that the songs of the *Naturmensch* represent a form of language—but one that surpasses conventional understandings of language, as in this case "*poetry begins, completely in the service of music*" ["*Die Poesie beginnt, ganz in der Herrschaft der Musik*"] (trans. mine, KSA 7, 64). It is through "harmony, dynamism, and rhythm" ["*Harmonie, Dynamik, und Rhythmik*"] that an entirely new "wholeness" ["*Ganzes*"] is produced. It is clear that "harmony" is hardly a function of consonance and the *resolution* of dissonant forces, but the continual

(1978) contains the foundation for Lévesque's interpretation of Nietzsche's texts into psychoanalytic and deconstructive criticism. In addition to Nietzsche's interpretation of music, he also discusses eternal recurrence, the will to power, and other key concepts.

⁵ Schrei und Gegenschrei: die Kraft der Harmonie. (KSA 7, 64[3:16])

creation of new dissonances and the encouragement of a constant state of tension and discord. The purpose of harmony is to sow discord and contradiction in order to break with the conventional, and to infuse language and life with *nature*, which Nietzsche clearly associates with a musical, dissonant process. For Nietzsche, musical dissonance is not merely a manner of understanding discord in a system of tonal harmony, but a metaphor for a decentred, highly disruptive, and constantly shifting force that he associates with life and nature. It manifests itself in Nietzsche's works in a variety of metaphors, genres, and concepts, and reflects the versatility and power of this primal force. The purpose of this study is to explore the many ways which Nietzsche portrays the extended metaphor of musical dissonance in his oeuvre, the manner in which he *emancipates* it, and its importance as an aesthetic concept.

Lévesque's research is remarkable and has both critical and literary merit. It outlines an approach toward the study of dissonance as a central theme in Nietzsche's writing. Yet, it does not extend far beyond the limits of *The Birth of Tragedy* to explore the significance of musical dissonance as a foundational concept in Nietzsche's other works and ideas. Additionally, Lévesque's critical approach relies almost exclusively upon texts associated with deconstruction and phenomenology in a way that serves to broaden the discourse of deconstructive criticism, rather than to develop a comprehensive argument about Nietzsche's philosophy itself.

Another text that inspired me to explore the metaphor of musical dissonance in Nietzsche's philosophy is a short chapter entitled "Nietzsche's Musical *Askêsis*," in Bruce Benson's book *The Pious Nietzsche* (2008). In this chapter, Benson persuasively argues that music—particularly as understood by the ancient Greeks—constitutes a disciplining and structuring force throughout Nietzsche's career. Benson explains that Nietzsche's rather unique form of musical asceticism helps him to become the "musical Socrates" that he envisages in his early writings: "Here the problem is clear enough for Nietzsche. Socrates has failed to listen to the muse [...] and the result is that he [Socrates] has fundamentally not

only misunderstood his role as philosopher but also fails to understand what true knowledge is" (171-172).

According to Benson, *musikê* [μουσική] helps Nietzsche to achieve this goal in three ways. Above all, *musikê* provides Nietzsche with an access point to gain understanding that transcends the limits of logic and reason. Secondly, *musikê* emphasizes the body as a mode of musical production and sensory perception. Finally, *musikê* has the ability to drive the human being into a state of ecstatic transformation. Benson asserts that *musikê* "has the power to take us out of ourselves, allowing us to see the world in a different way *and also* to transform us" (173). Benson's provocative concept of musical *askêsis* emphasizes that music, or more specifically *musikê*, provides Nietzsche with the inspiration and structure needed to think methodically, rigorously, and even ascetically, *without* falling prey to what Nietzsche considers to be the life-denying, ascetic, and myopic limitations of metaphysical systems of thinking (see also Benson "Nietzsche's Musical Askesis for Resisting Decadence"). In the following chapters, I augment Benson's argument and hypothesize that Nietzsche presents entirely "revaluated" and "rehabilitated" notions of systematic philosophy, asceticism, and other key philosophical concepts. That is, Nietzsche uses music to create a kind of *anti-system*—a radical rethinking of the concept of "philosophical system"—that inspires people to construct meaning and knowledge in accordance with the transfiguring and artistic power of music, rather than an idealistic world of metaphysical forms. A philosophical system based on *vibrant, dissonant* music fosters the growth of vital, powerful, this-worldly values that contradict and undermine the metaphysical values that Nietzsche believed were decadent and life-denying.

In her book entitled *Words Like Blood, Like Flowers* (2006), Babette Babich summarizes the significance of *musikê* in Nietzsche's thought:

the modern tendency to reduce music to the 'organized' art of sound obscures the equiprimordial sense in which *musikê* could be regarded, as Nietzsche saw it, as the enabling element of intellectual or spiritual as well as aesthetic and physical education and in which *musikê* figures as the determining force of both individual and societal character. (100)

As Babich emphasizes, the ancient Greek word *musikê* simply refers to “any art over which the muses presided,” including music and lyric poetry (“*mousikê*” Liddell and Scott). For the Greeks, music represented the totality of the human being’s ability to express itself through its manifold sensual, intuitive, emotional, and intellectual abilities. Like Benson, Babich contends that music provides Nietzsche with structure, or what she refers to as a “determining force.” The manner that Babich and Benson describe *musikê* and its influence on Nietzsche form the foundation of my understanding of music in this study. Music is not necessarily the “‘organized’ art of sound” described in musicology or music appreciation textbooks, but equivalent to an “equiprimordial force,” which I elaborate upon in Chapter One.

Throughout the chapters of this study, I explore texts by Nietzsche and his critics that explicitly and implicitly address musical dissonance to demonstrate my argument that it represents the foundation of an epistemology and a way of thinking. In this introduction, I establish a theoretical framework for discussing musical dissonance as a foundational theme in Nietzsche’s works, while in Chapter One, I focus upon *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* (as the complete 1872 title reads) and other early texts, in which Nietzsche posits musical dissonance as the basis for constructing an aesthetically oriented worldview. This worldview includes renewed definitions of “truth,” “ethics,” “justice,” “history,” “foundation” and other key concepts. The second chapter of this study discusses the significance of musical dissonance as the inspiration for Nietzsche’s critique of science in *The Gay Science* [*Die Fröhliche Wissenschaft*] (1882, 1887), and Chapter Three describes how musical dissonance serves as a metaphor for the “revaluation of all values” in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* [*Also Sprach Zarathustra*] (1883-85). In addition, Chapter Three argues that the fictional character Zarathustra actually represents a prophet and teacher of a musical, dissonant philosophy. In these chapters, I demonstrate that there is an inextricable link between science, metaphor, and musical dissonance. In the final chapter, I argue that Nietzsche ultimately realizes his goal of “imagining” a “becoming-human of dissonance” in

his autobiographical book, *Ecce Homo* (1888). In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche actually describes himself as a representation of musical dissonance, and uses his autobiography to describe a process of self-formation that derives inspiration and structure from musical dissonance. He draws upon the legends of Jesus Christ and Socrates to portray himself as a messiah and a herald of a new modernity in which musical dissonance prevails and metaphysics is kept in check. Throughout the study, I make frequent reference to Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks, essays, and lectures, in addition to his major published works.

Although we can locate the master metaphor of musical dissonance throughout Nietzsche's oeuvre, I identify several works in this dissertation that best represent its significance in the development of Nietzsche's thought. *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music* is indispensable because it openly argues that musical dissonance constitutes the "foundations of all existence" [*"Fundamente aller Existenz"*] (BWN 143; KSA 1, 155). The text challenges its readers to reinfuse philosophy, society, and art with more musical dissonance. Although *The Gay Science* does not represent Nietzsche's only examination of modern scientific thinking, it is the only one that he explicitly frames *with music*—songs, poetry, and descriptions of dance. *The Gay Science* actually portrays an example of a musical, *dissonant text*. Its structure, language, and metaphors reflect the primacy of musical dissonance. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* goes one step further and depicts musical dissonance as the inspiration for a teacher and prophet in a fictional epic that parodies canonical religious texts such as the Bible. The protagonist of this epic actually attempts to teach a philosophy based on musical dissonance.

Ecce Homo arguably represents the best place to conclude a chronological study of musical dissonance as an extended metaphor in Nietzsche's late works, as no other text portrays *himself* as a central, messianic figure that promulgates a philosophy and a *way of life* that privileges an epistemology of musical dissonance. While in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche portrays a fictional prophet in a fictional world, *Ecce Homo* presents a messianic figure who is "real," "alive," and situated in the present moment. Throughout this study, I

delineate important connections between different texts and different themes from throughout Nietzsche's works. Nietzsche composed his oeuvre in such a way that it is often necessary to read through it intertextually, and note the variations, disharmonies, and developments of themes and concepts from one work to another.

A secondary goal of this study is to emphasize the legacy of Nietzsche's musical, dissonant philosophy on his critics. For example, I examine various passages from Gilles Deleuze's canonical study of Nietzsche: *Nietzsche and Philosophy* [*Nietzsche et la philosophie*] (1962). I argue that many of Deleuze's central arguments, such as his influential interpretation of the theme of the "tragic" in Nietzsche's philosophy, are inspired by the theme of musical dissonance in Nietzsche's writings. This is despite the fact that Deleuze only mentions the word "music" two times in that book.

In addition, I develop Deleuze's claim that Nietzsche's remarks about science represent his hopes that one day, humanity will devise a new science that is based upon the element of "chance," "fire," and the "dice throw." In the first essay of *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, entitled "The Tragic," Deleuze asserts that Nietzsche dreams of a "machine to affirm chance, to cook chance" [*La machine à affirmer le hasard, à faire cuire le hasard*] and "produce the number which brings back the dice throw" [*à composer le nombre qui ramène le coup de dés*] and "play with the stars" [*jouer avec les astres*] (30; 35). He refers to this mechanism as the "Heraclitean fire machine" [*la machine à feu héraclitéenne*] (30; 35). Deleuze argues that the philosophy of Heraclitus constitutes an influential subtext throughout Nietzsche writings. Heraclitus portrays "fire," "chance," and "flux" as the ultimate sources of authority for deriving truth and meaning. Although Nietzsche's analyses of Heraclitus are primarily in his early texts, such as *The Birth of Tragedy and Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (ca. 1873), Deleuze passionately argues that the "Heraclitean" is an extended metaphor that pervades Nietzsche works. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche hoped that one day, human beings would construct "machines" that

would generate knowledge based on a Heraclitean epistemology—that is, a system of constructing knowledge and meaning that is literally structured like fire.

Deleuze's hypothesis is far-reaching. To suggest that Nietzsche "dreamed of machines" might seem absurd, as Nietzsche rails against "mechanistic" thought, calculability, predictability, and utopic thinking throughout his career. Yet, Deleuze makes it clear that the Heraclitean fire machine does not generate predictable and uniform results; in this way, it is an anti-machine. The Heraclitean fire machine is a machine that functions in way that actually seems "unscientific" and "unmachinic," as it does not seem to operate in accordance with objective, logical, dispassionate, and scientific ways of thinking. It is a machine whose purpose is to generate *illogic*, *unsystematic* knowledge, and deeply *subjective* impressions.

Deleuze suggests that Nietzsche's texts portray a radical epistemology that derives meaning from fire, chance, unpredictability, and error. According to Deleuze's analysis, Nietzsche's philosophy is not only a critique of the discourse of the Enlightenment or Western metaphysics, but a prolegomena for a truly *alternative* philosophy that derives meaning from a "Heraclitean" epistemology, in which everything is forever in flux, transforming like a burning fire, and subject to the laws of chance. On top of this epistemology, Nietzsche builds a foundation from which future generations can construct a new philosophy, a new science, new systems, and new machines. In a world in which thinkers respects a Heraclitean epistemology, words like "philosophy," "system," and "machine" have entirely new meanings, as they are built on fire and not stable, fixed concepts.

I agree with Deleuze on several key points. Firstly, Nietzsche's texts represent the foundation for an alternative philosophy that derives authority from a dynamic and unpredictable source of meaning. However, I do not believe that "Heraclitean fire" represents the master metaphor in Nietzsche's works: it is musical dissonance. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche claims that dissonance constitutes the *foundations of all existence*. This

claim is provocative, but also enigmatic. How can dissonance possibly serve as the “foundation” of all existence or anything for that matter? As I discuss in Chapter One, Nietzsche challenges the notion that a “foundation” represents something stable or unchanging. In Nietzsche’s texts, a foundation represents the basic criterion for which we can derive meaning and truths. Instead of a “foundation” for philosophy that is solid, predictable, and immutable, Nietzsche describes one that is dissonant and musical. Therefore, in Chapter Two, when I describe Nietzsche’s creation of a new “system” and “science,” it is my intention to refer to outgrowths of a philosophy that is radically different from the metaphysical philosophies that Nietzsche criticizes. Accordingly, when I claim that some of Nietzsche’s texts and concepts are “machinic” in nature, it is not my intention to claim that Nietzsche is a mechanistic thinker in the nineteenth century sense of the word. On the contrary, Nietzsche wanted to create a philosophy and write texts that function musically and dissonantly, and serve to create and generate more musical dissonance. Therefore, this study identifies *musical dissonance* as the master metaphor of Nietzsche works. Whereas Heraclitean fire is a highly significant metaphor in Nietzsche’s works, musical dissonance represents one that is even more powerful and pervasive.

My analysis of Nietzsche’s use of language and literary styles draws heavily upon the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975), whose philosophical observations on language and literature are also inspired by the metaphors of polyphony and musical dissonance. I draw upon Bakhtin’s 1934 essay “Discourse in the Novel,” which describes the inherent polyphonic structure of language. Bakhtin’s describes language as a dynamic process that consists of the interplay between centripetal and centrifugal discursive forces. All of humanity participates in the constant creation and transformation of language. Bakhtin’s dynamic theory of language informs my argument that Nietzsche’s texts do not only discuss musical dissonance, but perform it, and inspire readers to adopt it in their thinking, reading, and writing.

The theoretical framework of this thesis is inspired by the twentieth century composer Arnold Schoenberg's (1874–1951) powerful claim that his system of twelve-tone composition, which he developed in the early 1920s, represents the “emancipation of the dissonance” in musical composition (see Perle, 1-8, for a brief overview of twelve-tone and atonal composition). This phrase represents an overarching theme that binds this study together. Although Nietzsche's ideas indeed influenced Schoenberg's thought, my aim is not to delineate a line of influence between the two thinkers. Above all, Schoenberg's comments provide a conceptual framework for understanding the dynamic between dissonance and consonance, and how this dynamic can form the foundation of an epistemology. Thus, my discussion of Schoenberg's system of musical composition and his theories are intended to serve as a theoretical framework from which to analyze and interpret the function of musical dissonance in Nietzsche's texts and ideas. It is not my intention to offer an extensive reading of Schoenberg's theories in this study, nor is it my intention to claim that Schoenberg's music portrays a Nietzschean vision of what music should sound like. My goal is to emphasize the significance of the “emancipation of the dissonance” in reading and interpreting Nietzsche's works.

In the Coda, I offer some speculative remarks about how Nietzsche's musical, dissonant philosophy was received by Thomas Mann (1875–1955) and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969), whose political and critical writings appear even more provocative when interpreted through the lens of musical dissonance, as understood and portrayed by Friedrich Nietzsche. Theodore Adorno's ideas about music, particularly as depicted in *Philosophy of New Music* [*Philosophie der neuen Musik*] (1949) and a short essay entitled “Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg” (1955, 1967) [“Zum Verständnis Schönbergs”], loom in the background of almost every paragraph in this study. Adorno's *Philosophy of New Music* contains a vitriolic critique of the state of music and musical criticism in the modern world. It consists of an introduction and two essays: “Schoenberg and Progress” [“Schönberg und der Fortschritt”] and “Stravinsky and the Restoration” [“Strawinsky und die

Restauration"]. These essays portray a trenchant critique of modern civilization by analyzing the music we listen to and the way we listen to it. They advocate on behalf Schoenberg's system of twelve-tone composition (although not without reservations), which Adorno believes has the *potential* to revitalize many aspects of modern civilization that have been weakened by a profusion of mediocrity, sentimentality, decadence, or to put it another way, the primacy of *consonance*. Adorno synthesizes Schoenberg's and Nietzsche's comments about musical dissonance to a sophisticated level and passionately argues that the world of the late twentieth century needs more musical dissonance. In the Coda, I discuss Adorno's ideas in conjunction with a brief analysis of Thomas Mann's long political essay, *Confessions of a Nonpolitical Man* [*Die Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*] (1918), and the novel *Doctor Faustus* [*Doktor Faustus*] (1947), the latter of which depicts Adorno's, Nietzsche's, and Schoenberg's ideas about musical dissonance in a narrative about a *fictional* inventor of twelve-tone music. Adorno worked very closely with Thomas Mann on this novel. Ultimately, the purpose of the Coda is to delineate the importance of dissonance as an aesthetic concept that has profound relevance not only in Nietzsche's texts, but also in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. As with my discussion of Schoenberg's theories, my discussion of Adorno and Mann seeks to emphasize the importance of musical dissonance as an aesthetic concept in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and to enhance my interpretation of Nietzsche's texts.

In his book entitled *1910: The Emancipation of Dissonance* (1996), Thomas Harrison explains that Nietzsche's dissonant aesthetics, as depicted in *The Birth of Tragedy*, provided Schoenberg and his students with the motivation to venture beyond the comfortable and sentimental boundaries of consonance to seek new and more powerful modalities of human expression:

The content of this new, expressionist music, developed before the [First World] war and elaborated in original ways by Schoenberg's pupils Anton Webern and Alban Berg, is form unhinged from all content whatsoever [...]. If they have any emotional purpose, it is certainly not solace, consolation, joy, or reassurance. It is something closer to the unsettled, inexplicable emotions

of turmoil, agitation, and unease. Here Apollo, the clarifying god of constant harmony, gives way to the frenzied Dionysus. (47)

Harrison contends that dissonance provides the basis of a new ontology for artists in the post-Nietzschean world of 1910 in which “unity is constituted in the dissonance itself” (84). In this way, Harrison accurately captures the spirit of this study and Nietzsche’s enthusiasm for dissonance. However, Harrison implies that Schoenberg and his followers did *not* want “consolation, joy, or reassurance.” I disagree and maintain that Nietzsche, Schoenberg and their followers did indeed find “joy,” “consolation,” and “reassurance” when they decided to embrace dissonance as the basis for a foundation of understanding, meaning, and aesthetic expression. Yet, these emotions are *not* derived from comfortable, reassuring metaphysical joys: such emotions are precluded by dissonance. The pleasures that Nietzsche and these composers likely experienced in dissonance stem in large part from what commonplace wisdom considers to be “pain,” “suffering,” and “discomfort.” While the metaphysically oriented thinker finds joy in thoughts of comforting abstractions and release from the suffering of *this* world, the musical, dissonant thinker finds joy in ceaseless disruption, transformation, and this-worldly joys and suffering, as outlined in Nietzsche’s texts.

Harrison claims that the emancipation of dissonance is “form unhinged from content” (47). However, I argue that Nietzsche makes these terms irrelevant. The binaristic opposition of “form” and “content” is only relevant in a *consonant* epistemology, in which humanity produces knowledge with respect to a stable, central authority of meaning, such as God, “reason,” and “logic.” However, in Nietzsche’s dissonance-based epistemology, the thinker produces knowledge using a paradigm that does not respect the differentiation between process and thing. Everything is a process, as everything represents the “coming into being” of dissonance—not just the being of humans, but the being of *everything*.

My primary goal is to demonstrate how and why Nietzsche implores humanity to have the audacity and courage to “imagine a becoming-human of dissonance.” Due to the

paucity of Nietzsche's comments about music and musical dissonance in *some* of his most important texts, a great deal of my analyses rely upon close readings in which I examine Nietzsche's texts "between the lines," as well as Nietzsche scholarship. These investigations reveal that musical dissonance does indeed form the basis of his epistemology and approach to philosophy. The fact is that Nietzsche only uses the *actual* words "dissonance" and "dissonant" less than two dozen times in the texts collected in the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* (eKGWB).⁶ The vast majority of them occur in texts composed before 1880. This number does not include the many synonyms or metaphors for dissonance, and unfortunately, explicit references to musical dissonance are sparse. Thankfully, most of Nietzsche's explicit discussions of dissonance are strategically located and in powerful passages that provide the groundwork for a rigorous, close reading of relevant texts by Nietzsche and his critics.

Above all, the argument of this dissertation is a literary one. It is a contextual, literary analysis of the master metaphor of musical dissonance in Nietzsche's works. While I discuss concepts and scholarship from fields such as musicology and philosophy, my primary goal is to hypothesize upon the nature of this powerful metaphor throughout a broad range of Nietzsche's works. In the Introduction and Chapter One, I define dissonance within the context of Nietzsche's works, while in Chapters Three and Four, I explore how Nietzsche develops this powerful metaphor in his later works, and actually employs it to inspire a revaluation of all values in modern civilization.

⁶ The source of this figure, as well as other statistics regarding Nietzsche's usage of words in this study, is the *Digitale Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke und Briefe* [The Digital Critical Collected Works] (abbreviated eKGWB) database, edited by Paolo D'Iorio and hosted on *The Nietzsche Source* website. *The Nietzsche Source* features a text-searchable database that contains all of the works included in the KSA, and is based on the 1967 edition of the KGW. Currently, it is not complete and does not include, for example, Nietzsche's lecture notes and letters. Therefore some of my figures are limited by the texts currently available in the eKGWB.

The Will to Power and Musical Dissonance

For Nietzsche, there is indeed such a thing as *ultimate truth*. Nietzsche's ultimate truth is just as real and palpable as the most positivistic and invincible truths offered by analytic philosophers, and just as sublime and ineffable as the metaphysical truths respected by philosophers of religion and spirit. Nietzsche's truth represents a vast and potentially limitless storehouse of power that human beings can harness and use to enhance their vitality and actively affirm life. Nietzsche's truth conforms to neither the rules of Western metaphysics nor the "positivistic" sciences. For Nietzsche, this truth is the "will to power." The will to power represents a complex quantum of force that constitutes the fabric of the universe. It represents the whole universe, but it also represents a force that is distributed throughout the universe as a network of centres of force (that is, centres of force within a greater quantum of force). Therefore, the will to power effaces the boundaries between the individual, the group, and the unity of all things. The will to power—however vague and ambiguous Nietzsche's and his critic's descriptions of it might often seem—represents a truth that eschews the tendency to defer to the authority of metaphysical abstractions, as it completely resists binaristic philosophical dichotomies, such as "transcendent and immanent," "this-worldly and otherworldly," "true and false," and so forth. Nietzsche presents the will to power as a source of meaning and understanding that is anti-metaphysical.

Nietzsche's "truth" is simply that the universe—or "the world" [*die Welt*] as he describes it—is comprised of a single "magnitude" [*Größe*] of forces that represents a unity, but one which also represents a plurality of dynamic, shifting, and dissonant centres of force. The universe represents a continually transforming quantum of energy that defies "scientific" methods of categorizing, measuring, and quantifying phenomenon. This is because the "magnitude of force" that comprises the universe represents *all phenomena*, including those that fall both within and beyond the purview of human knowledge, and those that might forever be outside and beyond the reach of humanity's—or any being's—

ability to sense and comprehend. Although Nietzsche describes this force in many texts—both early and late—his most concise description of it is in an aphorism from his notebooks from 1885, which Walter Kaufmann placed at the end of his translation of *The Will to Power*:⁷

And do you know what “the world” is to me? Shall I show you it to you in my mirror? This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; a firm, iron [*eherne*] magnitude of force that does not grow bigger or smaller, that does not expend itself but only transforms itself; as a whole, of unalterable size, a household without expenses or losses, but likewise without increase or income; enclosed by “nothingness” [*Nichts*] as by a boundary; not something blurry or wasted, not something endlessly extended, but set in a definite space as a definite force, and not a space that might be “empty” [*leer*] here or there, but rather as force throughout, as a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many, increasing here and at the same time decreasing there [...]. (WP 549-550)⁸

Nietzsche’s magnitude of force is simply a metaphor *for everything*, as it comprises all phenomena in the universe, including those things that human science might perceive to be “nothing” (that is, containing no measurable amount of matter or force of any kind). Yet, this force is also a metaphor for *no specific thing*, in that it represents *nothing in particular*. It takes no sides, and conforms to no categorical worldview, aesthetic perspective, or scientific method. It is fundamentally “indifferent” to anything—even itself. The magnitude of force simply “is,” always “has been,” and always “will be.” This is not to imply that it is a metaphysical force, as it is very “real,” palpable, and forms the foundation of “this world.”

⁷ *The Will to Power* is the title of a book that Nietzsche abandoned. However, many of his notes that detail his plans for the book survived. The most reliable and scholarly translation and interpretation of these notes is Walter Kaufmann’s edition (1967), whose introduction and editorial notes detail *The Will to Power*’s long and controversial publication history. It is important to note that Nietzsche never completed the book and never authorized its publication in any form.

⁸ Und wißt ihr auch, was mir „die Welt“ ist? Soll ich sie euch in meinem Spiegel zeigen? Diese Welt: ein Ungeheuer von Kraft, ohne Anfang, ohne Ende, eine feste, eherne GröÙe von Kraft, welche nicht größer, nicht kleiner wird, die sich nicht verbraucht sondern nur verwandelt, als Ganzes unveränderlich groß, ein Haushalt ohne Ausgaben und Einbußen, aber ebenso ohne Zuwachs, ohne Einnahmen, vom „Nichts“ umschlossen als von seiner Gränze, nichts Verschwimmendes, Verschwendetes, nichts Unendlich-Ausgedehntes, sondern als bestimmte Kraft einem bestimmten Raum eingelegt, und nicht einem Raume, der irgendwo „leer“ wäre, vielmehr als Kraft überall, als Spiel von Kräften und Kraftwellen zugleich Eins und „Vieles“, hier sich häufend und zugleich dort sich mindernd [...]. (KSA 11, 610[38:12])

Additionally, it *does* have properties and motions that we can sense, observe, and admire; however, we cannot “know” them in any way other than as *metaphors*. That is, no human being—perhaps no being at all—can “know” or understand the will to power, but it is certainly within the capacity of all human beings to portray their interpretations of it, and their relationships to it, through the creation of metaphors.

For Nietzsche, the creation of metaphor includes the full spectrum of human activity, as every aspect of human activity represents a manifestation of the will to power. As human beings are capable of self-reflection and self-critique, all human activity is subject to interpretation. Thus, all human behaviour is a signifier for other aspects of human behaviour, intentions, motivations, and inspiration. Ultimately, these metaphors are aesthetic representations of humanity’s relationship to *the will to power*. Metaphors represent the many ways in which humanity can discharge its will to power. As metaphors represent the most fundamental and powerful force in the universe—a force that binds and connects every *thing* (including the living, the inanimate, the impalpable, and even the purely psychic)—they can be powerful inspirations and motivations for living, understanding, and cognition. By recognizing the nature of human existence as a matrix of complex metaphors, all of which represent a chain of power relations, humanity has access to an enormous storehouse of creative energy. Metaphors represent a relationship to a *process* and not an abstraction. They are not bound to a fixed form in a material, philosophical, or religious sense of the word. On the contrary, they represent the relationship of everything plastic, and apparently endowed with “meaning,” to the fantastically dynamic force that Nietzsche describes as “the will to power.”

Not surprisingly, Nietzsche’s magnitude of force contains many mystical sounding contradictions: it is neither one nor many, and has neither a beginning nor an end. It represents a fixed quantum of force, and contains no emptiness, despite the fact that it is surrounded and delimited by “nothingness.” Such rhetorical strategies and imagery are common in Nietzsche’s writings, which frequently bear the stylistic traits of religious texts.

This should come as no surprise as the vast majority of Nietzsche's texts share many goals with religious texts: that is, like religious texts, Nietzsche's writings on the will to power attempt to explain humanity's place in a vast and often enigmatic, terrifying universe. Yet, Nietzsche attempts to do so without resorting to metaphysical abstraction. In the second half of the aphorism, Nietzsche provides us with some important clues on how to interpret the mystical quality of his writing:

[the will to power is] a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing, eternally flooding back, with tremendous years of recurrence, with an ebb and a flood of its forms; out of the simplest forms striving toward the most complex, out of the stillest, most rigid, coldest forms toward the hottest, most turbulent, most self-contradictory, and then again returning home to the simple out of this abundance, out of the play of contradictions back to the joy of concord, still affirming itself in this uniformity of its courses and its years, blessing no satiety, no disgust, no weariness: this, my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying, this mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my "beyond good and evil," without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself—do you want a *name* for this world? A *solution* for all its riddles? A *light* for you, too, you best-concealed, strongest, most intrepid, most midnightly men? — *This world is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides! (WP 550)⁹

This passage describes the world as a complex engine that is capable of perpetual and ceaseless operation—a cosmic *perpetuum mobile*—that lies at the foundation of all things.

The magnitude of force manifests itself in the form of a galactic combustion furnace in

⁹ [...] ein Meer in sich selber stürmender und fluthender Kräfte, ewig sich wandelnd, ewig zurücklaufend, mit ungeheuren Jahren der Wiederkehr, mit einer Ebbe und Fluth seiner Gestaltungen, aus den einfachsten in die vielfältigsten hinaustreibend, aus dem Stillsten, Starrsten, Kältesten hinaus in das Glühendste, Wildeste, Sich-selber-widersprechendste, und dann wieder aus der Fülle heimkehrend zum Einfachen, aus dem Spiel der Widersprüche zurück bis zur Lust des Einklangs, sich selber bejahend noch in dieser Gleichheit seiner Bahnen und Jahre, sich selber segnend als das, was ewig wiederkommen muß, als ein Werden, das kein Sattwerden, keinen Überdruß, keine Müdigkeit kennt —: diese meine *dionysische* Welt des Ewig-sich-selber-Schaffens, des Ewig-sich-selber-Zerstörens, diese Geheimniß-Welt der doppelten Wollüste, dieß mein Jenseits von Gut und Böse, ohne Ziel, wenn nicht im Glück des Kreises ein Ziel liegt, ohne Willen, wenn nicht ein Ring zu sich selber guten Willen hat, — wollt ihr einen *Namen* für diese Welt? Eine Lösung für alle ihre Räthsel? ein *Licht* auch für euch, ihr Verborgenen, Stärksten, Unerschrockensten, Mitternächtesten? — *Diese Welt ist der Wille zur Macht — und nichts außerdem! Und auch ihr selber seid dieser Wille zur Macht — und nichts außerdem!* (KSA 11, 610-611[38:12])

which all *things*—matter, energy, and thought—interact in the most violent manners imaginable. These interactions, which Nietzsche describes as “contradictions” [*Widersprüche*], comprise the foundation of the “law” that oversees the magnitude of force. Nietzsche’s choice of words was likely very deliberate, as *Widerspruch*—a compound word comprised of the preposition “contrary” [*wider*] and the noun for “saying” or “law” [*Spruch*]¹—contains many important connotations. We can translate *Widerspruch* into English as “antithesis,” “contradiction,” “objection,” “protest,” and “discord”—to name but a few possibilities. These words evoke the language of jurisprudence, German idealism, rhetoric, and religion. The “law” of the magnitude of force that comprises the universe is simply a series of endless *Widersprüche*—that, it is a polyvalent and pluralistic series of *discords*, *dissonances*, and *tensions*. These processes provoke dramatic and extreme states of being in nature: the hottest and the coldest, the simplest and most complex, as well as the most turbulent and concordant. They represent an endless array of possibilities, but imply no finality or goal in the teleological sense of the word.

In addition, the passage describes a set of processes that completely preclude the existence of a centre. There is no centre to the “monster of energy.” To borrow from the epigraph of this study, which I have extracted from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: the “centre is everywhere.” The violent contradictions that pervade this quantum of force constantly create a plurality of centres, and subsequently destroy them. To foreshadow my discussion of Arnold Schoenberg’s theory of musical composition, the scenario that Nietzsche portrays represents a system of power relations in which dissonant forces are completely emancipated from a central, otherworldly authority of meaning.

At the end of the aphorism, Nietzsche states that there is only one “goal” that does not run contrary to the fundamental processes and “laws” of the universe. That goal is the “joy” and bliss [*Glück*] that human beings should feel while actively engaging with the processes represented by the will to power. Perhaps one can even experience a *lust* [*Wollust*] to help perpetuate the process and ensure its vitality. The aphorism ends with Nietzsche’s

declaration that the world is comprised of one thing: *the will to power* [*der Wille zur Macht*]. Nietzsche also declares that human beings—who comprise a portion of this “world”—are also nothing other than manifestations and projections of the will to power. In these passages, Nietzsche offers his readers the opportunity to realize the incredible possibilities offered by experiencing the joys of living in accordance with the *law* of the magnitude of force that comprises the universe.

The beginning and end of the aphorism might appear to contain a contradiction. Although at first, Nietzsche claims that the world is a “magnitude of force,” he claims that the world is the “will to power” at the end of the aphorism. Does this apparent contradiction imply that Nietzsche believes that the magnitude of force *is* the will to power? The language suggests that this is indeed the case. “Will” and “force” might very well be different metaphors for the same thing. This would certainly contradict the view that a “will” must be propelled by a sentient consciousness endowed with the spark of “reason”—a notion that has prevailed throughout modernity. That is, it defies the notion that the existence of the “will” is contingent upon a being that “wills”; there is no cause and effect relationship here. Nevertheless, we can be certain that Nietzsche has little concern with the *composition* of the “will” and “force” that comprise the universe. He demonstrates no interest in reducing it to its smallest components—that is, he completely avoids investigating the universe from a monadistic or atomistic perspective.

Such a task appears to be irrelevant and reductive to Nietzsche. Nietzsche’s aphorism focuses entirely on the *processes* that comprise the will to power and govern the “magnitude of force” which forms the fabric of the universe. The *chemical composition* of the fabric of the universe is not at issue here. Attempting to reduce the will to power to the sum of its parts is reductive, as Nietzsche does not ever attempt to explain the chemical composition of it. Despite the fact that he offers many descriptions of the will to power in his late works, *none of them* offer a concrete set of “formulae” for how it works—just *descriptions*.

In a recent study, Robin Small affirms that Nietzsche's universe can only be reduced to "centres of force." Yet, he also maintains that Nietzsche's cosmology still affirms a mechanistic notion of the "finite":

Nietzsche supports the so-called 'law of finite number,' at least as regards to simultaneous existence. Hence he accepts the proposition that the elements of the universe at a given time must be finite in number. For Nietzsche these are Boscovichian "centres of force" rather than material atoms. He goes further than Dühring in arguing that their possible combinations must also be finite in number, a crucial proposition in his sketches for a physical theory of eternal recurrence. (194)

Small makes a comprehensive survey of the texts that Nietzsche studied during the years in which he wrote his notes about the will to power. Unfortunately, however, Small assumes that Nietzsche was not only inspired by the writings of these scientists, but that he literally followed their *mechanistic* and metaphysically oriented methodologies. It is true that in *some* of his sketches, Nietzsche experiments with the possibility that the universe might be composed of a truly "finite" amount of force. However, it seems clear from the passages I discuss here that there is abundant evidence to suggest that Nietzsche had not come to a final decision about the question of the finite versus the infinite. However, I consider it even *more* likely that Nietzsche wanted to destabilize the dichotomy of the finite and the infinite—a binarism that continues to irk modern thinkers. Nietzsche describes the finite as infinite and the infinite as finite. Perhaps these words become metaphors for our own insecurities about their validity in the same way that "truth" becomes a metaphor for the impossibility of an abstract truth? This study examines the views of many critics who attempt to reconcile Nietzsche's thought with conventional ways of thinking. Nietzsche often forces us to make a choice: accept his ideas at face value, which generally defy predominant modes of philosophical and scientific discourse, or reconcile his ideas with them.

Nietzsche and Metaphysics

Nietzsche describes an entire cosmology in the space of one paragraph that accounts for the existence of *everything* in the universe by describing the interaction between centres

of force. The processes that govern these forces are of prime significance. The dissonant forces that constitute the will to power ensure that a permanent centre of force—a central authority for constructing meaning and order—can never exist in the universe. That is, it ensures the “emancipation of the dissonance” throughout the universe. It is a process that describes the universe as flux in which there is no fixed centre. In the following chapters, I argue that musical dissonance serves as the most accurate metaphor for the processes which characterize the dynamic and discordant “monster of energy”—the “will to power”—that Nietzsche describes in this fragment. By imagining the processes that describe the “monster of energy, without beginning, without end” as the foundation of Nietzsche’s philosophy, it is possible to arrive at fresh and relevant interpretations of Nietzsche’s most famous concepts, including the will to power, the *Übermensch*, science, and eternal recurrence.

The remainder of the Introduction discusses the significance of musical dissonance as a replacement for the foundation of what Nietzsche persistently describes as *metaphysics* throughout his works. As indicated in “How the True World Became a Fable,” Nietzsche attributes the rise of metaphysics to epistemologies that are fundamentally “anti-nature,” “life-denying,” and hostile to this world. He begins his six-point call to arms by attacking Platonism and Christianity: “The true world—unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable, but the very thought of it—a consolation, an imperative” [*“Die wahre Welt, unerreichbar, unbeweisbar, unversprechbar, aber schon als gedacht ein Trost, eine Verpflichtung, ein Imperativ”*] (TPN 485; KSA 6, 80). In this line, Nietzsche refers to Platonism’s and Christianity’s deference to a central authority of meaning in “another world”—that is, the world of “forms” and “truth” in Platonism, and the world of the divine in Christianity. In each case, “this world”—the world of life—is denigrated and subjugated to the hegemony of “another world” which is unattainable or unknowable for those that exist in the world of the living. Later in the aphorism, Nietzsche claims that this metaphysical worldview transfers to rational-scientific worldviews that dominate the epistemes of modernity: “The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently,

not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us?/(Gray morning. The first yawn of reason. The cockcrow of positivism.)” (TPN 485).¹⁰ Nietzsche’s manifold objections to metaphysics, which I outline in the following chapters, relate to his fundamental concern that it does not serve the interests of *life*.

Nietzsche clearly portrays this sentiment with regard to the science of history in his essay on historical truths in the *Untimely Meditations* [*Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen*] (1876), entitled “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” [“*Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben*”]:

We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life: for it is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate—a phenomenon we are now forced to acknowledge, painful though this may be, in the face of certain striking symptoms of our age. (UM 59)¹¹

Nietzsche voices a concern that modern historians suffer from a desire to be *overly historical*. This historical fever has reached such proportions, that their apotheosis of the discipline of history as an object of worship has undermined their responsibility to ensure that history serves the vitality and strength of human beings and their cultures. Put more simply, Nietzsche believes that life serves science when the opposite should be the case. Nietzsche’s concern that history can deplete the vitality of human beings applies to his writings on the various branches of the arts and sciences, all of which Nietzsche believes have been infected by the horrible poison of life-denying metaphysical philosophies.

According to Nietzsche, the manifold epistemologies that constitute modern religion, philosophy, and science engage in metaphysical abstraction. These epistemologies

¹⁰ Die Wahre Welt — unerreichbar? Jedenfalls unerreicht. Und als unerreicht auch *unbekannt*. Folglich auch nicht tröstend, erlösend, verpflichtend: wozu könnte uns etwas Unbekanntes verpflichten?.../(Grauer Morgen. Erstes Gähnen der Vernunft. Hahnenschrei des Positivismus.) (KSA 6, 80)

¹¹ Nur soweit die Historie dem Leben dient, wollen wir ihr dienen: aber es giebt einen Grad, Historie zu treiben und eine Schätzung derselben, bei der das Leben verkümmert und entartet: ein Phänomen, welches an merkwürdigen Symptomen unserer Zeit sich zur Erfahrung zu bringen jetzt eben so nothwendig ist als es schmerzlich sein mag. (KSA 1, 245-246)

refuse to admit that the rigidity and supposed “objectivity” of their truths, formulas, and categories are the result of their own *volition* to create seemingly immutable and permanent abstractions. That is, they are simply disingenuous. Metaphysics and science claim to preserve and enhance life, but in reality, they serve to affirm an abstraction, which is antithetical to the processes that govern the “real” world—or as Nietzsche refers to it: “this world.”

In the fifth book of *The Gay Science* (aphorism 344), Nietzsche laments that it is impossible to affirm life, while simultaneously affirming an abstract “other” world that is not governed by the processes that define “this world.” Nietzsche considered the following passage so important, that he quotes it verbatim in *The Genealogy of Morals* [*Zur Genealogie der Moral*] (1887) (third essay, twenty-fourth aphorism), in order to underscore the shared responsibility of science and metaphysics in distorting our understanding of “truth.” This aphorism appears in the 1886 edition of *The Gay Science*:

Thus the question “Why science?” leads back to the moral problem: *Why have morality at all* when life, nature, and history are “not moral”? No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science *thus affirm another world* than the world of life, nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this “other world”—look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, *our* world? —But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is **still a metaphysical faith** upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith **which was also the faith of Plato**, that God is the truth, that truth is divine. [bold emphasis mine] —But what if this should become more and more incredible, if nothing should prove to be divine any more unless it were error, blindness, the lie—if God himself should prove to be our most enduring lie? — (GS 282-283)¹²

¹² Dergestalt führt die Frage: warum Wissenschaft? zurück auf das moralische Problem: wozu überhaupt Moral, wenn Leben, Natur, Geschichte, „unmoralisch“ sind? Es ist kein Zweifel, der Wahrhaftige, in jenem verwegenen und letzten Sinne, wie ihn der Glaube an die Wissenschaft voraussetzt, bejaht damit eine andre Welt als die des Lebens, der Natur und der Geschichte; und insofern er diese „andre Welt“ bejaht, wie? muss er nicht ebendamt ihr Gegenstück, diese Welt, unsre Welt—verneinen?... Doch man wird es begriffen haben, worauf ich hinaus will, nämlich daß es immer noch ein metaphysischer Glaube ist, auf dem unser Glaube an die Wissenschaft ruht, — dass auch wir Erkennenden von heute, wir Gottlosen und Antimetaphysiker, auch unser Feuer noch von dem Brande nehmen, den ein

This famous passage underscores the problem of metaphysical abstraction as the single most significant flaw of Western epistemology. Although the root of this problem might lie in Platonism, Nietzsche contends that it has been a universal problem for millennia. Metaphysical abstraction forms the foundation of all of the predominant epistemes of modernity, including the metanarrative of science. It is the motivation—the “fire” [*Feuer*—that fuels the inquiry of the religious, the godless [*Gottlosen*], and the rational-scientific thinker alike, whether Christian, Jewish, scientific, rationalist, or Platonic.

This aphorism ends with a terrifying question: what *would happen* if humanity were to continue placing faith in knowledge produced from metaphysical abstractions, despite its own apparent incredulity toward metaphysics? Nietzsche suggests that humanity would apotheosize *mendacity* above all things (error, blindness, and lie—“*der Irrthum, die Blindheit, die Lüge*”). As depicted in “How the True World Became a Fable” (which Nietzsche published shortly after the second edition of *The Gay Science*), Nietzsche asserts that humanity has already reached a state in which it apotheosizes mendacity. He claims that human civilization of the past several centuries can be described by the word “error.” Thus, in aphorism 344, he suggests that human beings are on the verge of engaging in what is essentially a metaphysics of mendacity.

Although from time to time Nietzsche extols “lying,” as if it enlivens and serves “life,” it is clear that Nietzsche does not consider the perpetuation of metaphysical ways of thinking to be life-affirming.¹³ There is nothing wrong with lying to others or even to ourselves, if it enlivens us and can help us to overcome a setback. However, it is important

Jahrtausende alter Glaube entzündet hat, jener Christen-Glaube, der auch der Glaube Plato's war, dass Gott die Wahrheit ist, dass die Wahrheit göttlich ist... Aber wie, wenn dies gerade immer mehr unglaublich wird, wenn Nichts sich mehr als göttlich erweist, es sei denn der Irrthum, die Blindheit, die Lüge, — wenn Gott selbst sich als unsre längste Lüge erweist? — (KSA 3, 576-577)

¹³ Here I refer to Nietzsche's comments in “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” in *Untimely Mediations* and “Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense” that praise humanity's ability to deliberately exaggerate, and even lie, if it serves the purpose of affirming life.

that we never forget that a lie is still a lie, and do not apotheosize it as a truth. For example, in the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche suggests that it is perfectly acceptable to deliberately “forget” historical truths if it serves the purpose of enlivening an individual or culture. Thus, in Nietzsche’s writings, there is a distinction between “lying” and creating falsehoods for “life” and outright, stubborn, spiteful *mendacity*.

An examination of the significance of musical dissonance as the foundation of Nietzsche’s philosophy helps to delineate what sort of epistemology Nietzsche might consider to be *honest* and *just* with respect to the will to power and musical dissonance. How should humanity replace its metaphysical epistemologies? How can we undo the damage caused by the great “error”? As Nietzsche claims in the famous aphorism entitled “Why I am a Destiny” [“*Warum ich ein Schicksal bin*”] in *Ecce Homo*, he believes that he is among the only “decent” [“*anständige*”] philosophers who have the courage to “stand in opposition to the mendaciousness of millennia [“*gegen die Verlogenheit von Jahrtausenden im Gegensatz weiss*”]. Yet, he also claims that his truth is “terrible” [“*Furchtbar*”] (BWN 782; KSA 6, 365-366). I argue that in this case, “terrible” equates to “dissonant.” That is, deriving truth from a dissonant epistemology presents philosophers with frightening, discordant, and uncomfortable truths.

Nietzsche’s use of the word “metaphysics” in this passage is of paramount importance, as it is unconventional, controversial, and runs against the accepted practices of many branches of philosophy. The text carefully eschews the responsibility of identifying a *specific kind of metaphysics*. Does Nietzsche refer to Hegelian metaphysics? Kantian? Platonic? Cartesian? Judeo-Christian? If the answer is to be the latter, then *what kind* of Judeo-Christian metaphysics—Augustinian, Gnostic, or Talmudic? The answer seems to be “all of the above.” Although Nietzsche generally identifies Platonic thought as the most powerful, influential, and even audacious of ancient metaphysical systems, there are times in which he focuses his critiques upon Judaism and Christianity, and other times in which he seems to conflate all three systems. Sometimes, Nietzsche even tosses more “isms” into

the picture—Buddhism for example. This is a very typical strategy for Nietzsche. As I discuss in the following chapters, Nietzsche conflates narratives of many kinds in a wide variety of contexts in order to trouble the reader's assumptions about conventional and predominant epistemes, concepts, and symbols. For example, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche parodies and pilfers a wide variety of mythologies, literary texts, and religious ideologies in the construction of his myth of Zarathustra (see Chapter Three), but by doing so, he provokes the reader to reconsider the meaning of "redemption" and "pity." As Nietzsche claims in *Ecce Homo*, he is far less interested in attacking people or criticizing historical facts than he is in inspiring his readers to overcome metaphysics, and therefore overcome modernity (see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of this topic).

Therefore, when I discuss "metaphysics" in this study, I refer to Nietzsche's critique of otherworldly philosophies in general. Any system of thinking that privileges an abstract, objective, and intractably rigid authority for understanding, truth, and interpretation is "metaphysical" for Nietzsche. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche's fictional character provides a useful metaphor for "this-worldly" and "otherworldly." In an aphorism entitled "On the Afterworldly" ["*Von den Hinterweltlern*"], Zarathustra describes the consequences of privileging the "afterworld" as a central authority of meaning. He describes two realms, a "this-sided" [*diesseitig*] realm and a "that-sided" [*jenseitig*] realm (KSA 4, 35-38). One represents the sensual world of everyday life and experience, and the other represents a world that exists *after* this world or *outside* of this life. The most obvious connotation of this imagery would be the Christian concept of the afterworld, however, in the broad context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, it refers to any type of thought that is influenced by an epistemology which privileges a world free of the sensuality, pain, suffering, and the unpredictability of everyday life. "That-worldly" thinkers denigrate the significance of the physical and sensual world of everyday life.

It is difficult to equate non-metaphysical (this-worldly) philosophy with conventionally accepted notions of "materialism" without evoking the philosophies of

thinkers such as Thomas Hobbes, Francis Bacon, or Karl Marx, all of whom are associated with materialism and have had profound objections to metaphysics. This is because Nietzsche would have nevertheless considered them metaphysicians. Nietzsche certainly admired aspects of Hobbes and Bacon's ideas, but considered their rational-scientific thought to be metaphysical, as they attempted to fashion political and social ideologies that apotheosize scientific principles that Nietzsche believed to be abstractions.¹⁴ Despite Marx and Engels' emphasis on sensuality and materialism, Nietzsche regarded them as metaphysicians as well, as they attempt to forge a system of social organization that is totalistic and relies upon the calculability of human emotion and behaviour. In this regard, Nietzsche resembles the protagonist of Dostoevsky's novella, *Notes from Underground* (1864), who vociferously attacks nearly every modern system of social, scientific, and philosophical thought for attempting to transform man into a "piano key" (22). This metaphor refers to the predetermined and calculable function of a piano key. The underground man believes that modernity's manifold "isms" and ideas about how to live and think seek to force human beings to live according to the rules of abstract mathematical equations and criteria—that is, that human beings can and should function in a predictable and orderly fashion like keys for piano playing. Both Nietzsche and the Underground Man believe that humanity's existence as an unpredictable, suffering, and passionate individual must never be subjugated to a system based on universal abstractions.

Nietzsche seems to have a dual purpose in conflating various types of philosophy in this passage from *The Gay Science*. He emphasizes the ubiquity of metaphysics and the extent of its proliferation in systems of thought throughout the diverse domains of philosophy, aesthetics, and science. In addition, he clearly intends to confound the reader's understanding of "metaphysics." Nietzsche maintains that it is appropriate to coningle and conflate a manifold of systems and worldviews that privilege a metaphysical world as the

¹⁴ See Lampert's *Nietzsche and Modern Times* (1993) for a detailed discussion of Nietzsche's critique of the metaphysical underpinnings of modern science, especially pages 143-272.

central authority for constructing meaning, value, and truths. For example, mathematics, logic, and Christianity are all metaphysical for Nietzsche because they privilege abstractions that transcend the sensual world of reality. This is a key rhetorical strategy in Nietzsche's texts, which he frequently employs to provoke readers into rethinking their basic understanding of different terms and concepts.

Although Nietzsche's use of the word "metaphysics"—as well as other words such as "justice," "metaphor," "system," and "truth"—sharply contrasts with conventional usage (in both the nineteenth century and the present day), it is important to recognize the larger context for his strategy. These words represent *values* in Nietzsche's system—that is, signifiers for different epistemes of understanding the world. For example, the word "truth" signifies a modality for understanding the facticity and veracity of a phenomenon and the word "humanism" signifies a modality for understanding what it means to be a human being. However, the "value" of humanism and truth can have a variety of different meanings. Throughout Nietzsche's works, Nietzsche rethinks and rehabilitates these ubiquitous and powerful values for use in more life-affirming contexts. In his famous 1873 essay entitled "Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense" [*Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne*], for example, Nietzsche introduces a new episteme for understanding truth. In the first few paragraphs of the aphorism, Nietzsche harshly criticizes the existence of objective, irrefutable, and absolute truths. However, it is not long before he asks his readers to consider a *new* episteme for understanding truth:

What then is truth? A mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations, that have been poetically and rhetorically augmented, embellished, transposed, and after long use, appear to a people to be firm, canonical, and obligatory [...]."
(trans. mine)¹⁵

¹⁵ Was ist also Wahrheit? Ein bewegliches Heer von Metaphern, Metonymien, Anthropomorphismen kurz eine Summe von menschlichen Relationen, die, poetisch und rhetorisch gesteigert, übertragen, geschmückt wurden, und die nach langem Gebrauche einem Volke fest, canonisch und verbindlich dünken [...]. (KSA 1, 880)

Metaphors are in a state of constant and violent transformation and change. Nietzsche offers his readers a radical and subversive notion of truth. It is based on a very different epistemology than those that derive truth from a central, metaphysical authority of meaning. Nietzsche rehabilitates truth to signify a plurality of metaphors that are in a constant state of flux.¹⁶ They represent an “army” that is constantly on the move and ready to attack. These attacks might represent civil disturbances within the truth itself, or challenges to the metaphorical composition of another “truth.” However, Nietzsche’s rehabilitated notion of truth functions in a way that is remarkably similar to abstract and empirically based truths in conventional philosophical and scientific methods. That is, a dissonant, metaphorical truth functions as a basic unit in a dissonant epistemology in a way that *parallels* abstract truths in a metaphysical epistemology. “Truth” is still a core concept in Nietzsche’s philosophy, but its foundation is entirely different. Instead of using truths that represent “metaphysical” truths, they represent musical, “dissonant” truths. This is but one example of the many “revaluations” that Nietzsche’s depicts in his work. All of them “rehabilitate” metaphysical concepts for deployment in a dynamic and life-affirming, dissonant epistemology.

At the end of aphorism 344 from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche voices his concern that humanity’s persistent refusal to abandon the lies represented by the dead god will prevent them from seeking new and fertile ground for the production of knowledge and “truths.” The consequence is that humanity might continue to rely upon metaphysical abstraction as the foundation of truth, albeit completely disingenuously. And out of sheer mockery for life itself, it will actually worship mendacity! Humanity would continue to worship God, but not because of its faith in the metaphysical truths it represents. On the contrary, humanity would worship it because God *is a lie*—a lie to which humanity has remained faithful for

¹⁶ The inspiration for my use of the word “rehabilitation” throughout this text, is inspired by a short chapter in Sarah Kofman’s book *Nietzsche and Metaphor* [*Nietzsche et la métaphore*] entitled “The Rehabilitation of Metaphor” [*Réhabilitation de la métaphore*] (17; 30). I discuss Kofman’s book throughout this study.

millennia. This is certainly a sad prospect. It represents the apotheosis of a fictional, transcendental world. Nietzsche, however, offers his readers the opportunity to reevaluate philosophy—to completely rehabilitate it—through the foundational concept of musical dissonance. In Nietzsche’s texts, musical dissonance supplants the otherworldly, metaphysical foundation that has dominated philosophy for thousands of years. It represents a new epistemology with new truths that are not *disingenuous* lies, but are in fact faithful to the spirit of the processes that underpin everything in the universe.

Overcoming Metaphysics through Musical Dissonance

For humanity to overcome metaphysics, it must rethink its relationship to the universe in which the foundation for existence is a dissonant interplay of many centres of force. Humanity must learn to cultivate its relationship to the dissonant forces of the will to power and actually *foster* its growth—in all aspects of its culture, society, and science. Humanity must gradually remake itself from the bottom up.

In the 1885 fragment from *The Will to Power*, Nietzsche adamantly states that this *universal process* is also an inherently personal and *individual* process. While this might appear to be a contradiction between two sets of interests or goals, it actually represents a pluralistic goal. Nietzsche begins by claiming that “the world”—as it is to *him*—is a “monster of energy.” This claim is not only “subjective,” it is also specular. Nietzsche finds his truth in his “mirror,” and it is through the medium of this mirror that Nietzsche intends to share this truth with his readers. Therefore, Nietzsche’s understanding of the world derives inspiration from his self-examination. This accords entirely with his model of the universe, which establishes a connection between the self, others, and the world through the common denominator of the will to power. Nietzsche invites his readers to look into *his* mirror, but also look into their own mirrors—to literally gaze into the “light” that exists within all human beings and every object. This light does not represent an abstract ideal or god, but simply the will to power.

In Nietzsche's writings, the most important aspect of his "philosophy" typically involves the triangulation between the deeply personal and subjective, the opinions and thoughts of his readers, and ideas that have a potentially "universal" significance. Nietzsche begins and ends the aphorism by emphasizing that his observations about the universe reflect *his* world—a world that he discovered through an act of self-examination. In his autobiographical work, *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche claims that the "revaluation of all values"—a phrase that arguably describes the overall project of his writings—is his "formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity" [*Formel für einen Akt höchster Selbstbesinnung der Menschheit*] which Nietzsche claims has become "flesh and genius" [*Fleisch und Genie*] in him (BWN 777; KSA 6, 365). This phrase emphasizes that the revaluation of all values does not begin with an abstract philosophical system, but (at least potentially) with *him*! However, it can only continue with a "supreme self-examination" on the part of each individual member of humanity.

Certainly, the will to power is not "objective" in the sense that it can be measured using empirical methods or that it represents a truth value of sorts. The will to power represents the fabric of the universe and everything that is contained within it. It is real, palpable, important, and a potential source of incredible energy. Yet, it is something that we cannot understand using conventional methods of scientific inquiry. Humanity can only understand it from a *human perspective*, which for Nietzsche is completely reliant upon *metaphor*.

In his early essay, "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense," Nietzsche actually claims that metaphor constitutes the foundation for the most *primal of human drives*: the "metaphor drive." Nietzsche resolutely states: "The drive toward the cultivation of metaphors [*Metapherbildung*] is the fundamental drive of human beings, which one cannot for a single instant rationalize away, for one would thereby rationalize away man himself"

(trans. mine, c.f. *TNR* 121).¹⁷ Throughout this study, I demonstrate that the *process* that governs the metaphor drive is identical to the “dissonance” that represents the extraordinarily sublime and foundational “will to power.” To create a metaphor is to create images in words, sounds, the plastic arts, or one of many possible modes of expression that depict humanity’s understanding of the world. As Nietzsche puts it, metaphor “continually manifests an ardent desire to refashion the world which presents itself to waking man, so that it will be as colorful, irregular, lacking in results and coherence, charming, and eternally new as the world of dreams” (121).¹⁸ Although metaphors may congeal into “concepts” and “truths,” they are, underneath the surface, highly dynamic storehouses of potential energy. In the same way in which Nietzsche describes the constant creation and destruction of “consonance” in the sea of dissonance that constitutes the universe through the will to power, “concepts” and truths will unceasingly transform and disrupt.

Nietzsche’s description of the metaphor drive as a “drive toward the *cultivation* of metaphors” clearly indicates not only a drive to create and use metaphors, but to continually foster and *nurture* them. It is clear, however, that for Nietzsche, the process of cultivation must accord with the fundamental processes that govern the universe. Therefore, to cultivate metaphors is to increase the dissonance that defines them and the dissonant relationships that exist between them, as described in Nietzsche’s famous definition of truth as a “mobile *army*” of metaphors. Nietzsche’s early works outline a theory of language and semiotics that not only prefigures his descriptions of the will to power, but accords with the theories of musical dissonance portrayed in his early works.

¹⁷ Jener Trieb zur Metapherbildung, jene Fundamentaltrieb des Menschen, den man keinen Augenblick wegrechnen kann, weil damit den Menschen selbst wegrechnen würde. (*KSA* 1, 887)

¹⁸ [...] fortwährend zeigt er die Begierde, die vorhandene Welt des wachen Menschen so bunt unregelmässig folgenlos unzusammenhängend, reizvoll und ewig neu zu gestalten, wie es die Welt des Traumes ist. (*KSA* 1, 887)

A New Type of System for a Musical Epistemology

In his book entitled *Nietzsche's System*, John Richardson suggests that the final aphorism from *The Will to Power* seems to “announce an ontology—a truth about the essence of things” (8)—a statement that explicitly links Nietzsche to metaphysics. Richardson spends little time discrediting other interpretations of Nietzsche, and instead comes to the conclusion that the many different “Nietzsches” described by the philosopher’s numerous critics—including Heidegger, Derrida, Schacht, and Solomon—reflect the many different aspects of Nietzsche’s perspectival thought. Many critics use the term “perspectivalism” to describe Nietzsche’s thought, a tendency that stems in part from a note that Kaufmann anthologized into his edition of *The Will to Power*. Nietzsche claims that although the world is “knowable,” it “has no meaning behind it, but countless meanings. — ‘Perspectivism’” [“Soweit überhaupt das Wort, Erkenntniß’ Sinn hat, ist die Welt erkennbar: aber sie ist anders deutbar, sie hat keinen Sinn hinter sich, sondern unzählige Sinne, Perspektivismus’”] (WP 267; KSA 12, 315[7:60]). As Robert Solomon underscores in his contribution to *The Penguin Dictionary of Philosophy*, “Nietzsche’s perspectivism has been taken to absurd extremes, for instance by those who claim that Nietzsche rejected the very idea that any one perspective or ‘interpretation’ is better than any other, which he surely did not believe” (418). Nietzsche’s use of the term “perspectivism” in *The Will to Power*, has been—like many other terms in his lexicon—taken out of context and distorted. In this case, many readers have interpreted Nietzsche’s statement to be an endorsement of relativism, effectively ignoring Nietzsche’s belief that everything in the universe—things, living beings, and ideas—all have a constantly changing order and rank determined by their respective abilities to discharge their “will to power.”

According to Richardson, it is not necessary to “choose” between the many different “Nietzsches” portrayed by the critics. For him, the two most important modern interpretations of Nietzsche’s works fall into those that represent Nietzsche as a “perspectivalist” and those persuaded by Heidegger’s incredibly influential and dramatic

claim that Nietzsche is Western philosophy's "last metaphysician." Richardson suggests that perhaps he is both (see Richardson 6):

My own response has more affinity with the first of these alternatives, though it seeks a route between the two. Unsurprisingly, we find that both terms have to be understood differently—more complexly and also more "weakly"—than we've so far done. Nietzsche's thought includes both a metaphysics and a perspectivism, once these are more complexly grasped. But I argue that the metaphysics is basic: it's an ontology of perspectives. (11)

This passage suggests that Nietzsche's so-called "perspectivism" functions as a sort of ersatz metaphysics. That is, for Nietzsche, the "perspectives" and the subjectivities of individual human beings exist *outside* the world of the purely physical and material. Although Richardson's suggestion that Nietzsche's perspectivism is metaphysical is somewhat tenuous, his claim that Nietzsche's *ontology* draws upon a variety of seemingly conflicting "systems" is critical. Richardson justifies his assertion that Nietzsche's philosophy is metaphysical by claiming that Nietzsche "contradicts himself" by "imput[ing] a non-perspectival truth to his perspectivist thesis itself" (11). However, we can only accept Richardson's hypothesis if we can find any evidence that Nietzsche ever intended to "impute" or even suggest that there is such a thing as a *non-perspectival truth* or that he ever proposed a perspectivist thesis. Like many critics, Richardson assumes that Nietzsche still respects the standard definitions and axioms that dominate mainstream scientific and philosophical thought. On a positive note, however, Richardson's argument accentuates the importance of the dissonant interplay between a wide variety of narratives and "perspectives" in Nietzsche's epistemology. Yet, whether or not this amounts to a metaphysics is a question that I will explore in this work. I argue that it does not.

Richardson's claim that Nietzsche's perspectivism equates to an ersatz metaphysics is untenable as Nietzsche does not envision a dichotomy between the material world and the aesthetic world—or as he describes it in *The Birth of Tragedy* and other early works, the world of *semblance* [*Schein*]. This does not mean that Nietzsche equates "reality," physicality, and materiality with the *abstract*, as Nietzsche associates abstractions with the

“otherworldly.” Although “abstractions” are natural products of the human imagination and qualify as semblance, Nietzsche’s concerns relate to the specific role that abstractions play in philosophy. Nietzsche fears that abstractions are simply taken too *literally* and accepted as axiomatic, absolute facts that transcend the rules that govern *this world*. These abstractions include Judeo-Christian morality, and scientific and philosophical systems. As Nietzsche describes in “Truth and Lies” and the *Untimely Meditations*, there are no benefits to absolute “truths” of any kind (that is, historical truths, philosophical truths, or semantic truths), as the belief in absolute truths represents a complete disregard for the process of *truth creation*. Anything that involves the use of human thought is inherently metaphorical. It is inherently bound to the constrictions of subjective thought, which is the most important and only truly “real” thought.

Some might raise the objection that the will to power is not only metaphysical, but also a Kantian abstraction. These objections are well founded in many respects, as in his later works, Nietzsche describes the will to power in a way that seems to conjure images of metaphysical ideas and unknowable things-in-themselves. These images do indeed have their affinity with Judeo-Christian and Platonic discourse, and Kantian metaphysics (see Kaufmann *Nietzsche*, esp. pages 72-95). Yet, these qualities are bereft of the rigid abstractions of their predecessors. Nietzsche does not describe the will to power as a “thing” that can or should be known as Kant does. For Nietzsche, it is a process that can apply to a virtually infinite set of “things,” animate or inanimate, tangible or aesthetic, known or unknown. Yet, the notion that humanity does exist with respect to a “truth” that can only be understood from a purely human point of view is indeed Kantian. The argument that Nietzsche posits a realm that transcends reality is seductive. However, it does not stand up to scrutiny for a wide variety of reasons, not the least of which is the fact that *everything* is subject to the will to power, or in the case of his early works, “the primal unity” or “Dionysian truths,” which constitute the fabric of the one and only universe.

Simply put, there is no “otherworld” in Nietzsche’s work. It is impossible to have a metaphysics if there is no transcendental, metaphysical realm.

Perhaps one of the most important messages of Nietzsche’s writings on the will to power is that the finite and the infinite are not necessarily antipodal—that is, it could very well be that the boundaries that Nietzsche places upon the universe are entirely indefinite, unknown, and undiscovered. The boundaries of the universe may *seem* infinite from the vantage point of human cognition, and represent a quantity that is unknown and unknowable, but in actuality still represent a *certain* quantity of force, albeit one that cannot be measured using a specific method of scientific inquiry.

The Emancipation of Dissonance

Nietzsche’s discussion of dissonance in his early works is ambiguous. He discusses it in a wide variety of contexts. The most informative of these is in the beginning of the twenty-fourth and final aphorism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, where he declares: “If we could imagine a becoming-human of dissonance—and what else is the human being?” [*“Könnten wir uns eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz denken — und was ist sonst der Mensch?”*] (trans. mine, cf. BWN 143; KSA 1, 155). In the preceding, twenty-third aphorism, Nietzsche suggests that musical dissonance is the key to understanding the world as an aesthetic phenomenon. This passage provides his readers with information about the importance of “music” and “dissonance” as a unified concept in understanding the universe:

In this sense, it is precisely the tragic myth that has to convince us that even the ugly and disharmonic are part of an artistic game that will in the eternal amplitude of its pleasure plays with itself [*mit sich selbst spielt*]. But this primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp, and there is only one direct way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of *musical dissonance* [emphasis Nietzsche’s]. Quite generally, *only music, placed beside the world, can give us an idea of what is meant by the justification of the world as an aesthetic phenomenon* [emphasis mine]. The joy aroused by the tragic myth has the same origin as the joyous sensation of dissonance in music. The Dionysian, with its primordial joy

experienced even in pain, is the common source of music and tragic myth.
(BWN 141)¹⁹

Nietzsche posits musical dissonance as a method of *creating knowledge* and gaining understanding about the world. In addition, musical dissonance facilitates humanity's ability to actually justify its existence. Our senses, tools, machines, and intellects provide us with raw information about the world. However, this information only becomes truly useful and enlivening when we juxtapose it with "musical dissonance," the "disharmonic," and the "ugly" ("*hässlich*": ugly, gross, deformed)—the last of which is clearly a metaphor for that which defies consonance in aesthetics, philosophy, and music. The process of musical dissonance provides us with a framework and system to evaluate, understand, and order our knowledge about the world. That is, it provides the basis for an epistemology, albeit a very unconventional and radical epistemology. Just because Nietzsche labels this knowledge "aesthetic" does not mean that it is not philosophical or "real."

The knowledge gained by juxtaposing the world with dissonance is very different from consonant knowledge—that is, knowledge whose foundation is based on metaphysical and scientific abstractions. It provides little certainty and comfort, but rather a conflagration of joy and pain, each of which seems to be bound to the other, and which together, constitute a tragic ecstasy that Nietzsche believes represents a reflection of a primeval, universal state of being.

As indicated in the final passage of *The Will to Power*, and passages throughout the works that I explore in this study, Nietzsche maintains that dissonance represents the

¹⁹ [...] in welchem Sinne uns gerade der tragische Mythos zu überzeugen hat, dass selbst das Hässliche und Disharmonische ein künstlerisches Spiel ist, welches der Wille, in der ewigen Fülle seiner Lust, mit sich selbst spielt. Dieses schwer zu fassende Urphänomen der dionysischen Kunst wird aber auf directem Wege einzig verständlich und unmittelbar erfasst in der wunderbaren Bedeutung der *musikalischen Dissonanz*: wie überhaupt die Musik, neben die Welt hingestellt, allein einen Begriff davon geben kann, was unter der Rechtfertigung der Welt als eines aesthetischen Phänomens zu verstehen ist. Die Lust, die der tragische Mythos erzeugt, hat eine gleiche Heimat, wie die lustvolle Empfindung der Dissonanz in der Musik. Das Dionysische, mit seiner selbst am Schmerz percipirten Urlust, ist der gemeinsame Geburtsschooss der Musik und des tragischen Mythos. (KSA 1, 152)

natural state of affairs in the universe. “The joy of concord” is *not* a resolution; it is not home (see pages 27-29). The “centre” of Nietzsche’s musical epistemology is entirely diffuse; it can be found everywhere and nowhere. In this way, the “dissonance” that forms the fabric of the universe reflects Arnold Schoenberg’s goal of creating a style of musical composition that is not structured around a tonal centre (or even a *group* of tonal centres).

The process of harnessing the will to power is tantamount to harnessing the powers of musical dissonance. Arnold Schoenberg, the inventor of twelve-tone composition—a system completely reliant upon dissonance as its driving force—refers to the cultivation and exploitation of the aesthetic potential of dissonance in musical compositions as the “emancipation of the dissonance.” In his essay entitled “Composition with Twelve Tones” (1941) published many years after he developed the twelve-tone method, Schoenberg claims that his system of twelve-tone composition relies upon dissonance to facilitate *comprehension* on the part of the listener.²⁰ This occurs in a way that parallels the manner in which composers of tonal music rely upon *consonance* as an organizing force. The twelve-tone system requires the composer to use all the notes of the chromatic scale, without regard to the hierarchical power of a tonal centre, or “key.” Schoenberg argues that musical dissonance is a means to gain a more sophisticated understanding of the world. These comments accord with Nietzsche’s claims that dissonance is the only way to make “Dionysian art” “intelligible”:

What distinguishes dissonances from consonances is not a greater or lesser degree of beauty, but a greater or lesser degree of *comprehensibility*. In my *Harmonielehre* I presented the theory that dissonant tones appear later among the overtones, for which reason the ear is less intimately acquainted with them. This phenomenon does not justify such sharply contradictory terms as concord and discord. Closer acquaintance with the more remote consonances—the dissonances, that is—gradually eliminated the difficulty of comprehension and finally admitted not only the emancipation of dominant and other seventh chords [...].

²⁰ Schoenberg wrote this essay in English. It was published in an anthology of Schoenberg’s essays entitled *Style and Idea* (published in 1950 and later translated into German under the title *Stil und Gedanke*).

The term *emancipation of the dissonance* refers to its comprehensibility, which is considered equivalent to the consonance's comprehensibility. A style based on this premise treats dissonances like consonances and renounces a tonal centre. By avoiding the establishment of a key, modulation is excluded, since modulation means leaving an established tonality and establishing *another* tonality. (216-217)

Thus, for Schoenberg, musical dissonance inspires people to *think* and *comprehend* the world in an entirely different way. According to Schoenberg, if we allow dissonance to supplant consonance as the central authority of all meaning in a system of composition, we will not defer to tonal centres to derive meaning and comprehensibility anymore. Instead, we will derive meaning from dissonant relationships between tones, which in a tonal system, are relegated to the margins of meaning, as they represent a departure from the centre. However, now, the "centre is everywhere"—that is, distributed equally, in theory, among all twelve tones of the chromatic scale.

Schoenberg contends that composers have been gradually employing more and more dissonance for several hundred years. Schoenberg describes how a phenomenon called "extended tonality" developed over the course of time (216). Extended tonality includes the "simple dissonances" ("Twelve-tone Composition" 207) such as diminished triads and seventh chords that are characteristic of Beethoven's late compositions, the extreme modulations and chromaticism of Wagner, as well as the "impressionistic" harmonies characteristic of Debussy's compositions. Schoenberg argues that these composer's works reflect increasing doubts as to the *relevance* and *reality* of a tonal centre.

Referring to the works of Wagner and Debussy, Schoenberg suggests that it "soon became doubtful whether such a root [tonality] remained the centre to which every harmony and harmonic succession must be referred" (216). Schoenberg maintains that the daring and experimental harmonies of these composers reflect more than a desire to create new methods of composition, but an *incredulity* toward the authority and primacy of the metanarrative of tonality. The creation of wild modulations and harmonies that disorient the listener's sense of a tonal centre are not intended to confuse listeners, but to make them

question the relevance of tonality in modern music. Schoenberg maintains that the modernism of Debussy, however, takes this process of “extending” tonality too far. He claims that Debussy’s harmonies are “non-functional” (216). His music no longer draws attention to the potentially shocking power of dissonance, as Wagner’s did. Essentially, Debussy’s music made dissonance appear banal. This greatly annoys Schoenberg.

Perhaps the meaning of the banality that Schoenberg perceives in the music of Debussy is simply that tonality—as the foundation for a system of musical composition—is no longer viable. The lack of meaning and functionality in Debussy’s music is a wake-up cry to younger composers, such as Schoenberg, that an alternative to tonality must be found. Thus, the emancipation of dissonance actually inverts the criteria by which music generates meaning. In traditional harmony, consonance circumscribes and imposes order upon the dissonance. The hierarchy of tonal harmony that accords greater status to “consonant” intervals, and encourages listeners to associate the absence of dissonance with greater *comprehensibility*, suggests that consonance represents a state of normalcy and propriety. According to Schoenberg, true dissonance does not actually exist in a tonal system of composition! Schoenberg claims that dissonances are simply “remote consonances.” Dissonances merely represent a departure from a norm based on a tonal centre. But what if that fixed and unitary centre were to suddenly disappear? How would music signify meaning? Would it be possible to construct a reliable foundation of meaning in a system without a “centre”—tonal or otherwise? If so, is it possible to use this system as the foundation of an epistemology that humanity can use to create new works of art, philosophies, systems of social organization, and science?

The gradual acceptance of “dissonance” into a system of tonal composition definitely represents a gradual “emancipation” of certain dissonances from the prohibitions imposed by stricter forms of tonal harmony, but the phenomenon of “dissonance” itself is still enthralled to tonality. All of the modernist forms of composition that I cite above are still essentially conservative, in that they facilitate the construction of harmonies, which respect

the primacy of a tonal centre. The tonal centre might be ambiguous, or there might be several tonal centres in a piece, but the hegemony of a tonal centre as the foundation for musical composition remains unchallenged.

Schoenberg tells us “the emancipation of the dissonance in twelve-tone music refers to its comprehensibility” (217). It seems clear that the notion of “comprehensibility” that occupies such prominence in this sentence refers to the manner in which we derive meaning from twelve-tone music. Instead of deriving meaning by critiquing the elements of a musical composition by how much or how little they respect the hegemony of a tonal centre, we must learn to derive meaning by respecting the primacy of the lack of a centre—that is “pure dissonance.”

According to Schoenberg, the main difference between using consonance and dissonance as criteria for measuring the degree of something’s comprehensibility is the quality of thinking that it promotes. Consonance promotes a very limited and circumscribed mode of critique, while dissonance is inherently *difficult*. Schoenberg implies that consonance has made us intellectually lazy, and that the emancipation of dissonance might very well be a curative for this laziness.

The removal of a tonal centre from a musical composition helps to ensure the sharpness of the listener’s ability to think critically. Schoenberg claims that tonality is a method that is a “means to an end”: the end is to make what “happens easily comprehensible” (“Opinion or Insight?” 260). It is certainly not difficult to promote “easiness” when there is a central reference for meaning. But the mere act of positing and insisting that there is—or at least can and should be—no centre *or* centres of meaning, definitely does not promote easiness of any kind. Even if the day comes—as Schoenberg claims it will—when humanity is able to listen to truly dissonant music without considering it weird or unnatural, the mode of critique and cognition promoted by the system will not be an “easy” one. This period will simply be a time in which humanity readily and

willingly embraces *difficulty*—an attitude that accords rather well with Nietzsche’s “tragic” worldview.

In a traditional composition in which harmonies and tonalities are organized around a tonal centre, a hierarchy is established in which every tone is ranked according to its level of dissonance—or conversely, the “remoteness” of consonance—with respect to the tonic. Contrastingly, Schoenberg claims that the notes in a twelve-tone row are “*Related Only with One Another*” [capitals and italics Schoenberg] (“Twelve Tones” 218). That is, the absence of a tonal centre emancipates the dissonant relationships in such a way that they constitute the organizing power in a musical composition. Dissonances will continue to exist, but we will not interpret or judge the extremity or quality of dissonance by the degree to which it undermines or subverts a composition with a tonal centre. Free and “emancipated” dissonances will draw attention to relationships between *each other* and the various structures that constitute a tone row.

Schoenberg emphatically asserts that the twelve-tone row “is in no way identical with the chromatic scale” (218). This is a bold proclamation, as the chromatic scale merely represents the series of twelve tones that constitutes a full octave in the diatonic scale. They form the foundation of tonal harmony in most forms of Western music. However, Schoenberg insists that the tone row is *not* a scale, as it does not necessarily privilege a descending or ascending order of tones. The ordering of the tones is entirely arbitrary. The term “chromaticism” cannot apply to the twelve-tone row, as from Schoenberg’s perspective, “chromaticism” refers to a style of composition in which dissonant tones are *grafted* to an underlying tonality. In the twelve-tone system, the composer never grafts tones to an underlying foundation, as the “foundation” of the twelve-tone system represents a *lack of centre*. The foundation of the twelve-tone system can only be described as a set of discordant *processes*. In Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system, dissonances do not represent a departure from the norm—they *are* the norm.

Schoenberg neither denies the “naturalness” or beauty of tonality, nor does he claim that the twelve-tone system is superior or even *more natural* or beautiful than tonality. In “Opinion or Insight?,” Schoenberg concedes that “tonality’s origin is found—and rightly so—in the laws of sound” (258). But this does not preclude the existence of *other laws*, perhaps even more fundamental and powerful laws that are available to the composer. Schoenberg continues:

But there are other laws that music obeys, apart from these and the laws that result from the combination of time and sound: namely, those governing the working of our minds. This latter forces us to find a particular kind of layout for those elements that make for cohesion—and to make them come to the fore, often enough and with enough plasticity—so that in the small amount of time granted us by the flow of the events, we can recognize the figures, grasp the way they hang together, and comprehend their meaning. (259)

While Schoenberg’s cryptic statement that music must obey the forces that govern the “workings of our minds” does not necessarily imply that a state of “pure dissonance” is *natural*, it certainly suggests that we cannot simply write-off the decentralization of harmony in music as “artificial.” Schoenberg does not elaborate on the nature of the “workings of our minds” in this essay, but it is clear that he regards tonality and dissonance as two methods of ordering relationships between tones. Each method of ordering tones and harmonies appears widely throughout nature; the realm of sound consists of an infinite amount of tonalities and dissonances that resound simultaneously. It is our choice to construct compositions exclusively upon tonality, or a group of tonalities, and colour them with dissonance if we so choose. However, it is also an equally valid option to chose an entirely different approach: to exclude all tonality and create a foundation based upon pure dissonance.

We might choose to employ dissonance as the foundation for a composition and embellish it with tonality. That is, instead of grafting dissonance onto consonance, we could easily graft consonance onto dissonance. While Schoenberg chose to concentrate his efforts on composing music that excluded tonality, other composers devoted to twelve-tone composition and other forms of “atonality” have freely comingled dissonant and consonant

harmonic structures. A particularly significant example is Alban Berg's *Violin Concerto*, which is based upon a tone row that contains four triads—two major and two minor—as well as a series of four whole tones. The triads represent tonal harmonic relationships.²¹

Thus, Schoenberg's motivation for creating the twelve-tone system is not necessarily an aesthetic or ideological statement against tonality, but a statement advocating the inclusion of more dissonance in music. A passage in "Opinion or Insight?" suggests that Schoenberg's primary concern is simply that we shift our attention away from tonality and consonance, and stop relying upon it as a central authority for creating meaning and knowledge—the highly regulated and restricted twelve-tone system might be a tool to help us achieve this goal:

In the emancipation of the dissonance there was a final step that could be taken, and it has frequently been condemned—a step, as I myself believe, which has excluded consonances from music for only a short period, but one which I have shown to lie along the path followed by the evolution of music, through the works of our greatly revered predecessors. (261)

This passage, which stylistically speaking, bears a great deal of similarity to that of a political manifesto, implies that Schoenberg believes that the totalistic restrictions inherent to the twelve-tone system are necessary to facilitate the development of modern music—and perhaps that of philosophy as well. The following lines consist of six numbered paragraphs that outline the musical, aesthetic, and philosophical justification of the twelve-tone system in a historical context, and with respect to his major work, the *Harmonielehre*. They bear an ominous similarity to the coercive measures that Marx and Engels recommend at the end of the second essay of *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) entitled "Proletarians and Communists" (80-81). Marx and Engels list drastic measures that the Communist Party must implement after the successful overthrow of the bourgeois class. These ten measures will result in a temporary dictatorship of the proletariat and will ensure the complete dissolution of

²¹ These topics are discussed in many studies, including George Perle's classic study *Serial Composition and Atonality: An Introduction to the Music of Schoenberg, Berg, and Webern*, specifically, the chapter entitled "Simultaneity" (pages 84-110).

capitalist institutions. They will not be necessary forever, but must be followed until the central authority of meaning represented by the metanarrative of capitalism is dissolved.

In point number four, Schoenberg insists that the “state” represented by the twelve-tone system is “nothing new,” and merely represents what Wagner and his forbearers have been attempting to develop all along. The twelve-tone system merely represents “a new and strong enough cohesive force to bring all that happens to a common denominator”—the denominator represented by a state of pure dissonance.

In his fourth point, Schoenberg attacks the appeal to “nature” raised by his critics when they claim that the twelve-tone system is too artificial:

The appeal to its [tonality’s] origin in nature can be refuted if one recalls that just as tones pull toward triads, and triads toward tonality, gravity pulls us down toward the earth; yet an airplane carries us up away from it. A product can be apparently artificial without being unnatural, for it is based on the laws of nature to just the same degree as those that seem primary.
(262)

This statement does not assert Schoenberg’s belief that a decentred system is better or more natural than a tonal one. Schoenberg seems to concur that tonality does indeed *seem* more natural from both a historical and scientific standpoint—but both these perspectives show just one side of the story. Gravity might seem to be a universal constant that represents normality—but airplanes, balloons, and even the presence of birds help to demonstrate that the law of gravity can be broken with ingenuity and effort. Perhaps humanity can achieve even greater accomplishments if people begin to consider the universe from a perspective in which gravity is merely one of many laws. If engineers were to develop a system of propulsion that attempts to completely avoid gravity—and not fight it—humanity might achieve even greater innovation in the field of transportation. As Nietzsche emphasizes in *The Gay Science*, we spend too much time worrying about doing what is “natural” and might do better exploring the *unnatural*. By doing so, we might discover new and previously unimagined types of knowledge (see aphorism 355 [GS 300-302; KSA 3, 593-595]).

My intention is to underscore the pioneering nature of Schoenberg's project, and his belief that dissonance does not represent a force that opposes tonality. Rather, it represents a complementary force, which can potentially alter humanity's worldview. As Nietzsche asserts in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the "fraternal union" ["*Bruderbund*"] (BWN 130; KSA 1, 140) between the *consonant* forces of the Apollonian and the *dissonant* forces of the Dionysian should form the foundation of aesthetics and epistemology. The same axiom might hold sway in Schoenberg's writings on twelve-tone harmony. The emancipation of the dissonance might very well refer to a reconciliation between the previously overvalued and privileged force of consonance, with its "brother" dissonance—a brother that in all likelihood represents the more primeval, rowdy sibling.

In "Composition with Twelve Tones" Schoenberg claims that all artists—"whether one calls oneself conservative or revolutionary"—"must be convinced of the infallibility of one's own fantasy and one must believe in one's own inspiration" (218). To realize this goal, an artist must

[...] wish to know *consciously* the laws and rules which govern the forms which he has conceived "as in a dream." Strongly convincing as this dream may have been, the conviction that these new sounds obey the laws of nature and of our manner of thinking—the conviction that order, logic, comprehensibility and form cannot be present without obedience to such laws—forces the composer along the road of exploration. He must find, if not laws or rules, at least ways to justify the dissonant character of these harmonies and their successions. (218)

It is unfortunate that Schoenberg does not provide a citation for the phrase that he places inside quotation marks: "as in a dream." Although Schoenberg could be alluding to Freud's theory that dreams represent "wish fulfillment," the tone of this paragraph is starkly reminiscent of Nietzsche's description of the "Apollonian" nature of dreams in *The Birth of Tragedy* and other early works.²² Nietzsche describes the relationship between dreams and humanity's tendency to create enduring, immutable "truths" out of its perception of the

²² Freud's most concise explanation of his theories related to dreams is the chapter entitled "Dreams and Occultism" (pages 38-70) in *New Introductory Lectures on Psycho-analysis* (1933).

universe. Nietzsche states his belief that the desire to create concepts, systems, and impute form to the universe is an entirely “natural” and instinctual drive of humanity:

The higher truth, the perfection of these states in contrast to the incompletely intelligible everyday world, this deep consciousness of nature, healing and helping in sleep and dreams, is at the same time the symbolical analogue of the soothsaying faculty and of the arts generally, which make life possible and worth living. But we must also include in our image of Apollo that delicate boundary which the dream image must not overstep lest it have a pathological effect (in which case mere appearance would deceive us as if it were crude reality). (*BWN* 35)²³

In “Composition with Twelve Tones,” Schoenberg seems to acknowledge that the twelve-tone system is a “dream” to help him to find the “laws or rules” necessary to justify his system. Yet, at the same time, he acknowledges that the system itself does not represent an eternal truth that stands opposed to the narrative of tonality, but an attempt to forcefully introduce something truly different.

Schoenberg’s description of the “emancipation of the dissonance” represents a source of knowledge and understanding, and provides a clear and instrumental theoretical framework from which I can analyze Nietzsche’s deployment of dissonance as the foundation for an epistemology. To state that musical dissonance forms a foundational and pervasive theme in Nietzsche’s works is to present only the surface of the argument. In order to complete the argument, it is necessary to underscore that Nietzsche takes full advantage of dissonance’s power by emancipating it. This emancipation occurs at the symbolic, rhetorical, and formal layers of Nietzsche’s texts.

In a way which closely parallels Schoenberg’s belief that the emancipation of dissonance can transform the landscape of music theory, but also aesthetics, culture, and perhaps even the way we think and produce knowledge, Nietzsche draws upon the

²³ Die höhere Wahrheit, die Vollkommenheit dieser Zustände im Gegensatz zu der lückenhaft verständlichen Tageswirklichkeit, sodann das tiefe Bewusstsein von der Schlaf und Traum heilenden und helfenden Natur ist zugleich das symbolische Analogon der wahrsagenden Fähigkeit und überhaupt der Künste, durch die das Leben möglich und lebenswerth gemacht wird. Aber auch jene zarte Linie, die das Traumbild nicht überschreiten darf, um nicht pathologisch zu wirken, widrigenfalls der Schein als plumpe Wirklichkeit uns betrügen würde — [...]. (*KSA* 1, 27-28)

metaphor of musical dissonance to achieve what he eventually refers to as the “revaluation of all values.” The method by which these thinkers achieve their respective goals is remarkably similar. Schoenberg attempts to force a paradigmatic shift in epistemology by introducing a totalistic system of generating knowledge and understanding that completely eschews a centre of meaning. Although Nietzsche does not invent a coercive, rigid system, which appeals to absolute truths, he does offer his readers a system that they can employ to “emancipate” dissonance gradually, pervasively, and passionately. The equivalent of Schoenberg’s “tonal centre” in Nietzsche’s critique of Western philosophy is the metaphysical, central authority of meaning to which science, religion, and philosophy defer. Throughout the course of his texts, Nietzsche gradually undermines the metaphysical “centre” that predominates our sciences and philosophies by “rehabilitating” and “revaluing” the basic vocabulary we use to produce knowledge. In the following chapters, I explore how Nietzsche gradually “emancipates the dissonance” inherent in concepts such as “truth,” “humanism,” “history,” and “redemption,” in a way that inspires his readers to think in accordance with a philosophy that derives meaning from musical dissonance, and rigour from musical *askêsis*. Nietzsche’s texts wean the reader from a dependence upon epistemes that rely upon a metaphysical, central authority of meaning, to a decentred episteme, in which the “centre is everywhere,” and the reader is but one of the many centres of force that constitute the “will to power.”

CHAPTER ONE

“IF WE COULD IMAGINE DISSONANCE BECOME MAN”:

MUSICAL DISSONANCE IN *THE BIRTH OF TRAGEDY* AND OTHER EARLY TEXTS

If we could imagine dissonance become man—and what else is man? — this dissonance, to be able to live, would need a splendid illusion that would cover dissonance with a veil of beauty. This is the true artistic aim of Apollo in whose name we comprehend all those countless illusions of beauty of mere appearance that at every moment make life worth living at all and prompt the desire to live on in order to experience the next moment. (Nietzsche *BWN* 143)¹

“If We Could Imagine Dissonance Become Man”

In the final section of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asks his readers to speculate upon the implications of a revolutionary conception of the human being, as well as the foundation of a provocative and vital form of humanism. He asks his readers to “imagine a becoming-human of dissonance” [emphasis mine]—or as the phrase is better known through Kaufmann’s canonical and more memorable translation cited above: “If we could imagine dissonance become man” [“Könnten wir uns eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz denken”] (*BWN* 143; *KSA* 1, 155). Whereas Kaufmann, Speirs, Golffing and other prominent translators of Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy* emphasize “dissonance” and “man” as the focus of the phrase—“dissonance become man” (Kaufmann 143), “dissonance assuming human form” (Speirs 115), “incarnation of dissonance” (Golffing 145)—it is important to consider that the subject of this sentence is dominated by the gerund of the verb “to become” [werden]: *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*. Therefore, I prefer to borrow Babette Babich’s translation of this phrase, “a becoming-human of dissonance,” and render the first word as “becoming-human”—a compound noun consisting of the words for “human

¹ Könnten wir uns eine Menschwerdung der Dissonanz denken — und was ist sonst der Mensch? — so würde diese Dissonanz, um leben zu können, eine herrliche Illusion brauchen, die ihr einen Schönheitsschleier über ihr eignes Wesen decke. Dies ist die wahre Kunstabsicht des Apollo: in dessen Namen wir alle jene zahllosen Illusionen des schönen Scheins zusammenfassen, die in jedem Augenblick des Dasein überhaupt lebenswerth machen und zum Erleben des nächsten Augenblicks drängen. (*KSA* 1, 155)

being” or “humanity” followed by the gerund of the verb “to become.” As the gerund is the root word, the emphasis of the term is the *process of becoming*.² Thus, the word “man” does not even appear in the original German text as an independent noun. Nietzsche clearly emphasizes the *continual process of humanization* far more than a particular type of completed human being. Golffing’s translation of the phrase *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz* as “incarnation” reflects the subtleties of the original German text far more than the other translations, yet his reading still detracts from Nietzsche’s emphasis on the process of the *becoming-human* of dissonance—or, alternatively, “the becoming of human beings as dissonance”—that constitutes the members of the human race.³ This important passage reflects the spirit of the 1872 title of the work, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*, which was revised to read *The Birth of Tragedy. Or: Hellenism and Pessimism* in 1874.

Perhaps the most beautiful description of dissonance in *The Birth of Tragedy* is in Rüdiger Safranski’s biographical study of Nietzsche: “living dissonance” (62). This description captures the vitality of Nietzsche’s understanding of dissonance. According to Safranski, dissonance characterizes the means by which a “tragic society” forges social relationships. He claims that individuals assert “their individuality against the collective chorus, coming to the fore,” embodying “‘living dissonance’” (62). This dissonance depicts constantly shifting boundaries between individuals, society, and the natural world. Dissonance is more than just an aesthetic; it is a dynamic and primal force that constitutes the foundation of the individual and civilization. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, the word “tragedy” articulates an allegory of the dissonant nature of human civilization. Living dissonance represents a state of being that is dynamic at its very core; sentimentality, stagnation, and monism have no place in a society that recognizes the primacy of dissonance.

² See Babich’s *Words in Blood, Like Flowers*, page 61.

³ This alternative translation of the phrase sidesteps the creation of a hyphenated word to portray the meaning of the compound noun *Menschwerdung*, which has no English equivalent.

Nietzsche's dissonant humanism suggests that humanity should constantly redefine itself and rethink its process of self-formation. The question that I address in this chapter relates to the criteria that govern this process of redefinition. How does one redefine oneself? To what *end* does one redefine oneself? And finally: why *should* one redefine oneself? The answer to these questions lies in Nietzsche's conceptualization of musical dissonance. For Nietzsche, dissonance is a force that is consistently disruptive and transformative, but it is also a force that needs to be *nurtured and cultivated*.

The musical, dissonant humanism described by Nietzsche is an ironic inversion of the notion that essences, origins, and unities represent singular, monadic, and immutable phenomena. Thus, to truly "be human" and cultivate one's "humanity" requires that one engage in the process of constantly rethinking one's form, limits, boundaries, and qualities. Defining humanity as the product of dissonance defies the notion that "becoming" is a process of achieving a specific identity. In fact, it describes a process in which human beings consistently redefine who they are. To foreshadow the title of Nietzsche's last book, written in 1888, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* [*Ecce Homo: Wie man wird was man ist*], the process that Nietzsche refers to as the "becoming-human of dissonance" requires that humanity constantly meditate upon its "whatness," and not on its "whoness." That is, Nietzsche's dissonance-based process of self-formation is not about one's development *into* a specific person, but one's destiny as a being that must constantly redefine itself and rethink *what it is* in every way imaginable.

Nietzsche does not depict dissonance as an aberrant or unnatural state, but rather, as a state that represents the inherent condition of the entire universe. "Man" is a sentient and dynamic manifestation of that condition. Moreover, as Nietzsche implies in his assertion that dissonance makes "life worth living at all," "man" should seize the opportunity to develop a self-identity based on dissonance—perhaps even to consider himself a *representative* of dissonance. That is, in the same way that Platonic philosophy and Christianity encourage human beings to defend the interests of divine "goodness" in every

aspect of their lives, and to consider themselves to be representatives of this goodness, Nietzsche implies that we should do the same with musical dissonance. This is a remarkably provocative notion.

Humanity's encounter with the dissonant universe in which it lives inspires it to shroud its existence with an Apollonian "veil of beauty" [*"Schönheitsschleier"*]. Nietzsche's use of the word dissonance suggests that the aesthetic act of creating beauty through art temporarily ameliorates the constant anxiety caused by its existence in a fundamentally dangerous and discordant universe. Nietzsche's description of dissonance reveals that one of the fundamental aspects of human existence is the *uncanny*. Human existence is uncanny because the dissonance that exists in the "external" world, and outside of what humanity perceives to be its sphere of control, also constitutes the foundation of its own existence. It accords with Freud's description of the "uncanny" [*das Unheimliche*] as a source of discomfort because it represents a deeply repressed, frightening, yet familiar and "homely" memory (see Freud, especially pages 826–828). However, Nietzsche claims that humanity can deal with its uncanny nature in two ways: it can deny its existence as a complex matrix of dissonant forces and embrace fictitious metaphysical beliefs that promulgate the existence of an immutable soul, or it can embrace its uncanny nature and cultivate it. At any rate, humanity is forced to reckon with the uncanny nature of dissonance every day. It must constantly struggle to live in a dissonant universe, but in doing so, it must reconcile itself with the uncanny fact that it is comprised of the very dissonance against which it struggles.

Nietzsche also contends that anxiety-provoking dissonance inspires humanity toward life-affirming and productive activity. It is a catalyst for "action." Without dissonance, there would be no motivation for humanity to create the manifold veils of beauty—aesthetic creations in the broadest sense of the world—that "make life worth living" and "prompt the desire to live on in order to experience the next moment." Dissonance provides a source of discomfort, anxiety, and danger, but also the drive and even the *cognitive skills* necessary to create art, knowledge, and social institutions. Thus,

dissonance is inherently duplicitous and functions in a plurality of ways. By cognitive skills, I refer to the act of perceiving the world as a constantly shifting matrix of force that inspires us to continually rethink our understanding of the universe. Thus, musical dissonance inspires and provokes us into rethinking the concepts and epistemes that we use to investigate and interrogate the universe, exploit its resources, and represent it through works of aesthetic creation. Again, Nietzsche proposes two choices for humanity: it can *fight, battle, and seek to contain and reign in dissonance*, or it may work *with* dissonance and *cultivate* it—if only for the sake of doing so. At any rate, dissonance represents a source of *life and vitality* in Nietzsche's works.

Dissonance: "The Foundations of All Existence"

Although many critics praise Nietzsche's apotheosis of musical dissonance as a life-affirming force, some interpret *The Birth of Tragedy* as a work that encourages human beings to "harmonize dissonance." According to Babette Babich, *The Birth of Tragedy* attempts to reconcile aesthetics with science:

As Nietzsche had argued in his first book [*The Birth of Tragedy*], both art and science are ordered to life. Art seeks to harmonize dissonance, resolving it by transfiguration: not by elimination but rather by way of musical incorporation: "a becoming-human of dissonance" (BT 25). By contrast, especially in the guise of the technological science of modernity, as it begins with Socrates and the promise of logic and truth, mechanical or physical science effectively corrects or improves the world. ("Nietzsche's 'Gay Science'" 101)

As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, I do not believe that Babich's contention that "art seems to harmonize dissonance, resolving it by transfiguration" accords with Nietzsche's exaltations of the *primacy* of musical dissonance in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his other early works. Additionally, it does not accord with his remarks about *The Birth of Tragedy* in his 1886 introduction to the book, or his autobiographical text, *Ecce Homo*, composed in 1888. Nietzsche does not attempt to reconcile or vindicate the power of dissonance with respect to rational-scientific thinking or aesthetics, nor does he suggest that we harmonize or resolve it. The textual evidence actually indicates that Nietzsche's dissonance-based philosophy

emancipates dissonance from the thralldom of consonance and metaphysically based epistemes. Musical dissonance becomes the criterion by which all knowledge is created and evaluated. While I agree with Babich's contention that musical dissonance represents a subversion of Socrates' belief that "truth and logic" can "correct" the world, the notion that it represents a force that needs to be *contained* in order to function obscures its significance as the "foundation of all existence" and man as a *becoming-human of* dissonance. If anything, the opposite is true: it is dissonance that reigns in consonance. Art does not seek to "harmonize" dissonance, but to *cultivate* it, foster its vitality, and tap into its enormous reserve of power. The semblance of unity or harmony in the tragic art that Nietzsche describes actually represents moments of supreme tension and dissonance.

In an unpublished note written in late 1869 or early 1870, Nietzsche states (I preserve the fragmentary, ungrammatical state of Nietzsche's notes in my translations): "In harmony it is the *will to plurality* [italics mine], which is fused together with unity. Accordingly, there is some discrepancy in the resonance of the overtones in the temperament of every sound: accordingly there is a little discrepancy between the temperament of each individual essence and the total essence."⁴ Nietzsche draws a direct analogy between acoustics and philosophy. He claims that in acoustics, there is a natural tendency toward *plurality* [die *Vielheit*]. However, the aggregate of these dissonant relationships also signifies a unity. This tendency serves as an axiom for both music and ontology. Every tone or "essence" that appears to represent an individual, discrete entity is in actuality a complex network of dissonances, which can be distinguished by a discerning ear. If we accept this little parable as a depiction of the "primal unity," then it becomes clear that unity is a function of a universal drive toward "manyness" (plurality, *Vielheit*). By cultivating plurality in all aspects of human existence, humanity can affirm its vitality in the same way that a sound

⁴ In der Harmonie ist der Wille in der Vielheit, die zur Einheit zusammengeschmolzen ist. Dabei ist der Charakter jedes Tones *ein wenig* diskrepant in den mitklingenden Obertönen: so ist der Charakter jedes Einzelwesens *ein wenig* dem Gesamtwesen diskrepant. (KSW 7, 63[3:14])

with rich and vibrant overtones affirms its beauty. These fragments from the beginning of Nietzsche's scholarly career demonstrate his desire to radically rethink the concept of "unity" and "essence" as a signifier for a vast, seemingly immeasurable complex of dynamic, dissonant forces. The legacy of Nietzsche's reconceptualization of unity appears prominently in his description of the will to power in his writings of the 1880s, which describe the universe as a unity—a "monster of energy"—that humanity can only understand as a dissonant plurality. However, the roots of his famous theories lie here in his works of the late 1860s and early 1870s.

In the first line of the paragraph that follows the epigraph of this chapter, Nietzsche asserts that musical dissonance constitutes the "foundations of all existence" [*"Fundamente aller Existenz"*] (BWN 143; KSA 1, 155). The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate exactly how musical dissonance functions as the foundation of all existence, and how human beings and their civilizations can—and should—exploit, cultivate, and disseminate the dissonance that constitutes it. According to Nietzsche, human beings are, at bottom, the manifestation of a complex, dynamic, and powerful matrix of forces that he describes as "dissonance." The most powerful implication of Nietzsche's dissonance-based philosophy and dissonance-based humanism is that it provides him with an epistemological framework that can completely supplant the foundation of metaphysical epistemologies, such as Judeo-Christian monotheism and Platonism. By positing dissonance as the foundation for an epistemology—and even an *ontology*, that is, the way in which we interpret *Being*—Nietzsche endows himself with the tools needed to initiate a radical revolution in philosophy that will obsolete metaphysics. In the following sections, I delineate the far-reaching implications of Nietzsche's hypothesis, and explain how it sets the stage for Nietzsche's later work, particularly, the "revaluation of all values."

In his autobiographical reflections in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche refers to his prophecies in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he claims that Germany will become a "tragic" and Dionysian society, just like the society of the ancient Greeks before the advent of Platonism. He claims

that *The Birth of Tragedy* sets the stage for an enormous revaluation of values that is free from “degenerating,” “parasitical” and life-denying metaphysical epistemologies:

A tremendous hope speaks out of this essay. In the end I lack all reason to renounce the hope for a Dionysian future of music. Let us look ahead a century; let us suppose that my attempt to assassinate two millennia of antinature [*Widernatur*] and desecration of man were to succeed. That new party of life which would tackle the greatest of all tasks, the attempt to raise humanity higher, including the relentless destruction of everything that was degenerating and parasitical, would again make possible that excess of life on earth from which the Dionysian state [*Zustand*], too, would have to awaken again. I promise a tragic age: the highest art in saying Yes to life [*Jasagen zum Leben*], tragedy, will be reborn when humanity was weathered the consciousness of the hardest but most necessary wars *without suffering from it*. (BWN 730)⁵

Nietzsche makes a clear connection between the future of Dionysian music and a Dionysian future for all of humanity, human institutions, and art. Although Nietzsche wrote these comments sixteen years after the original publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche’s self-critique captures the spirit of the book, and is filled with hopeful visions of a new man, new state, and new social and political institutions that “listen to the luring call of the Dionysian bird” [“*dem wonnig lockenden Rufe des dionysischen Vogels lauschen*”] (BWN 139; KSA 1, 149). It is also clear that Nietzsche believed that Dionysian music is a very special kind of music—it must be a forward-looking, life-affirming music. Dionysian music must be free of the constraints of metaphysical epistemologies. As Nietzsche describes in detail in *The Case of Wagner* and *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, there are many *sick* and *degenerate* forms of music that have circulated around the world. On the surface, they might appear to be manifestations

⁵ Aus dieser Schrift redet eine ungeheure Hoffnung. Zuletzt fehlt mir jeder Grund, die Hoffnung auf eine dionysische Zukunft der Musik zurückzunehmen. Werfen wir einen Blick ein Jahrhundert voraus, setzen wir den Fall, daß mein Attentat auf zwei Jahrtausende *Widernatur* und *Menschenschänderung* gelingt. Jene neue Partei des Lebens, welche die grösste aller Aufgaben, die Höherzüchtung der Menschheit in die Hände nimmt, eingerechnet die schonungslose Vernichtung alles Entartenden und Parasitischen, wird jenes *Zuviel von Leben* auf Erden wieder möglich machen, aus dem auch der dionysische Zustand wieder erwachsen muss. Ich verspreche ein *tragisches* Zeitalter: die höchste Kunst im *Jasagen zum Leben*, die Tragödie, wird wiedergeboren werden, wenn die Menschheit das Bewusstsein der härtesten, aber nothwendigsten Kriege hinter sich hat, *ohne daran zu leiden...* (KSA 6, 313)

of power, but in reality, are purveyors of worn-out, metaphysical ways of thinking. As Nietzsche states in the aphorism entitled “Wagner as a Danger” [“*Wagner als Gefahr*”] in *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, Wagner’s music “wants *effect*, nothing more. *Espressivo* at any price, and music in the service, the slavery, or poses—*that is the end*” (TPN 667).⁶ The notion that music should serve the purposes of any other mode of human expression is anathema to Nietzsche. Music may function as a mode of *expression*, but never *representation*, and certainly, never to supplement another form of art—such as those which privilege words or gesture.

In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asserts that only music is capable of expressing and mirroring the relationship of humanity to the primal unity of the universe. If composers subject music to words or the plastic arts, the transformative power of music will never be unleashed. On the contrary, it will be repressed, enthralled, and subverted:

A style in which music is regarded as the servant, the text as the master, where music is compared with the body, the text with the soul? where at best the highest aim will be directed toward a paraphrastic tone-painting, just as formerly in the New Attic Dithyramb? where music is completely alienated [*entfremdet*] from its true dignity as the Dionysian mirror of the world, so that the only thing left to it, as the slave of phenomena, is to imitate the formal character of phenomena, and to arouse a superficial pleasure in the play of lines and proportions. (BWN 118-119)⁷

A method of musical composition that regulates the production of melodic and harmonic material in accordance with visual and linguistic patterns alienates music from the “Dionysian mirror of the world.” Nietzsche tells us that the “world” is a representation of a primal unity of dissonant forces. Therefore, Nietzsche’s reference to Hegel’s master-servant

⁶ ...die *Wirkung* will, nichts mehr... Das *espressivo* um jeden Preis und die Musik im Dienste, in der Sklaverei der Attitude — *das ist das Ende*... (KSA 6, 422)

⁷ [bei einer solchen Stilvermischung] wo die Musik als Diener, das Textwort als Herr betrachtet, die Musik mit dem Körper, das Textwort mit der Seele verglichen wird? wo das höchste Ziel bestenfalls auf eine umschreibende Tonmalerei gerichtet sein wird, ähnlich wie ehemals im neuen attischen Dithyrambus? wo der Musik ihre wahre Würde, dionysischer Weltspiegel zu sein, völlig entfremdet ist, so dass ihr nur übrig bleibt, als Sclavin der Erscheinung, das Formenwesen der Erscheinung nachzuahmen und in dem Spiele der Linien und Proportionen eine äusserliche Ergetzung zu erregen. (KSA 1, 126)

dialectic clearly posits consonance as an arrogant master, who is either unaware—or at the very least, unwilling to admit—of his dependence upon musical dissonance as a source of power. Thus, musical dissonance becomes a servant that is enthralled to a system that forces it to “imitate” the “play of lines and proportions”—that is, to imitate consonance.

The “play of lines and proportions” does not accord with the life-affirming processes of the primal unity. However, Nietzsche describes them as abstractions and metaphysical constructs. In the next paragraph of the text, Nietzsche claims that musicians can reverse this process and emancipate music from its thralldom to the plastic arts and metaphysical epistemes, and reconnect it to its dissonant origins. Modern man can achieve this process by infusing civilization with the “Dionysian spirit” [*“dionysischen Geistes”*]: “what hopes must revive in us when the most certain auspices guarantee *the reverse process, the gradual awakening of the Dionysian spirit* in our modern world!” (BWN 119).⁸ In the following pages, I demonstrate that the “awakening of the Dionysian spirit” represents the active emancipation of dissonance from the centripetal power of metaphysical, otherworldly philosophies.

David Allison’s analysis of *The Birth of Tragedy* also affirms that the “revaluation of all values” begins with *The Birth of Tragedy*. Allison asserts that both the young Nietzsche and the mature Nietzsche believe that a “new ‘artist’s metaphysics’,” which relies on the restoration of Dionysian “tragic wisdom,” is the key to the revitalization of European culture and inspiring a “revaluation of all values.” Referring to the same passage from *Ecce Homo*, Allison opines:

With his analysis in *The Birth of Tragedy* [in *Ecce Homo*], Nietzsche claimed to have presented an interpretation of historical fact, not unlike the analyses of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Gibbon, or Burckhardt. Nietzsche himself, however, held out the possibility of alternative developments within European culture, and to this end he examined the promise of emergent formulations, particularly those of Wagner, or what he termed a new “artist’s

⁸ [...] welche Hoffnungen müssen in uns aufleben, wenn uns die allersichersten Auspicien *den umgekehrten Prozess, das allmähliche Erwachen des dionysischen Geistes* in unserer gegenwärtigen Welt, verbürgen! (KSA 1, 127)

metaphysics," a modern "tragic wisdom." [...] Nietzsche never ceased to explore the resources needed for such a new age of human achievement. Realistically, he understood that if such an age were possible, it would have to be purchased at great expense. [...] Nietzsche had already termed this task "the revaluation of all values" by then, and in retrospect, he saw *The Birth of Tragedy* as his own first step for carrying it out. (27)

According to Allison, the young Nietzsche was impelled by the radical ideas of his age, particularly his contemporaries Wagner and Burckhardt. Their writings offered Nietzsche radical and inspiring ideas on how to transform the world into a place that is faithful to the dissonant "foundations of all existence."

Allison suggests that, ultimately, it is musical dissonance that supplants metaphysical notions of "essence" and "idea," which have traditionally served as the building blocks of philosophy, to create a new, and more dynamic, Dionysian worldview:

Music alone, he argued, is capable of expressing the infinitely polymorphous character of the dynamic world, a world capable of every tension, transformation, stress, intensity, and pulsion. It does this not by representing one single state, a static "image" of the world as the language of concepts does, but by manifesting the very nature, essence, or idea (*Idee*) of its general dynamic properties—in short, what Nietzsche calls its *dissonance*: "This primordial phenomenon of Dionysian art is difficult to grasp, and there is only one direct way to make it intelligible and grasp it immediately: through the wonderful significance of musical dissonance." (47)

Allison's analysis suggests that music represents a metaphor for the way in which humanity can manipulate and understand the fundamental building blocks of the universe. These basic units are not atoms or monads, but merely representations of a singular, yet dynamic and transformative *process* of dissonance. Allison claims that dissonance forms the "structural identity among the dynamic properties of the world," which represents a "creative reservoir of tonal elements that sustains every variation in sonority, rhythm, tempo, harmony, measure, melody, [and] polyphony" (47). These elements reflect the manifold ways in which human beings can interact with the "foundations of all existence" using their bodies, intellects, affects, and hands. Knowledge and understanding are inextricably linked to all aspects of music.

But is it enough to acknowledge that dissonance forms the foundation for Dionysian art? It is important to fully account for Nietzsche's claim that dissonance constitutes the basis for a humanization, and accordingly, the foundation for a system of valuation and a theory of social interaction. We must seriously consider Nietzsche's claim that his revaluation of all values began in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

As Nietzsche suggests through the vivid imagery in his texts, a dissonance-based epistemology represents a path toward a vital, powerful, and dynamic world. Above all, it is an epistemology of superabundance. An epistemology that is inspired by the belief that knowledge can be constructed on a foundation of dissonance and the "will to plurality" can only produce a philosophy with concepts and ideas that literally resonate and overflow with power. To commit oneself to it would require that every action taken in life, ranging from the creation of art and literature to the establishment of social institutions, be predicated upon the dynamic and dissonant processes of the will to power. In the following sections, I explore various facets of Nietzsche's portrayal of musical dissonance in his texts, and well as how it has inspired some of his critics. Finally, I describe the world that Nietzsche envisioned for a civilization that is able to express itself as "living dissonance."

The Rehabilitation of Logos

In his book *Dissonance: Nietzsche and the Limits of Language* (1981), Claude Lévesque discusses Nietzsche's conception of "dissonance become man." Specifically referring to this formulation of "man," Lévesque equates dissonance with the many meanings ascribed to the word *logos*:

At the origin [of all things], there is nothing that could establish an identity or serve as a sturdy and delimitable *foundation* [emphasis mine]. At the origin, there is dissonance, the splay of a difference, the redoubling and falsity of a duplicity, that is to say, the very thing that disqualifies, and renders absurd all pursuit of a simple and indivisible origin, and a full and reassuring presence. In effect, the pursuit of an *archê* [origin, beginning] can only be lost

in the shifting sands of that which is unsublatable [*irrelevable*] and wholly unrepresentable. (trans. mine, 78)⁹

Lévesque contends that for Nietzsche, the foundation and the origin of human identity and existence is dissonance. In fact, Lévesque actually postulates dissonance as *the* “origin” of “everything,” in almost the exact same way in which it is postulated in the first line of the Gospel of John (1:1): “In the beginning was the Word [*logos*]:/the Word was with God/and the Word was God” (1207). Liddell and Scott provide the following as the primary definition for *logos* [λογος]: “the word or that by which the inward thought is expressed.” Yet, this simple definition is supplemented by dozens of other definitions that represent the many variations of the Greek language. They include “speech,” “discourse,” “talk,” “report,” “assertion,” “resolution,” “narrative,” “history,” “reason,” and “opinion”—to name but a few (Liddell and Scott). All of these definitions might apply just as easily to Lévesque’s and Nietzsche’s conceptions of dissonance. However, dissonance lacks any sense of finality that is often ascribed to the Biblical interpretation of “word,” which connotes a distinct source, beginning, end, knowability, stability, or definable substance.

Perhaps the most famous critique of John 1:1 in the German language is in Goethe’s *Faust*, in which the eponymous protagonist declares that the word *logos* is actually a signifier

⁹ À l’origine, il n’y a donc rien qui puisse fonder une identité ni servir de fondement solide et délimitable. À l’origine, il y a la dissonance, l’écart d’une différence, le redoublement et la fausseté d’une duplicité, c’est-à-dire cela même qui disqualifie, rend absurde toute recherche d’une origine simple et indivisible, d’une présence pleine et sécurisante. En effet, la recherche d’une arché ne peut que se perdre dans les sables mouvants de la multiplicité irrélevable et proprement infigurable. (78)

My translation of the word *irrelevable* reads awkwardly, but accords with Derrida’s use of the word as something that cannot be “transcended” in “*Qual Quelle: Valéry’s Sources*” (1972). As Lévesque frequently responds to Derrida in his writings of the 1970s and 80s, it is tenable to assume that his usage of the word accords with Derrida’s. According to Alan Bass, who translated this essay for an anthology of Derrida’s essays entitled *Margins of Philosophy*, *irrelevable* represents “that which cannot be *relevé*,” and thus cannot be “subjected to the Hegelian operation of the *Aufhebung*” (297). *Aufhebung* is the word that Hegel uses to represent the sublations or “syntheses” that constitute the process of dialectics he discusses in his works, such as *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, which contains the famous essay on the master-slave dialectic “Lordship and Bondage” [*Herrschaft und Knechtschaft*].

for “the deed” or “action” [“*die Tat*“]. Faust, a middle-aged scholar who is exhausted with his life and career—and only moments away from being visited by the demon Mephistopheles, who changes the course of his life forever—contemplates different translations for *logos*. He believes that “word” is an inadequate translation for a signifier as polyvalent as *logos*. Faust stares at his copy of the Luther Bible, and thinking aloud, he ponders: “It says: ‘In the beginning was the *Word*.’ / I am already stopped here! Who will help me continue?” (trans. mine, lines 1224-1225). In the following lines, Faust tries out a few other words: “Mind” [“*Sinn*“], “Force” [“*Kraft*“], after which he concludes by exclaiming: “In the beginning was *action*!” [“*Im Anfang war die Tat!*“] (line 1237).¹⁰ Only moments after positing “action” and “deed” as appropriate translations for the word *logos*, Faust begins his infamous adventures, arguably initiating one of the most provocative revaluations of morality since the advent of Christianity.

As Walter Kaufmann and many other prominent critics have noted, Faust’s actions prefigure the sentiment portrayed by the title of Nietzsche’s 1887 book, *Beyond Good and Evil* (Goethe’s *Faust* 55). Goethe’s *Faust* suggests an alternative system of generating “values” and “morality.” The controversy over Faust’s translation of *logos* as “*Tat*,” stems from its ambiguity. How do we interpret and evaluate “*Tat*”? What standard do we use? To posit dissonance as the foundation for an epistemology is similarly problematic. In many respects, Lévesque’s suggestion that Nietzsche equates dissonance with *logos* is far more provocative than Goethe’s use of *Tat*, as *Tat* does not necessarily imply a complex process. A reader might construe *Tat* as a metaphor for an impulsive action. Contrarily, dissonance implies a complex process of dynamic transformation. If emancipated, dissonance can provoke a revaluation of all values, an act that represents a far more powerful, and potentially even more “rigorous” revolution in philosophy than the one implied by Goethe’s *Faust*.

¹⁰ Geschrieben steht: »im Anfang war das *Wort*!« / Hier stock ich schon! Wer hilft mir weiter fort? (568)

Lévesque's assertion that dissonance constitutes the *foundation* [*fondement*] of all things is a very ironic hypothesis, as this definition of foundation hardly represents stability in any way. Dissonance represents a destabilizing force that resists concord and permanence. Lévesque describes dissonance as an origin that reveals "splays" of "difference," and is repetitious and deceitfully duplicitous. Whereas the notion of "foundation" [*fondement*] in academic discourse implies a systematic, logical or linguistic underpinning for concepts, epistemologies and critical perspectives, Lévesque contends that for Nietzsche, a dynamic, unstable, and violent force constitutes the raw material for the "foundation" of humanization (and all existence for that matter). Thus, according to Lévesque, the origin of "man" is fundamentally antithetical to conventional notions of the concept of "origin" as a unitary, stable, immutable foundation for an epistemology or an ontology.

Additionally, Lévesque resists the notion that "origin" is synonymous with any form of "beginning." In fact, it renders any such notion "absurd," as anyone who searches for a stable principle and unity that defines "man" will inevitably become hopelessly lost in the "shifting sands" of irresolvable contradictions. Nietzsche's "dissonant" origins imply that the foundation of what it means to "be human" rests on a sea of constantly changing and conflicting configurations of meaning and perspective. Lévesque's description of origin describes the primacy of dissonance in the material word; this origin is to be found everywhere at all times. Most significantly, however, is the fact that dissonance represents a completely non-teleological, non purpose-oriented process. To quote the epigraph of this study: "the centre is everywhere" at all times. Purpose and teleology, as well as a central authority of meaning, are precluded.

Lévesque helps to affirm that Nietzsche considered the possibility that dissonance constitutes a replacement—or perhaps a "rehabilitation"—of a metaphysically oriented interpretations of logos. This adds to the long list of concepts that Nietzsche rehabilitates, rethinks, and revalues throughout his nearly two decades of active writing. Nietzsche's

revaluation of logos as musical dissonance functions in a way that parallels metaphysical conceptions of logos. That is, it represents the basic building block of human thought, existence, and an overarching set of processes that govern the universe. The Judeo-Christian god, however, is entirely absent from the picture.

Nietzsche declares that a civilization inhabited by people that recognize their dissonant origins cultivates itself musically. The dissonant human being and its civilization exist in accordance with a set of harmonic relationships that affirm, vitalize, and animate dissonance. As Nietzsche implies in the above-quoted passage, it is necessary for dissonance to “live”—therefore, humanity can and should *cultivate it*. In Nietzsche’s texts, it is the aesthetics of tragic art, music, dithyrambs, and other forms of artistic expression that provide the means through which human beings can engage with dissonance and cultivate it to strengthen their vitality as living beings.

How does one “cultivate” dissonance? Does the tragic artist merely attempt to create as many dissonances as possible in his or her performance, poem, or musical composition? As I discuss in the first section of this chapter, it seems clear that Nietzsche believes we have a certain measure of *responsibility* toward dissonance. This might sound strange, but it accords with the use of *logos* in the Gospel of John. The “word” is something that represents both the origin of the universe, but also an inspiration and criterion by which we must lead our lives. The only way that humanity can be truly faithful to dissonance is to emulate its processes.

Lévesque’s analysis provides a very important clue as to how dissonance serves to reevaluate all values. It does not negate the concepts of “beginning” “middle,” and “end,” but actually redefines, rehabilitates, and reevaluates them. By using the language of metaphysics and deploying words such as “unity” [*Einheit*], Nietzsche clearly intends to preserve some of the most powerful connotations of it: for example, the notion that everything originates from something. However, just like the will to power, Nietzsche’s primal unity is not a thing, but a process. Nietzsche describes musical dissonance as a

process that defies nearly every kind of objective, scientific scrutiny. Our responsibility is to rethink aspects of epistemology that rely upon the concept of “origins” and “unities.” We must refashion them in accordance with a musical, dissonant epistemology.

Nietzsche and the “Crisis of Humanism”

As suggested by Lévesque’s interpretation of *logos* as dissonance, I contend that dissonance serves a function analogous to “reason” in predominant forms of Western metaphysics. Dissonance represents the defining quality of humanity, and a tool that we can utilize to maximize its greatest potential in the realms of aesthetic, social, and intellectual endeavours. However, unlike the anthropomorphic and metaphysical implications of interpreting *logos* as “reason,” dissonance has no inherently privileged relationship with humanity. Humanity’s only privilege is that it has the potential to recognize that it is indeed an expression of musical dissonance. That is, humanity represents a race of sentient beings that has the ability to contemplate the nature of its existence. These beings can recognize their defining processes and decide how they wish to define their relationship with the universe in which they live. Thus, dissonance forms the *foundation* of a concept that is quite similar to various concepts of “humanism” that have dominated major philosophical schools of thought for centuries. However, it differs from them in that dissonance does not represent a divine spark that is unique to man. Dissonance exists everywhere and inside everything; humanity’s talent is that it can recognize that fact.

It might seem absurd to claim that Nietzsche is a “humanist” of sorts after so many scholars have tried to dismiss such a notion—not to mention the concept of humanism in general. In his famous “Letter on Humanism” (1947) [*Brief über den Humanismus*], Heidegger pleads with his readers not to regard his own ideas—and those of Nietzsche—as an attempt to “restore meaning” to the word “humanism.” Referring somewhat mockingly to Sartre’s famous 1946 lecture “Existentialism as a Humanism” [*L’Existentialisme est un*

humanisme"] and its reception by the public, Heidegger discusses humanism with a hypothetical interlocutor:

You ask: *Comment redonner un sens au mot 'Humanisme'*? [How can we restore meaning to the word "humanism"?] This question proceeds from your intention to retain the word "humanism." I wonder whether that is necessary. Or is the damage caused by all such terms still not sufficiently obvious? (219)¹¹

Heidegger contends that "restoring" meaning to the word humanism is a waste of effort, as the word has done little more than reinforce the damage inflicted upon civilization by Western metaphysics. For Heidegger, the word "humanism" is a product of the "Roman Republic," which represents a civilization that runs contrary to the dynamic, this-worldly civilization of the ancient Greeks—a sentiment Heidegger likely borrowed from the young Nietzsche who penned *The Birth of Tragedy*—and is responsible for perpetuating the decadence initiated by Platonism:

The first humanism, Roman humanism, and every kind that has emerged from that time to the present, has presupposed the most universal "essence" of man to be obvious. Man is considered to be an *animal rationale*. This definition is not simply the Latin translation of the Greek *zôon logon echon* but rather a metaphysical interpretation of it. This essential definition of man is not false. But it is conditioned by metaphysics. (226)¹²

This fear that the metaphysical implications of the word "humanism" are too dangerous to risk the consequences of its reconstruction, are not unique to Heidegger's eccentric, and anti-Roman sensibilities. Heidegger is repelled by the notion that the foundation of the human being and humanism is some sort of immutable, stable essence. He does not seem to contest Aristotle's definition of the human being as *zôon logon echon*—an animal that

¹¹ Sie fragen: *Comment redonner un sens au mot »Humanismus«* festzuhalten. Ich frage mich, ob das nötig ist. Oder ist das Unheil, das alle Titel dieser Art anrichten, noch nicht offenkundig genug? (147)

¹² Der erste Humanismus, nämlich der römische, und alle Arten des Humanismus, die seitdem bis in die Gegenwart aufgekommen sind, setzen das allgemeinste »Wesen« des Menschen also selbstverständlich voraus. Der Mensch gilt als das *animal rationale* [sic]. Diese Bestimmung ist nicht nur die lateinische Übersetzung des griechischen ζῷον λόγον ἔχον, sondern eine metaphysische Auslegung. Diese Wesensbestimmung des Menschen ist nicht falsch. Aber sie ist durch die Metaphysik bedingt. (153-154)

possesses speech—but the modern, “enlightened” understanding of *logos* as representing a rational, metaphysical faculty. In fact, this phobia of the term “humanism” extends into French deconstruction, which somewhat ironically, bears the mark of Heidegger’s anti-Roman sentiments.

Sarah Kofman makes a similar proclamation about Nietzsche’s anti-humanism in her book *Nietzsche and Metaphor* [*Nietzsche et la Métaphore*] (1972):

Nietzsche is indeed an atheist, even if he does not accept the refutation of God given by the majority of atheists. For there are multiple ways of refuting God. Nietzsche’s philosophy is indeed a *terrestrial philosophy* [emphasis mine] with nothing “sacred.” Everything sacred is introduced by man, and Nietzsche’s philosophy is *no humanism* [emphasis mine]. (145)¹³

In the book’s appendix—a substantial essay on its own—entitled “Genealogy, Interpretation, Text” [“Généalogie, interprétation, texte”] Kofman claims “Nietzsche cannot give a *rational* [emphasis mine] account of [the will to power]” because “it is for him a pure principle of interpretation” which Nietzsche describes “mythically in the form of Apollo and Dionysus.” For Kofman, “mythical language is another attempt to *overcome metaphysical language*” [emphasis mine] (144).¹⁴ These comments are inspired by Kofman’s objections to Paul Granier’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s portrayal of Dionysus in *The Problem of Truth in Nietzsche’s Philosophy* (1966) [*Le Problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche*].

According to Kofman, Granier argues that Nietzsche essentially substitutes “a Greek god [Dionysus] for the God of the Christians” [“...il n’est pas la substitution par Nietzsche d’un dieu grec au Dieu chrétiens”] (144; 205-6). She further maintains that Granier “confines Nietzsche to the metaphysical camp” [“il enferme Nietzsche dans le champ de la métaphysique”] (121; 177),

¹³ Nietzsche est bien athée, même s’il n’admet pas la réfutation de Dieu que donnent la plupart des athées. Mais il y a multiples manières de réfuter Dieu. La philosophie de Nietzsche est bien une philosophie de la terre sans aucun « sacré ». Tout sacré est introduit par l’homme, même si la philosophie de Nietzsche n’est pas un humanisme. (206)

¹⁴ C’est parce que Nietzsche ne peut en définitive en rendre compte rationnellement, et parce qu’il est pour lui un pur principe interprétatif, qu’il en parle mythiquement sous la forme d’Apollon et de Dionysos. Le langage mythique est aussi une tentative pour dépasser le langage métaphysique. (205)

which starkly contradicts Kofman's this-worldly interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas and language. Kofman reproaches Granier and like-minded thinkers, who attempt to position Nietzsche's ideas within the framework of traditional philosophical approaches that remain faithful to the discourse of the Enlightenment. In effect, Kofman condemns Granier for implying that Nietzsche is not nearly as radical as many might like to think, and that he is essentially a *secular humanist*.

In the chapter entitled "The Crisis of Humanism" in his book *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Postmodern Culture* (1985), Gianni Vattimo describes a "crisis in humanism" portrayed by Heidegger, which closely corresponds to Kofman's interpretation of the rejection of humanism that she identifies in Nietzsche's texts. Vattimo explains that both Heidegger and Nietzsche are dissatisfied that modern philosophers continue to focus upon a rational "consciousness" in human beings as the foundation of a humanism. They reproach philosophers for perpetuating the discourse of Roman humanism. Vattimo seems to accept Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche as an anti-humanist:

Even the twentieth-century passage from the concept of substance to the concept of function, as is suggested by the title of a classic neo-Kantian work by Cassirer, is a step in the direction clearly indicated by Heidegger in his commentary on Leibniz and the *principium reddendae rationis*. In this development, however, the subject—as *substantia*, substratum, *hypokeimenon*—is not only further and further reduced to consciousness [...] that is to say, to the kind of self-awareness unique to humanity [...]. This can be seen in the Cartesian *cogito*, in which the self-assuredness of consciousness is entirely a function of the fact that the clear and distinct idea is *evidence*. If this is the case, then the reasons for Heidegger's (and Nietzsche's) anti-humanism become ever clearer: the subject, conceived of by humanism as self-consciousness, is simply the correlative of metaphysical Being which is defined in terms of objectivity, that is, in terms of clarity, stability, and unshakeable certainty. (42)

According to Vattimo, Nietzsche helped to inspire the anti-humanism of Heidegger and other twentieth century thinkers. Referring to Heidegger's arguments against secular humanism in *The Principle of Reason [Satz vom Grund]* (1955-56), Vattimo identifies the centrality of a rational "subjectivity" in Western discourse as the catalyst of Heidegger's anti-humanism. In the preceding passage, Vattimo links together a variety of traditions,

beginning with the Platonic, and ending with early Enlightenment thinkers such as Descartes and Leibnitz. He contends that all these thinkers reduce the “essence” of humanity to a self-reflexive consciousness. Of the many terms that Vattimo uses in the passage is the Greek word *hypokeimenon*, which literally means “substratum.” According to Peters, Aristotle employs this term to describe a “substratum that persists through change” with the view that the “substratum is that of which other things are predicated and which is not predicated of anything else” (Peters 92). It is a metaphysical concept which suggests that all phenomena possess an underlying foundation that is immutable, essential, and unaffected by changes and transformations that occur in the sensual world.

In addition, Vattimo refers to Heidegger’s extended discussion of Leibnitz’s *principium reddendae rationis*—“the fundamental principle of rendering reasons”—that he identifies as a problematic development in the history of modern philosophy. According to Heidegger, this principle posits reason as an all-encompassing, reflexive, and imperative process. Reason is not merely a cognitive process that humanity employs to find the answer to *why* certain things exist; it literally constitutes the foundation of all existence. At the root of every cause is merely another cause—a process that can be traced back to a primal cause, which in effect, justifies the existence of reason itself. The universe represents an infinite matrix of causation with God at its centre. Humanity’s role as mediator between God and the universe is to “give back” (render) reason to itself—to *serve* reason:

This demand, the *reddendum*, pervasively bepowers all human cognition. Nevertheless, the *principium reddendae rationis* is not a mere Principle of cognition; rather, the *principium reddendae rationis* is the supreme fundamental principle of cognition, as well as of the objects of cognition because, according to the guiding thought of modern philosophy, something “is” only insofar as a founded cognition has secured it for itself as its object. (27)¹⁵

¹⁵ Dieser Anspruch, das *reddendum*, durchmachtet alles menschliche Vorstellen. Allein das *principium reddendae rationis* ist darum gleichwohl nicht ein bloßes Prinzip des Erkennens. Weil vielmehr nach dem Leitgedanken der neuzeitlichen Philosophie etwas nur «ist», insofern ein begründetes Vorstellen es für sich als seinen Gegenstand sichergestellt hat [...]. (54-55)

According to Vattimo, the “crisis of humanism” would be ameliorated with a “crash diet for the subject.” Eventually this “diet” would presumably lead to a humanity that relies upon a “sensitive organism of communication” as the basis for its self-identification:

The crisis of humanism, in the radical sense that it acquired in the work of philosophers such as Nietzsche and Heidegger [...] is most likely to be resolved in terms of a kind of ‘crash diet for the subject’, one which would allow the subject to listen to the call of a Being that no longer arises in the peremptory tone of the *Grund* or the thought of thought (or absolute spirit), but that dissolves its presence-absence into the network offered by a society increasingly transformed into an extremely sensitive organism of communication. (47)

I argue that Nietzsche accomplishes the goal outlined by Vattimo as early as 1872, when he published *The Birth of Tragedy*. To posit the phrase *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz* as the basis for a “humanism” in the most literal sense of the word, meets the requirements that Vattimo claims Nietzsche, Heidegger, and other anti-humanist thinkers, believe are necessary for a new conception of a human being. Stability and immutability are precluded with such a musical, dissonant humanism. There simply is no stable ground on which to fall in Nietzsche’s works.

Nietzsche proposes that the distinguishing characteristic of humanity is simply the ability to recognize the fact that human beings are animals that are constituted by *dissonance*. The dissonance that lies within the core of humanity is indifferent to humanity; it makes no “demands” on humanity in the manner in which Heidegger interprets Leibnitz’s *principium reddendae rationis*. It is entirely up to humanity to discover its existence as a musical, dissonant being and voluntarily engage and *cultivate* its dissonance. Dissonance represents an anthropomorphism only insofar as it is a force that humanity has the ability to manipulate by drawing upon its Dionysian drive (as Nietzsche puts it in his early texts).

There is nothing “metaphysical” about the raw power of dissonance, which Nietzsche regards as the natural state of the universe. Coming to terms with the concept of a musical, dissonant humanism and a musical, dissonant epistemology precludes the form of subjectivity that Vattimo claims irks Heidegger and Nietzsche, or the “sacredness” that

appalls Kofman. Nietzsche's humanism deters self-absorption with a metaphysical, subjective "self-consciousness."

Apollo and Dionysus: Gods of Dissonance

Nietzsche asks us to consider a "becoming-human of dissonance." This discussion is couched in his famous description of two fundamental "drives" [*Triebe*] that determine the nature of a society's or civilization's aesthetic sensibilities. Nietzsche names these two drives after two Olympian gods that represent different facets of humanity's aesthetic existence: Apollo and Dionysus. The relationship of the "Apollonian" [*Apollinische*] and "Dionysian" [*Dionysische*] is far-reaching and affects the characteristics of a broad range of human activity, including social and political institutions, academic pursuits in the arts and sciences, and naturally, all of the fine arts.

The Apollonian and Dionysian do not attempt to weaken or discredit each other; on the contrary, they work to strengthen and invigorate each other. As Nietzsche consistently emphasizes, the Apollonian and Dionysian drives exist in a "fraternal union" [*"Bruderbund"*] (BWN 130; KSA 1, 140). We cannot disassociate these drives, as they are "inseparable" [*"von einander untrennbar"*] (BWN 143; KSA 1, 154). Nietzsche describes this relationship as constituting the foundation of a vibrant, dynamic, and life-affirming aesthetics. The following passage immediately precedes the section in which Nietzsche asks his readers to "imagine a becoming-human of dissonance":

Thus the Dionysian is seen to be, compared to the Apollonian, the eternal and original artistic power that first calls the whole world of phenomena into existence—and it is only in the midst of this world that a new transfiguring illusion becomes necessary in order to keep the animated world of individuation alive. (BWN 143)¹⁶

¹⁶ Hier zeigt sich das Dionysische, an dem Apollinischen gemessen, als die ewige und ursprüngliche Kunstgewalt, die überhaupt die ganze Welt der Erscheinung in's Dasein ruft: in deren Mitte ein neuer Verklärungsschein nöthig wird, um die belebte Welt der Individuation im Leben festzuhalten. (KSA 1, 154-155)

Whereas Apollo creates the “countless illusions of beauty and mere appearance” that make “life worth living,” Dionysus ensures the originality and vitality of these illusions. Each of these forces characterizes the life of human beings, which is defined by its musical dissonance.

These aesthetic drives function in tandem to ameliorate the “terror[s] and horror[s] of existence” [“*die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins*”] (BWN 42; KSA 1, 35) through an aesthetic experience. A strong civilization, such as that of the ancient Greeks at its zenith does not employ these drives to *transcend* the “horrors” of material existence; they use them to *cope* with the horrors and even use them to their advantage. Indeed, the “horrors of existence” is merely a metaphor for dissonance. These horrors represent a consistent, ever-present, destabilizing force that can neither be controlled nor stopped. However, it is a force that *can certainly be harnessed* and cultivated through aesthetic engagement. Dissonance represents a daunting and sublime force that affirms life, yet one that is indifferent to any particular individual or civilization. Although the affirmation of dissonance and the “horrors of existence” represent an affirmation of *life*, it does not represent an affirmation of a metaphysical or otherworldly philosophy. The manner in which Nietzsche describes the dynamic between Apollo and Dionysus suggests that the Hellenic peoples celebrated the dissonant principle of their materialistic conditions. The joy they experienced in their aesthetic creations does not stem from a feeling of victory against uncontrollable forces, but their ability to define their own identity by their engagement with the dynamic and discordant forces that comprise existence. Simply put, Nietzsche describes the ancient Greeks as a dissonance-loving people.

The dissonant foundation of humanity is fundamentally duplicitous. Dissonance provokes humanity to draw upon the Apollonian to “resolve” and ameliorate the anxieties caused by its inherently volatile and unstable condition, yet dissonance relentlessly and continually erodes the foundation of any comforting “illusions of beauty of mere appearance.” The imminently destructive process of dissonance also challenges and incites

humanity to initiate the process of illusion making all over again. Whereas the artistic forces represented by Apollo continually labour to define and adapt themselves with respect to dissonance, it is the artistic prowess of yet another Greek god, Dionysus, who consistently and craftily, employs the raw and destructive power of dissonance to dirempt and erode the work of Apollo.

Yet, in contradiction to established readings of the dynamic between the Apollonian and Dionysian drives, I argue that *both* forces—the “Apollonian” and “Dionysian”—harness the force of dissonance to perform their respective artistic roles. Humanity’s Apollonian drive seeks to harness the inherently metaphorical, ironic, and duplicitous power of dissonance as the raw material to create pleasing and comforting illusions, while the Dionysian seeks to use the subversive, discordant power of dissonance to subvert the work of Apollo.

The disruptive power of Dionysus strengthens the partnership between these two gods. It sharpens the skills of each god and ensures the vitality and youth of humanity and its accomplishments. By youth, I simply refer to a state in which an individual or society is unencumbered by sentimentality and stagnation. A “tragic” civilization is always youthful, as tragic affirmation precludes the development of intransigence, decadence, and monotony. While tragic affirmation includes pain and unpleasant experiences and sensations, it ultimately provides a sense of joy in existing, much like a youth’s delight in taking risks.

Contrary to the many commentaries that describe dissonance as a specifically Dionysian phenomenon that is antithetical to the “rational,” “civilizing” artistic drive of Apollo, or those commentaries that actually equate the Dionysian to dissonance, Nietzsche’s text actually suggests that dissonance is the driving force behind *all* of humanity’s creative forces. At the end of aphorism 21, Nietzsche explicitly makes this point in the following passage:

The drama that, with the aid of music, unfolds itself before us with such inwardly illumined distinctness in all its movements and figures, as if we saw the texture coming into being on the loom as the shuttle flies to and fro—attains as a whole an effect that transcends *all Apollonian artistic effects*. In the total effect of tragedy, the Dionysian predominates once again. Tragedy closes with a sound which could never come from the realm of Apollonian art. And thus the Apollonian illusion reveals itself as what it really is—the *veiling during the performance of the tragedy of the real Dionysian effect*; but the latter is so powerful that it ends by forcing the Apollonian drama itself into a sphere where it begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom and even denies itself and its Apollonian visibility. Thus the intricate relation of the Apollonian and the Dionysian in tragedy may really be symbolized by a fraternal union of the two deities: Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo, finally the language of Dionysus; and so the highest goal of tragedy and of all art it attained. [emphases mine] (BWN 130)¹⁷

Although Nietzsche clearly privileges the Dionysian in many passages, Nietzsche repeatedly maintains that *both* gods derive their power from musical dissonance. The relationship between Apollo and Dionysus is reciprocal and inextricable—they are bound together in a fraternal union [*Bruderbund*], but ultimately, Apollo yields to the “wisdom” [*Weisheit*] of Dionysus. Each member of this union takes turns speaking the language of the other. They work together to create “tragedy.” However, ultimately, the *affirmation* of tragedy requires the willing submission of Apollo to Dionysus. Yet, this act of submission is not a defeat; on the contrary, it represents a conscious effort on the part of Apollo to achieve the tragic effect. Dionysus directly accesses the dissonant power of the universe. This direct access and understanding of dissonance and discord endows Dionysus the status of master

¹⁷ Das Drama, das in so innerlich erleuchteter Deutlichkeit aller Bewegungen und Gestalten, mit Hülfe der Musik, sich vor uns ausbreitet, als ob wir das Gewebe am Webstuhl im Auf- und Niederzucken entstehen sehen — erreicht als Ganzes eine Wirkung, die *jenseits aller apollinischen Kunstwirkungen* liegt. In der Gesamtwirkung der Tragödie erlangt das Dionysische wieder das Uebergewicht; sie schliesst mit einem Klange, der niemals von dem Reiche der apollinischen Kunst der tönen könnte. Und damit erweist sich die Apollinischen Täuschung als das, was sie ist, als die während der Dauer der Tragödie anhaltende Umschleierung der eigentlichen dionysischen Wirkung: die doch so mächtig ist, am Schluss das apollinische Drama selbst in eine Sphäre zu drängen, wo es mit dionysischer Weisheit zu reden beginnt und wo es sich selbst und seine apollinische Sichtbarkeit verneint. So wäre wirklich das schwierige Verhältnis des Apollinischen und des Dionysischen in der Tragödie durch einen Bruderbund beider Gottheiten zu symbolisieren: Dionysus redet die Sprache des Apollo, Apollo aber schliesslich die Sprache des Dionysus: womit das höchste Ziel der Tragödie und der Kunst überhaupt erreicht ist. (KSA 1, 139-40)

in their relationship. It is Dionysus who directs and orchestrates the aesthetic force of the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic.

As emphasized by many critics, including Benjamin Bennett (“Nietzsche’s Idea of Myth” 425), *The Birth of Tragedy* is in part a response to Friedrich Schiller’s *On the Aesthetic Education of Man in a Series of Letters* [Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen in einer Reihe von Briefen] (1795). Schiller’s letters attempt to outline an aesthetic system that Europeans can follow in order to overcome decadence and stagnation, and reinfuse their civilization with vitality, creativity, and grandeur. While Schiller does not advocate awakening sleeping gods to achieve his goal, he does describe the interplay between three fundamental drives: the “form drive” [Formtrieb], the “substance drive” (literally the “stuff drive” [Stofftrieb]), and a “play drive” [Spieltrieb], the latter of which coordinates the efforts of the form and substance drives. Nietzsche’s Apollonian and Dionysian drives bear a striking resemblance to Schiller’s form and substance drives, respectively, while the artist, seems to wield the equivalent of the play drive, which in his early works, Nietzsche simply refers to as “genius.”

According to Todd Kontje, who has devoted a substantial portion of his career to studying German aesthetics and the concept of *Bildung* (self-formation and self-education), Schiller’s aesthetic philosophy is overwrought by visions of an idealistic European civilization whose foundation consists of the loftiest and soberest principles of the Enlightenment—specifically the principles espoused by Kant:

Schiller maintains in his *Über die ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen* (1795) that *Bildung* through art renders political revolution unnecessary. In the ideal work of art, form and content stand in perfect harmony; contemplation of such a work reconciles conflicting drives in human beings and thereby completes the *Bildung* of the individual and helps to establish the utopian community of the aesthetic state. (5)

Clearly, Nietzsche does *not* share these particular goals. Although some critics believe that Nietzsche’s conceptualization of the Apollonian and Dionysian dynamic does support the project of the Enlightenment in the broad sense of the word (see the section entitled

“Resistance to Dissonance” below), no one would suggest that Nietzsche hankers for “perfect harmony.”

The Birth of Tragedy represents a powerful reconfiguration of Schiller’s model of humanity’s aesthetic drives. Whereas for Schiller, “the play drive unites the combined action of the two other instincts” [“*Der Spieltrieb also, als in welchem beide verbunden wirken*”] under the “constraint of reason” [“*Nötigung der Vernunft*”], the equivalent drive has a profoundly different purpose in Nietzsche’s model (trans. mine 58-59). For Nietzsche, the “playful” capacity of the artist—his “genius”—is to cultivate the *dissonance* between the Apollonian and Dionysian, and to ensure that the stage is set for the dissonance to continue growing, and even *spread*.

This reading accords with Claude Lévesque’s interpretation of *The Birth of Tragedy*. In the final chapter of *Dissonance*, entitled “Tragedy and the Spirit of Music” [“*Le tragédie et l’esprit de la musique*”] Lévesque explains that Apollo is not an “unconditional adversary” of Dionysus, but an accomplice in his cunning “game.” He takes just as much pleasure in the tragic game as Dionysus. Apollo depends upon Dionysus to ensure that his form-creating skills remain sharp and up-to-date:

Nevertheless, taken in its totality, the tragedy produces “an effect that *exceeds all artistic effects of which the Apollonian is capable*.” In this game of forces where there is always a dominant force and a dominated force, the veritable, dominant force is not Apollonian, but Dionysian. Apollo is not the unconditional adversary of Dionysus, but his accomplice and brother: he participates in his ruse, he plays his game, and he obeys his injunctions. The Dionysian always finishes by indirect imposition, by an intermediary, because he is the supervisor; it is he who holds all of the wires that actuate the Apollonian puppet. [...] Dionysian power is one in which symbols are apprehended simply as symbols. But like all self-referential systems, the symbols efface themselves—auto-erasure without end—and losing all autonomy and all sovereignty, becoming nothing but traces, that like a hand with its fingers cut off, pathetically and blindly indicates a terrible reality: “Everything that is profound loves to wear masks, but what is even profounder has the same hatred for images and symbols.” Tragic joy and the negation of symbols. (trans. mine, 175)¹⁸

¹⁸ Toutefois, prise dans sa totalité, la tragédie produit «un effet qui excède tous les effets artistiques dont est capable l’apollinien». Dans ce jeu de forces où il y a toujours une force

Lévesque argues that the Dionysian functions on a semiotic level. The Dionysian drive draws upon the power of dissonance to provoke the artist to recognize the arbitrary nature, ephemerality, and the interchangeability of all systems of codification. Yet, there is no sentimentality bound up in this process; dissonance brings joy and inspires the artist to continue the aesthetic process with the “traces” of his previous creations. Although Apollo may seem to be the more “civilized” and “human” god, it is actually Dionysus, who possesses the wisdom necessary to ensure the vitality of civilization. When channelled through an artist, Dionysus forces the artist to negate and destroy symbols.

Dionysus protects civilization from decadence and stagnation by *reminding* humanity that everything is merely appearance—or to be more specific—a dynamic “army of metaphors” and not rigid, cadaverous symbols. To draw upon Nietzsche’s essay on truth, Dionysus reignites humanity’s “metaphor drive” to remind people that its desire to find “truths”—its “truth drive”—is actually a desire to discover new and more vibrant metaphors. Although he does not employ the term “metaphor drive” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche does employ this term only a year later in “On Truth and Lies in the Extra-Moral Sense,” as I discuss in the Introduction (see especially pages 41-42). Nietzsche sees a clear connection between humanity’s Dionysian instinct and “its drive toward the creation of metaphors,” which Nietzsche describes in “Truth and Lies” as humanity’s “fundamental drive” [*“Fundamentaltrieb des Menschen”*] (trans. mine, KSA 1, 887).

dominante et une force dominée, la véritable force dominante n’est pas l’apollinienne mais la dionysiaque. Apollon n’est pas l’adversaire inconditionnel de Dionysos, mais son complice et son frère : il participe à sa ruse, il joue son jeu, il obéit à ses injonctions. Le dionysiaque finit toujours par s’imposer indirectement, par personne interposée, car il est le maître d’œuvre; c’est lui qui tient tous les fils et qui agite la marionnette apollinienne. [...] La puissance dionysiaque est telle en effet les symboles sont appréhendés comme tels, en tant que symboles. Or comme tout système de renvois, les symboles s’effacent eux-mêmes, s’auto-suppriment sans cesse, perdent toute autonomie et toute souveraineté, pour n’être plus que les traces qui, comme une main aux doigts coupés, indiquent pauvrement, aveuglement, une terrible réalité. «Tout ce qui est profond aime à se masquer, mais ce qui est encore plus profond a même la haine de l’image et du symbole.» Joie tragique de la négation des symboles. (175)

The Resistance to Dissonance

In 1935, Eliza Marian Butler published a provocative book entitled *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*, which surveys the effect that Greece has had on the German imagination since the seventeenth century. Unfortunately, the tyranny that ancient Greek culture has had on Germany has not always been positive, as demonstrated by the Nazis' apotheosis of it in their aesthetic theories. Butler's overarching argument is that ancient Greece has always served as a symbol that represents the lofty, often idealistic dreams of German thinkers. In her 1958 introduction to the book, written in response to the German defeat in World War Two, she notes that the German imagination has been enthralled by ancient Greece for centuries. Among those famous Germans who have fallen prey to the philosophy and art of the Hellenic peoples are disparate figures such as Goethe and Hitler. All of them have one thing in common. They stubbornly refuse to look beyond their intoxicating visions of Greece as the site of an idyllic Golden Age:

None of them ever visited the country; and Winckelmann and Goethe actually refused to do so when the opportunity was given them. Had they seen with their own eyes its wild, titanic landscapes and experienced its sometimes-menacing moods, they would perhaps have recognized the tragic element in Greek poetry and thought, which they resolutely ignored and eliminated from their conception of the golden age of Greece. They might have seen, what Nietzsche was later to stress so strongly [...], the dark background from which the Apolline art they worshipped sprang. And even this they only saw in [...] still and lifeless statues [...]. This somehow fitted in with their preconceived notions [...] which first Winckelmann and after him everyone else discerned the "noble simplicity and serene greatness" they strove to imitate. (xi)

Butler asserts that Nietzsche was one of the only thinkers who tried to look beyond the statues in museums, who saw discord and suffering, and very little "serenity" under the surface of Greek art. Nietzsche inverted the entire equation. Nietzsche's ideas were harshly criticized in the nineteenth century as much as they are today. However, the motivation behind Nietzsche's critics is not their objections to Nietzsche's artistic license with the institution of historiography. Their refusal to openly accept the possibility that Nietzsche's interpretation of ancient society *might* be correct was a terrifying prospect, as it would imply

that the forbearers of Western civilization were motivated by their love for the irrational, intoxication, and primitive sexual urges, and not lofty and utopic notions of reason and enlightenment. As I discuss below, Nietzsche's vision of the ancient Greeks as a dissonance-loving people has undermined the project of the Enlightenment.

The dynamics of the Apollonian-Dionysian *Bruderbund* are very contentious. Although francophone deconstructionist thinkers, such as Gilles Deleuze, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and Jacques Derrida freely acknowledge the supremacy of Dionysian wisdom in Nietzsche's thought, there are scholars who resist the notion. The perception of Dionysus as the master partner of the dialectic has not been widely accepted. Benjamin Bennett begins his article entitled "Nietzsche's Idea of Myth: The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Eighteenth-Century Aesthetics" (1979) by criticizing Walter Kaufmann's interpretation, one of the most celebrated Nietzsche scholars of twentieth century. In the first paragraph, Bennett asserts "Kaufmann maintains that Nietzsche, if forced to choose, would 'favor' the Apollonian over the Dionysian because the latter, taken by itself, is in essence a 'destructive disease'" (420). Bennett cites Kaufmann's famous book on Nietzsche, entitled *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, in which the latter argues that Nietzsche's "thesis is that it took both [gods] to make possible the birth of tragedy, and he emphasizes the Dionysian only because he feels that the Apollonian genius of the Greeks cannot be fully understood apart from it" (128). This, however, is not an accurate statement. Bennett argues throughout his essay that Kaufmann consistently and *persistently* misinterprets Nietzsche's texts (perhaps even deliberately). He also expresses his disdain that so many Nietzsche scholars have accepted these misinterpretations without question. According to Bennett, *The Birth of Tragedy* provides "us with a freshly integrated historical sense of our own intellectual situation" (432) by "detaching" myth and aesthetics from nineteenth century metaphysics. Bennett's perspective accords with Nietzsche's early writings on tragedy, as well as his mature reflections of his own philosophy in *Ecce Homo*. Kaufmann's post-war observations are excusable in light of his desire to rescue Nietzsche from being associated with National

Socialism and anti-Semitism after World War Two. He probably lost some sleep contemplating the consequences of telling his postwar students that Nietzsche was a Dionysian thinker who was inspired by visions of a world of dissonance.

Unfortunately, the tendency to minimize the provocative implications of “Dionysian wisdom” still figures prominently in twenty-first century Nietzsche scholarship. Douglas Smith, editor and translator of the 2000 Oxford Classics edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, seems to make an explicit connection between dissonance and the Dionysian. However, he dismisses the significance of it, just like Walter Kaufmann:

For Nietzsche, the aesthetics of dissonance finds its ultimate justification in the fact that man is “dissonance in human form” (§ 25), torn and divided through the process of individuation and separation from an original unity. Musical dissonance then becomes the most effective artistic means of representing the pain of individual existence and its divided nature, the most expressive Apollonian form assumed by Dionysian loss of identity, form pushed to the limits of dissolution into formlessness. This emphasis on dissonance provides the book with its Dionysian conclusion. The final paragraph of the text, however, offers the more serene, and Apollonian, evocation of an imagined encounter between modern man and Greek culture in ancient Athens, concluding with an invitation to attend a tragedy and so to give an offering to its twin presiding deities, Apollo and Dionysus. (xxi)

In his footnotes to the translation, Smith discourages readers from taking the implications of the phrase “dissonance become man” (“*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*”) too seriously. According to Smith, this phrase indicates that Nietzsche merely “rejoins and radicalizes the Romantic view of human existence as *Zerrissenheit* or divided consciousness,” and that “The Dionysian state is one of dissonance which is overlaid and concealed by the harmony of the Apollonian” (163). Smith’s comments suggest that the purpose of the Dionysian and dissonance in Nietzsche’s texts, ultimately serves to reinforce the “serene” power of Apollo over the destabilizing, intrusive power of dissonance.

One can only speculate upon the reason that so many Nietzsche scholars overlook Nietzsche’s straightforward opinions about the primacy of the Dionysian. Smith directly examines the overwhelming and ubiquitous evidence that *The Birth of Tragedy* promotes a new humanism based on dissonance, yet he attempts to circumvent it by paraphrasing and

misinterpreting the book's final paragraphs. Smith's analyses imply that Nietzsche is simply being ironic about dissonance and the Dionysian, and that his true intention is to endorse the Apollonian in a surprise about-face in the final aphorism. The quote that Smith paraphrases, speculates upon what a modern man might feel if he were to dream "that he was carried back into an ancient Greek existence" [*"in eine althellenische Existenz sich zurückversetzt"*] (BWN 144; KSA 1, 155). Nietzsche answers his own question in the final lines of the book:

To a man in such a mood, however, an old Athenian, looking up at him with the sublime eyes of Aeschylus, might reply: "But say this, too, curious stranger: how much did this people have to suffer to be able to become so beautiful! But now follow me to witness a tragedy, and sacrifice with me in the temple of both deities" (BWN 144)¹⁹

Smith clearly interprets "beautiful" as the ancient Greeks' triumph of the Apollonian over the Dionysian. He believes that Apollo has tamed Dionysus. Apollo only lets Dionysus emerge when it is necessary to reaffirm his own superiority.

Thus, many scholars of Nietzsche studies interpret dissonance to be a "tool" of man, or perhaps merely a primitive "instinct" of man that needs to be controlled and reigned in by reason. Most of them do not seem to believe that dissonance serves as the basis for a humanism in Nietzsche's works. However, these readings appear to stand in contradiction to the language on the pages of Nietzsche's texts. The reluctance of some scholars to accept Nietzsche's apotheosis of musical dissonance in *The Birth of Tragedy* is no different from the myopia of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth century scholars that Butler criticizes in *The Tyranny of Greece over Germany*. Thus, the disagreement among scholars regarding the significance of the Dionysian and musical dissonance in Nietzsche's works reflects the continuation of a centuries old debate in philosophy and the social sciences. The projects of modernity and the Enlightenment are predicated upon consonance, "reason," and secular

¹⁹ —Einem so Gestimmten dürfte aber ein greiser Athener, mit dem erhabenen Auge des Aeschylus zu ihm aufblickend, entgegen: „Sage aber auch dies, du wunderlicher Fremdling: wie viel musste dies Volk leiden, um so schön werden zu können! Jetzt aber folge mir zur Tragödie und opfere mit mir im Tempel beider Gottheiten!" (KSA 1, 156)

humanism. But is there room for alternative conceptions of modernity, such as Nietzsche's, which embrace radically subversive epistemologies based on musical dissonance? The resistance to dissonance is pervasive in modern theoretical discourse.

Toward an Epistemology of Musical Dissonance

Nietzsche describes the final product of the Apollonian-Dionysian effect as "dreams." Although Nietzsche's concept of "dreams" certainly includes the actual dreams that someone might have while asleep, the term refers to the act of aesthetic creation in general. Dreams represent the sensual and conceptual images that result from the interplay of the Apollonian and Dionysian aesthetic drives. Nietzsche seems comfortable calling them dreams, as this aesthetic process is the result of humanity's struggle to come to terms with the "horrors of existence," which I maintain is nothing other than a metaphor for dissonance. Although these "dreams" function to ameliorate the anxieties caused by the destructive and destabilizing reality of this-worldly existence, Nietzsche is clear that the Hellenic dreamer—prior to the advent of Platonic thought—gained great pleasure from the knowledge that dreams are purely human constructs (that is, that a dream is nothing more than a dream). It was not until the rise of metaphysics that dreaming became pathological, as Nietzsche describes in the following passage from "The Dionysian Worldview" [*Die dionysische Weltanschauung*], a text composed in 1870:

We dream with pleasure as we understand the *figure* [*Gestalt*] directly; all forms speak to us; nothing is indifferent or unnecessary. Yet even while this dream-reality is most alive, we nevertheless retain a pervasive sense that it is *semblance*; only when this ceases to be the case do the pathological effects set in whereby [the] dream no longer enlivens and the healing natural energy of its states ceases. ("Dionysiac World View" 119)²⁰

²⁰ Wir genießen im unmittelbaren Verständniß der *Gestalt*, alle Formen sprechen zu uns; es giebt nichts Gleichgültiges und Unnötiges. Bei dem höchsten Leben dieser Traumwirklichkeit haben wir doch noch die durchschimmernde Empfindung ihres *Scheins*; erst wenn diese aufhört, beginnen die pathologischen Wirkungen, in denen der Traum nicht mehr erquickt, und die heilende Naturkraft seiner Zustände aufhört. (KSA 1, 553)

Walter Kaufmann promotes the notion that Nietzsche's discussion of dreams is comparable to Sigmund Freud's description of dreams as the manifestation of "wish-fulfillment" (BWN 60).²¹ Although this explanation of dreams might accord with Nietzsche's description of "pathological dreams," in which the dreamer is unaware—or at least unwilling to admit—that his dreams are nothing more than dreams, it does not accurately describe the Hellenic dreamer. The Hellenic dreamer merely fantasizes about the implications of his dreams. He is entirely *aware* of the fact that his dreams merely represent a flight of fancy in an inherently dissonant universe.

According to Nietzsche, the Hellenic peoples lived side-by-side with Hellenic gods. Whereas the god or gods of metaphysical religions help to reinforce the notion of a metaphysical universe in the minds of their worshippers, the Hellenic gods of pre-Platonic Greece help their worshippers to cope with the harsh realities of living in an entirely this-worldly and dissonant universe. Nietzsche believes that this type of god dominated pre-Platonic Hellenic spiritual life. The Olympian gods teamed-up with their worshippers to ameliorate the dissonant "horrors of existence." They suffered *together*. Although the gods possessed superhuman powers and control over natural forces, they were neither omnipotent nor representative of a transcendent world. The Greeks needed these powerful companions to serve as intermediaries between the harsh reality of existence and the anthropomorphized world of man. As Nietzsche explains in the third aphorism of *The Birth of Tragedy*, the gods represent one of the Greeks' supreme aesthetic creations. They are actually the product of Hellenic dreams:

Now it is as if the Olympian magic mountain had opened before us and revealed its roots to us. The Greek knew and felt the terror and horror of existence. That he might endure this terror at all; he had to interpose between himself and life the radiant dreambirth of the Olympians. [...] This was again and again overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian *middle world* of art; or at any rate it was veiled and withdrawn from sight. It was in order to be able to live that the Greeks had to create these gods from a most profound need. Perhaps we may picture the process to ourselves

²¹ See also pages 56-57 in the Introduction.

somewhat as follows: out of the original Titanic divine order of terror, the Olympian divine order of joy gradually evolved through the Apollonian impulse toward beauty, just as roses burst from thorny bushes. How else could this people, so sensitive, so vehement in its desires, so singularly capable of *suffering*, have endured existence, if it had not been revealed to them in their gods, surrounded with a higher glory. (BWN 42-43)²²

Nietzsche's language implies that the Greeks were at least partially aware that their gods were aesthetic creations. He describes the creation of the Olympic gods as a self-conscious and deliberate act of the Greeks. Although it is difficult to draw a conclusion regarding the Greeks' attitude toward their gods based on a relatively short analysis of this passage, such an interpretation would be consistent with Nietzsche's description of the Greeks as an aesthetically minded people with an outright this-worldly philosophical view of the universe. In addition, my hypothesis that Nietzsche describes the ancient Greeks as a people who self-consciously created their own gods, accords with Nietzsche's emphasis on the act of "god creation" in his later works. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *The Anti-Christ*, Nietzsche, and his fictional counterpart, Zarathustra, implore their readers to revitalize civilization by creating new, dancing gods. As he states in an aphorism entitled "On Reading and Writing" ["*Von Lesen und Schreiben*"] in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: "I would believe only in a god who could dance" ["*Ich würde nur an einen Gott glauben, der zu tanzen versteht*"] (TPN 153; KSA 4, 49).

²² Jetzt öffnet sich uns gleichsam der olympische Zauberberg und zeigt uns seine Wurzeln. Der Grieche kannte und empfand die Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins: um überhaupt leben zu können, musste er vor sie hin die glänzende Traumgeburt der Olympischen stellen.[...] [das] wurde von den Griechen durch jene künstlerische *Mittelwelt* der Olympier fortwährend von Neuem überwunden, jedenfalls verhüllt und dem Anblick entzogen. Um leben zu können, mussten die Griechen diese Götter, aus tiefster Nöthigung, schaffen: welchen Herrschen diese Götter, aus tiefster Nöthigung, schaffen: welchen Hergang wir uns wohl so vorzustellen haben, dass aus der ursprünglichen titanischen Götterordnung des Schreckens durch jenen apollinischen Schönheitstrieb in langsamen Uebergängen die olympische Götterordnung der Freude entwickelt wurde: wie Rosen aus dornigen Gebüsch hervorbrechen. Wie anders hätte jenes so reizbar empfindende, so ungestüm begehrende, zum *Leiden* so einzig befähigte Volk das Dasein ertragen können, wenn ihm nicht dasselbe, von einer höheren Glorie umflossen, in seinem Göttern gezeigt worden wäre. (KSA 1, 35-36)

In Nietzsche's early writings, the most skillful manipulators of the Apollonian and Dionysian drives are children. At times, Nietzsche describes children as demigods. They have the ability to engage with their Apollonian and Dionysian drives as if they were actually able to "play" with the gods themselves. Children have little interest in allowing dreams to be mistaken for reality. Their main objective is to continually create and destroy dreams—just for the fun of it. Nietzsche frequently employs the image of children at play when he describes the philosophy of the pre-Socratic (or "pre-Platonic," as Nietzsche prefers to say) philosopher Heraclitus throughout his early works. In the second to last section of *The Birth of Tragedy* (aphorism 24), Nietzsche describes the importance of "artistically employed dissonances" [trans. mine, Kaufmann's: "artificially employed"] [*"künstlerisch verwendeten Dissonanz"*] (TPN 141; KSA 1, 153) as a necessary component of truly great tragic art to express the ineffable—the realm beyond the Apollonian domain of abstractions, concepts, and plasticity. Nietzsche describes this realm as "*das Unendliche*," a word that refers to that which is without "end," delineation, permanence, or simply "infinite":

Is it not possible that by calling to our aid the musical relation of dissonance we may meanwhile have made the difficult problem of the tragic effect much easier? For we now understand what it means to wish to see tragedy and at the same time to long to get beyond all seeing: referring to the artistically employed dissonances, we should have to characterize the corresponding state by saying that we desire to hear at the same time long to get beyond all hearing. That striving for the infinite, the wing-beat of longing that accompanies the highest delight in clearly perceived reality, reminds us that in both states [being under the influence of the inseparable processes of the Apollonian and the Dionysian] we recognize a Dionysian phenomenon: again and again it reveals to us the playful construction of the individual world as the overflow of primordial delight. Thus the dark Heraclitus compares the world-building force to a playing child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again. (BWN 141-142)²³

²³ Sollte sich nicht inzwischen dadurch, dass wir die Musikrelation der Dissonanz zu Hülfe nahmen, jenes schwierige Problem der tragischen Wirkung wesentlich erleichtert haben? Verstehen wir doch jetzt, was es heissen will, in der Tragödie zugleich schauen zu wollen und sich über das Schauen hinaus zu sehnen: welchen Zustand wir in Betreff der künstlerisch verwendeten Dissonanz eben so zu charakterisiren hätten, dass wir hören wollen und über das Hören uns zugleich hinaussehen. Jenes Streben in's Unendliche, der Flügelschlag der Sehnsucht, bei der höchsten Lust an der deutlich percipirten Wirklichkeit,

Nietzsche emphasizes that it is “artistically employed dissonance” that gives human beings the *means* to “strive for the infinite.” Again, dissonance serves as the *foundation* for an important process. Only through *dissonance* are human beings able to “recognize the Dionysian phenomenon” of a world educational, formative, and constructive force [*Weltbildende Kraft*, Kaufmann’s translation: “world-building force”] which is best represented by a cycle of playful, yet willful, creation and destruction of forms, contours, schemata, concepts. This process represents a constant cycle of individuation and deindividuation; and for those that are able to recognize the foundational importance and power of this process, it is a “primordial delight” to experience! In this passage, Nietzsche provides a powerful example: children delighting in the constant, playful, creation and destruction of sandcastles.

Although Nietzsche states that this delight is felt within the “individual world” [*Individualwelt*], I would argue that we should read the term “individual” as indicating a variety of carefully delimited and defined perspectives. These perspectives might very well represent the perspective of an “individual” *person*, but potentially also a group of people, a society, or even a civilization. The basis for my assertion is simply that Nietzsche describes this process with respect to the *tragic arts*, which in the context of Nietzsche’s works, represents an experience that involves a variety of shifting and interconnected subjectivities, including individuals, an audience, a theater company, the general public, and various social institutions.

The relationship between dissonance and the Dionysian is crucial. On the one hand, it seems as though the Dionysian represents a form of dissonance itself, as Nietzsche describes the Dionysian drive as one marked by discord, disharmony, and the dissolution of

erinnern daran, dass wir in beiden Zuständen ein dionysisches Phänomen zu erkennen haben, das uns immer von Neuem wieder das spielende Aufbauen und Zertrümmern der Individualwelt als den Ausfluss einer Urlust offenbart, in einer ähnlichen Weise, wie wenn von Heraklit dem Dunkeln die weltbildende Kraft einem Kinde verglichen wird, das spielend Steine hin und her setzt und Sandhaufen aufbaut und wider einwirft. (KSA 1, 153)

form. These are all attributes that characterize the Dionysian effect. However, I argue that dissonance—specifically “artistically employed dissonance”—should be characterized as a *process of cognition and understanding* rather than simply a process of destruction. To describe the Dionysian effect on Apollonian constructs, Nietzsche uses a variety of scientific terms that connote gradual, continual, and organic processes of metamorphosis, including *Auflösung* (dissolution, decomposition) and *Zerfall* (ruin, decomposition). These terms describe a process that is far more complex than outright “destruction.” They represent a gradual process of disassemblage and diremption in which the relationship between the various parts of a form, concept, or idea are revealed in a variety of perspectives. During this process, the artist expands his knowledge by evaluating the dissonant relationships that the strife between the Apollonian and Dionysian reveals. This process of cognition that relies upon dissonance accords with Schoenberg’s descriptions of how dissonance can form the foundation of a means of acquiring and interpreting knowledge (see “The Emancipation of Dissonance” in the Introduction).

This passage clearly indicates that a productive and vital balance of the Apollonian and Dionysian drives is optimal only when we attain a “clearly perceived reality.” Nietzsche describes this reality as representing a process of achieving a certain level of understanding and cognition, but also being able to *imagine* or *conceive* of a state of being that is *beyond* understanding and cognition—that is, “understanding” and “cognition” from a conventional, rational-scientific perspective. Nietzsche explains this within the context of the aesthetic world of the fine arts, to “see tragedy and yet get beyond all seeing,” and to “hear [music] and get beyond all hearing.”

Nietzsche consistently describes music as the form of art that depicts the most basic and genuine representation of the “will,” as well as the most dynamic and foundational component of the finest examples of classical Greek tragedy. Thus, Nietzsche chooses to utilize a *musical process* to represent the means of reaching a higher level of understanding. Nietzsche’s description of “the unending” and infinity is sublime.

Although it seems to be a vague and almost metaphysical concept, Nietzsche's formulation of infinity represents a unique cartography of the universe. This sublime point in the universe is what Nietzsche describes as a "point of indifference" [*"indifferenter Punkt"*]. In an unpublished note written between the end of 1870 and the spring of 1871, Nietzsche explains that "nature" is not beautiful—it is in fact a "disruptively ugly and a point of indifference" [*"das Störende-Häßliche und ein indifferenter Punkt"*] (*Early Notebooks* 34; KSA 7, 164[7:116]). The point of indifference represents pure dissonance, as it does not harmonize with anything except perhaps with discord itself. Like dissonance, it represents infinity in the broadest sense of the word. Infinity is entirely indifferent to anything created, perceived, or understood by man. Thus, the "point" of indifference actually represents a manifold of infinite possibilities. Yet, in a seemingly contradictory manner, Nietzsche describes it as a unitary phenomenon, that is, a "point," which might indicate that for Nietzsche, every "point" in the material world is defined by these infinite possibilities. The point of indifference surrounds humanity and serves as a constant reminder of the arbitrary nature of its concepts:

There is no natural beauty. But there is the disruptively ugly and a point of indifference. Think of the reality of dissonance as opposed to the ideality of consonance. What is productive, then, is the pain, which creates the beautiful as a related counter-colour—of that point of indifference. [...] It is continually living and growing, a world within the world. But is the reality perhaps only pain, and the *representation* born of that? But then of what type is the *enjoyment*? The enjoyment of something not real but only ideal? And is perhaps all life, as far as it is enjoyment, nothing but such a reality? And what is the point of indifference reached by nature? How is painlessness possible? Intuition is an aesthetic product. What then is real? What is it that intuit? Are diversity of pain and indifference of pain possible as conditions of a being? (*Early Notebooks* 34)²⁴

²⁴ Ein Naturschönes giebt es nicht. Wohl aber das Störende-Häßliche und ein indifferenter Punkt. Man denke an die Realität der Dissonanz gegenüber der Idealität der Konsonanz. Produktiv ist also der Schmerz, der als verwandte Gegenfarbe das Schöne erzeugt — aus jenem indifferenten Punkte. [...] Diese ist eine fortwährend lebende wachsende, eine Welt in der Welt. Ist nun aber die Realität vielleicht nur der Schmerz, und daher die *Vorstellung* geboren? Welcher Art ist aber dann der *Genuß*? Der Genuß an etwas nicht Realem, nur Idealeem? Und ist vielleicht alles Leben, soweit es Genuß ist, nichts als eine solche Realität? Und welches ist jener indifferente Punkt, den die Natur erreicht? Wie ist Schmerzlosigkeit

Nietzsche describes dissonance as a “reality,” in contradistinction to consonance, which he describes as an “ideality.” We might feel impelled to flee to the comforts of ideality, and even call it “beautiful,” in order to shield us from the apparent ugliness, discomfort, and suffering of “reality.” Although this passage is only a fragment and clearly contains some inconsistencies, we can see the beginning of an epistemology and aesthetic that accords with Nietzsche’s description of the will to power over a decade later. Nietzsche urges us to abandon metaphysical comforts as a source of pleasure and to seek knowledge, beauty, and joy in discord and dissonance. To borrow a phrase from his 1888 book, *The Case of Wagner: A Musician’s Problem* [*Der Fall Wagner. Ein Musikanten-Problem*], Nietzsche challenges his reader to “Dare to be Ugly”:

And this is the definition of passion. Passion—or the gymnastics of what is ugly on the rope of enharmonics.—Let us dare, my friends to be ugly. Wagner has dared it. Let us dauntlessly roll in front of us the mud of the most contrary harmonies. Let us not spare our hands. Only thus will we become *natural*. (BWN, 624)²⁵

Nietzsche suggests that the ugliness of enharmonics—a term that in this particular context appears to imply the dissonance between enharmonic temperaments and sonorities—can provide us with a path toward the development of an epistemology that is far more “natural” and enlivening than metaphysical epistemologies. As Nietzsche explains in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is only through “artistically employed” musical dissonance that we can begin to make sense of the world for what it really is.

möglich? Die Anschauung ist ein aesthetisches Produkt. Was ist dann real? Was ist das Anschauende? Vielheit des Schmerzes und Indifferenz desselben als Zustände eines Wesens möglich? (KSA 7, 164-165[7:116])

²⁵ Und dies ist die Definition der Leidenschaft. — Leidenschaft — oder die Gymnastik des Hässlichen auf dem Seile der Enharmonik. — Wagen wir es, meine Freunde, hässlich zu sein! Wagner hat es gewagt! Wälzen wir unverzagt den Schlamm der widrigsten Harmonien vor uns her! Schonen wir unsre Hände nicht! Erst damit werden wir *natürlich*... (KSA 6, 25)

Tragedy and Science

The beginning of Nietzsche's unpublished essay, "Homer's Contest" [*"Homer's Wettkampf"*] (1872), portrays Nietzsche's belief that humanity must embrace its relationship to a fundamentally dissonant universe. In fact, humanity has the responsibility to do so for its own sake. The "inhuman" and dissonant aspects of nature are indeed the most "fertile soil" in which humanity can grow:

If we speak of *humanity* [*Humanität*], it is on the basic assumption that it should be that which *separates* man from nature and is his mark of distinction. But in reality there is no such separation: 'natural' characteristics and those called specifically 'human' [*menschlich*] have grown together inextricably. Man, in his highest, finest powers, is all nature and carries nature's uncanny dual character in himself. Those capacities of his which are terrible and are viewed as inhuman are perhaps, indeed, the fertile soil from which alone all humanity, in feelings, deeds and works, can grow forth. (95)²⁶

This remarkable passage plainly states that there are two notions of humanity—one that rests on the assumption that man represents something separate and apart from nature, and one which allows no room for such separation. Unfortunately, the nuance of Nietzsche's choice of words is lost in the English translation. To render "humanity" into English, Nietzsche employs the Latin-based word *Humanität*—which conjures modern European, rational-scientific and religious conceptions of the human being—and the German term *Menschen*, to represent a concept of the being human that does not respect a nature-human dualism. Nietzsche goes so far as to claim that the specifically "terrible" qualities of nature can and should be the "fertile soil" for human development of all kinds. "Homer's Contest" posits that life during the Homeric age was driven by an all-consuming spirit of *erism* in which all human activity was impelled by the desire to constantly compete

²⁶ Wenn man von *Humanität* redet, so liegt die Vorstellung zu Grunde, es möge das sein, was den Menschen von der Natur *abscheidet* und auszeichnet. Aber eine solche Abscheidung giebt es in Wirklichkeit nicht: die „natürlichen“ Eigenschaften und die eigentlich „menschlich“ genannten sind untrennbar verwachsen. Der Mensch, in seinen höchsten und edelsten Kräften, ist ganz Natur und trägt ihren unheimlichen Doppelcharakter an sich. Seine furchtbaren und also unmenschlich geltenden Befähigungen sind vielleicht sogar der furchtbare Boden, aus dem allein alle Humanität, in Regungen Thaten und Werken hervorwachsen kann. (KSA 1, 783)

and struggle, without end or telos. Life simply emulated the raw, vital, and dissonant power of nature. Erism appears to be a metaphor for musical dissonance.

Nietzsche posits aesthetics as the basis for the various branches of human inquiry, or what he broadly refers to as *Wissenschaft*—that is, science. The health and vitality of all aspects of human civilization are dependent upon a life-affirmative understanding of the world and environment in which it exists. According to Nietzsche, science and epistemology are fundamentally aesthetic matters.

As Nietzsche emphasizes in his 1886 introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, a set of aphorisms entitled “Attempt at a Self-Criticism” [“*Versuch einer Selbstkritik*”] *The Birth of Tragedy* is about *science*:

What I then got hold of, something frightful and dangerous, a problem with horns but not necessarily a bull, in any case, a *new* problem—today I should say that it was *the problem of science itself*, science considered for the first time as problematic, as questionable. But the book in which my youthful courage and suspicion found an outlet—what an *impossible* book had to result from a task so uncongenial to youth! Constructed from a lot of immature overgreen personal experiences, all of them close to the limits of communication, presented in the context of *art*—for the problem of science cannot be recognized in the context of science—a book perhaps for artists who have an analytic and retrospective penchant [...]. (BWN 18)²⁷

In 1886, Nietzsche claims that his book is about *science* [*Wissenschaft*]*—a subject that Nietzsche claims is intimately connected to an aesthetic worldview. It is important to bear in mind that the word Wissenschaft has a broad range of meanings in the German language, that extend far beyond the conventional use of the English word “science.” Wissenschaft refers to empirically based science, as it does in English, but also academic disciplines, news,*

²⁷ Was ich damals zu fassen bekam, etwas Furchtbares und Gefährliches, ein Problem mit Hörnern, nicht nothwendig gerade ein Stier, jedenfalls ein *neues* Problem: heute würde ich sagen, dass es das *Problem der Wissenschaft* selbst war—Wissenschaft zum ersten Male als Problematisch, als fragwürdig gefasst. Aber das Buch, in dem mein jugendlicher Muth und Argwohn sich damals ausliess—war für ein *unmögliches* Buch mußte aus einer so jugendwidrigen Aufgabe erwachsen! Aufgebaut aus lauter vorzeitigen übergründen Selbsterlebnissen, welche alle hart an der Schwelle des Mittheilbaren lagen, hingestellt auf den Boden der *Kunst*—denn das Problem der Wissenschaft kann nicht auf dem Boden der Wissenschaft erkannt werden—, ein Buch vielleicht für Künstler mit dem Nebenhange analytischer und retrospektiver Fähigkeiten [...]. (KSA 1, 13)

and lore. In addition, the word *Wissenschaft* reflects the manifold meanings expressed by the Latin word *cognitio*, which describes the processes of learning and cognition, and the knowledge that these processes produce. As Babette Babich explains:

Intriguingly, although [...] the German term *Wissenschaft* and the English word *science* ought to be distinguished, commentators tend not to explicate the difference in question. Each word carries its own penumbra of meanings and substitutions, articulating on each side a divergent range of associations, both metonymic and metaphorical. Dating from the fourteenth century, the term *Wissenschaft* was coined in German for the needs of a theological and mystical context in order to translate the Latin *sciens*, *scientia*, terms given as *science* in English, and related to *scire*, to know, *scindere*, to cut or divide. Key here in understanding *Wissenschaft* is the set of associations of the root terms, in particular the powerful etymological array via *wissen* linked to the Old High German *wizzan* and Old Saxon *wita* but also the English *wit* and *wot* and thence to the Sanskrit *vêda* and the ancient Greek *oîda*, as well as the Latin *videre*. (105)²⁸

Babich contends that Nietzsche's claim that *The Birth of Tragedy* is indeed about science, conveys the manifold meanings of science embraced by the ancients, Provençal troubadours, the natural philosophers of the Renaissance, and other seekers of knowledge whose methods did not conform to the cold, mathematical, and objective structures that have predominated more recent centuries. Nietzsche's *The Gay Science* is perhaps the most compelling evidence that Babich is right. As outlined in the first chapter of Kathleen Higgins' book on *The Gay Science*, entitled *Comic Relief*, the title of Nietzsche's book was inspired by the chivalric code of the Provençal troubadours of the high middle ages: "*La gaya scienza*, or *gai saber*, was an expression for the troubadours' art, which included music, poetry, and gallant expression" (16). Science is an art that requires the use of the entire body, sciences, emotions, and affects. A complete scientific view of the world demands that we consider the importance of dance, music, and affects.

Nietzsche believes that those peoples and civilizations that can cultivate their inherent dissonant talents are a "tragic people." As Gilles Deleuze states in his 1962 monograph on Nietzsche:

²⁸ Grimm, <http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemma=wissenschaft>.

According to Nietzsche it has never been understood that the tragic=the joyful. This is another way of putting the great equation: to will=to create. We have not understood that the tragic is pure and multiple positivity, dynamic gaiety. Affirmation is tragic because it affirms chance and the necessity of chance; because it affirms multiplicity and the unity of multiplicity. The dice throw is tragic. All the rest is nihilism, Christian and dialectic pathos, caricature of the tragic, comedy of bad conscience. (36)²⁹

To truly *affirm* the tragic—and not merely depict it superficially—one must be able to experience “joy” in the dynamic multiplicity of the universe. Any Apollonian construct, such as a work of art, a tragic drama, or a concept, represents one of a potentially infinite interpretations of life. We can only delight in the Apollonian if we visualize it with respect to the dissonant and unpredictable universe that looms in the background. This juxtaposition endows Apollonian constructs with true value. For Deleuze, it is the inherent dissonance in the concept of the tragic that brings “joy” and creates something truly beautiful that makes life “worth living.” To admire the supposed “permanence” of Apollonian forms and concepts, and attempt to utilize the Apollonian to “correct” the universe of its dissonant nature, is neither tragic nor joyful. In fact, it is not truly Apollonian either, as Apollo would never attempt to withdraw from his partnership with Dionysus.

According to Nietzsche, Euripides undermined the strength of the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic by infusing his works with Socratism, specifically the apotheosis of metaphysical knowledge:

Like Plato, Euripides undertook to show to the world the reverse of the “unintelligent” poet; his aesthetic principle that “to be beautiful everything must be conscious” is, as I have said, the parallel to the Socratic, “to be good everything must be conscious.” So we may consider Euripides as the poet of aesthetic Socratism.

Socrates, however, was that *second spectator* who did not comprehend and therefore did not esteem the Old Tragedy; in alliance with him Euripides

²⁹ On n’a jamais compris selon Nietzsche ce qu’était le tragique: tragique=joyeux. Autre façon de poser le grande équation: vouloir=créer. On n’a pas compris que le tragique était positivité pure et multiple, gaieté dynamique. Tragique est l’affirmation: parce qu’elle affirme le hasard et, du hasard, la nécessité; parce qu’elle affirme le devenir et, du devenir, l’être; parce qu’elle affirme le multiple et, du multiple, l’un. Tragique est le coup de dés. Tout le reste est nihilisme, pathos dialectique et chrétien, caricature du tragique, comédie de la mauvaise conscience. (41)

dared to be the herald of a new art. If it was this of which the older tragedy perished, then aesthetic Socratism was the murderous principle; but insofar as the struggle was directed against the Dionysian element in the older tragedy, we may recognize in Socrates the opponent of Dionysus. (BWN 86)³⁰

Socrates' exaltation and apotheosis of the intelligible, conscious, and rational as the foundation of an epistemology, marks a radical shift in human understanding. In addition, it corresponds with an analogous shift in aesthetics.

In Socrates' system, "good" knowledge is "conscious" knowledge. According to Nietzsche, Euripides inspired a like-minded revolution in aesthetics: that which is "beautiful" (and therefore *good*) must be "conscious" [*bewusst*] as well. In each of these cases, Nietzsche clearly associates the "conscious" with a metaphysical epistemology that does not accord with the dissonant cosmology and epistemology that he ascribes to the pre-Socratic philosophers. Nietzsche associates this shift in valuation with a revolt against the "fraternal union" of the Apollonian-Dionysian aesthetic. Socrates' emphasis on "conscious knowledge" indicates an epistemology that privileges *consonant* knowledge. Being "conscious" of something equates to understanding its relationship to a metaphysical system of knowledge.

Above all, the Socratic and Euripidean influence on philosophy and art represents the denigration of the "strife" between Apollo and Dionysus that characterizes the Apollonian-Dionysian aesthetic [*"der Kampf gegen das Dionysische der älteren Kunst"*] (KSA 1, 87-88). Socrates and Euripides *oppose* Dionysus and his significance as the guiding force of an epistemological and aesthetic principle. As it is, Socrates' denial of the Dionysian, and his

³⁰ Euripides unternahm es, wie es auch Plato unternommen hat, das Gegenstück des „unverständigen“ Dichters der Welt zu zeigen; sein ästhetischer Grundsatz, „alles muss bewusst sein, um schön zu sein“, ist, wie ich sagte, der Parallelsatz zu dem sokratischen „alles muß bewusst sein, um gut zu sein.“ Demgemäss darf uns Euripides als der Dichter des ästhetischen Sokratismus gelten. Sokrates aber war jener *zweite Zuschauer*, der die ältere Tragödie nicht begriff und deshalb nicht achtete; mit ihm im Bunde wagte Euripides, der Herold eines neuen Kunstschaffens zu sein. Wenn an diesem die ältere Tragödie zu Grunde ging, so ist also der ästhetische Sokratismus das mörderische Princip: insofern aber der Kampf gegen das Dionysische der älteren Kunst gerichtet war, erkennen wir in Sokrates den Gegner des Dionysus [...]. (KSA 1, 87-88)

exaltation of a *purely Apollonian* aesthetic that is entirely divorced from its union with the Dionysian, marks the complete and total destruction of the aesthetic itself. In effect, Socrates breaks the “fraternal union” between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. As one cannot exist without the other, Socrates effectively annihilates and nullifies both aesthetic drives. Nietzsche considers the magnitude of this destruction to be tantamount to the annihilation of “art” itself. To be Socratic is to harbour *murderous* tendencies toward art, or as Kaufmann renders it, an “art-destroying tendency” [“*kunstmörderischen Tendenz*”] (BWN 107; KSA 1, 112).

The manifestations of Apollo and Dionysus that remain after this reconfiguration of their relationship are no longer the same gods: “And because you [Euripides] had abandoned Dionysus, Apollo abandoned you” [“*Und weil du Dionysus verlassen, so verliess dich auch Apollo*”] (BWN 75; KSA 1, 75). The moment that Dionysus is taken out of the equation, every aspect of the dynamic is permanently altered. The “suicide” [Selbstmord] of Greek tragedy equates the death of both the Dionysian and Apollonian gods and the “drives” that they represent. Without the eristic spirit inherent in the dissonance that had hitherto characterized the relationship between Apollo and Dionysus, Greek civilization became degenerate [entartet], and its gods and values mere ersatz representations of their former selves.

According to Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche, anything static and unitary is a phantasmagoria. The “dice throw” [“*le coup de dés*”], on the other hand, represents an affirmation of the dissonant and this-worldly reality of the universe. Although such a worldview might represent discomfort and pain from a metaphysical worldview, it represents a far more *joyful existence*. This tragic joyfulness, or what Deleuze labels “dynamic gaiety” [“*la gaieté dynamique*”]—derives meaning from the inherent instability and unpredictability of the universe. It is a celebration of humanity’s recognition of its participation in an exclusively this-worldly existence, as well as its ability to enjoy and thrive in this existence. For Nietzsche, as well as many of his readers, such as Deleuze, one

possible solution to the onslaught of decadence would be through the revival of humanity's "tragic" drive—that is, its ability to coordinate its Apollonian and Dionysian instincts through *strife*.

As I discuss in Chapter Two, *The Birth of Tragedy* sets the stage for Nietzsche's rehabilitation of "science" in *The Gay Science*. Yet, it is impossible to fully understand *The Gay Science* without first exploring the underpinnings of its "tragic" and aesthetic epistemology in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which emphasizes the importance of "chance," dissonance, dance, and frenzy in developing a system of scientific understanding.

The Rehabilitation of Ethics

Strictly defined, ethics represents a set of moral principles and rules of conduct by which human beings should live. Additionally, ethics refers to the branch of philosophy that studies and critiques these principles and rules. It attempts to determine what should be considered good, bad, just, and unjust. Nietzsche is generally regarded as an *immoralist*—that is, someone who opposes conventional modes of morality and ethics. The reason for this is in due in part to the fact that Nietzsche labels himself an "immoralist" in *Ecce Homo*: "I am the first immoralist" (BWN 783; KSA 6, 637). His greatest contribution to ethics is *The Genealogy of Morals*, which contains a trenchant and vitriolic critique of metaphysical systems of morality in which Nietzsche claims that almost everything we value to be "good" and "bad" is based upon a morality whose central authority of meaning is located in "another world." This system of valuation rose to prominence with Platonism, Judaism, and particularly Christianity, all of which defer to otherworldly systems of belief.

Nietzsche explains to the readers of *The Genealogy of Morals* that this problem is no less pressing today, as we moderns treat science, philosophy, and mathematics as metaphysical systems that represent transcendental truths (see particularly the third essay, entitled "What is the Meaning of Ascetic Ideals" ["*Was bedeuten asketische Ideale*" KSA 5, 339-412]). We attempt to construct legal systems, political ideologies, and new types of scientific

inquiry that valorize metaphysical abstractions—absolute truths and criteria of all kinds—that do not correspond to the reality of human life in the world of the here and now. To the great frustration of generations of students, philosophers, and intellectuals, Nietzsche tells his readers that they should reevaluate their systems of morality based on “nobility,” “strength,” and the “will to power.” These words are inspiring and provocative but leave readers confounded with the following question: How do we put this into practice? Should we put it into practice? Is it possible to construct an ethical system based on a dissonance-based philosophy that can actually work?

According to Robin Small, Nietzsche’s musings on the nature of the primal unity and the incendiary, dynamic philosophy of Heraclitus provide us with an important clue as to how Nietzsche developed his perspective on “ethics”:

[...] for Nietzsche, the question about the nature of the world is not to be separated from the *value* of the world, and why [...] a separation of “cosmology” from “ethics” [...] misrepresents his intentions. Any idea of *applying* a cosmology to ethics or thinking of its “implications” for ethics must be an equally mistaken interpretation. That is never the direction of Nietzsche’s thinking. Rather, he poses the task of finding the common source of the two: an affirmative form of life and a world that can be affirmed, without any trace of the moralistic interpretation [...]. (203)

As Small notes only a few lines earlier, one of the great inspirations of his fictional Zarathustra is the pre-Socratic (or pre-Platonic, to use Nietzsche’s own terminology) philosopher Heraclitus. In short, Heraclitus of Ephesus (535 ca. – 475 BCE) believed that everything in the universe can be reduced to fire, described by fire, and understood with respect to fire. For Heraclitus, the nature of *logos* is quite simple: it is fire. Heraclitus’ interpretation of fire as the foundation for a code of ethics and justice helped Nietzsche develop his own perspectives on ethics and justice that bear no “trace of moralistic interpretation” in the metaphysical sense of the word.

There are only 139 extant fragments of his writings—all of which appear as quotations in the works of other philosophers (see Haxton). It is very easy to describe Nietzsche’s feelings toward Heraclitus, which can be summed up briefly and accurately

without recourse to any academic language at all: Nietzsche was inspired by everything Heraclitus wrote.

Nietzsche describes the processes that govern Heraclitus' cosmology in exactly the same way he describes the will to power. For Heraclitus, "fire" constitutes the foundation of existence and functions analogously to musical dissonance in Nietzsche's writings. The twentieth of Heraclitus' extant aphorisms declares "That which always was, and is, and will be everliving fire,/ the same for all, the cosmos,/ made neither by god nor man,/ replenishes in measure/ as it burns away" (15). This aphorism describes a *process* that bears a striking resemblance to Nietzsche's description of the will to power that I discuss in the Introduction. In this discussion, I will examine Nietzsche's analyses of Heraclitus' philosophy in his early works, and describe how he uses them as the foundation for a system of ethics and justice that influences all of his major writings.

Nietzsche carefully avoids lengthy discussions of Heraclitus in *The Birth of Tragedy*, as he clearly wants to focus his readers' attention on other figures, such as Socrates, Euripides, Schopenhauer, and Wagner. However, during the early 1870s, Nietzsche wrote a great deal about Heraclitus in his unpublished works, including the manuscript of a book entitled *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (ca. 1873), his lectures entitled *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (ca. 1872-74), and throughout his notebooks. The manner in which Nietzsche writes about Heraclitus is beautiful and seductive, and often gives the impression that the young Nietzsche wishes that he could write as simply and clearly as Heraclitus. Probably the most convincing evidence for this hypothesis is in the vast tracts of "quotes" by Heraclitus that appear in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, which Nietzsche freely and shamelessly lengthened and revised to suit his needs—and without footnotes of course! As Nietzsche never submitted this book for publication, we probably should not hold Nietzsche responsible for his flagrant acts of paraphrasing and embellishment.

There are few close readings of Nietzsche's interpretations of Heraclitus. Most studies of Nietzsche merely note that Nietzsche was inspired by Heraclitus' belief that the

universe represents a monstrous quantum of fire. However, as Small notes, Heraclitus provides Nietzsche with the groundwork for his “revaluation of all values.” Nietzsche’s interpretations of Heraclitus evidence Nietzsche’s belief that the foundation of all existence is something that is entirely indifferent to humanity. This accords with how Nietzsche describes the will to power in years to come. Nietzsche believes that Heraclitus created the foundation for a new epistemology and a new system of *ethics* that is life-affirming, viable, and actually rather easy to understand. Additionally, Nietzsche believes that Heraclitus was an anti-metaphysician. Fire represents the antithesis of metaphysics; it is impossible to found an epistemology based on fire and affirm “another world.”

Nietzsche describes how Heraclitus develops a system of ethics using the metaphor of dissonance in a lecture entitled “Heraclitus.” Dissonance is the primary criterion of this system. The more dissonance that exists in a relationship, the stronger and more powerful it is. Human beings should *cultivate* dissonance and stoke it like fire. We should be like children who build sand castles on a beach. Children, who are not burdened by the metaphysical abstractions that preoccupy adults, allow themselves to delight in the process of creating and destroying forms. They revel in the dissonance of their activities. This is not meant to imply that Nietzsche idealized children for their “innocence” and “simplicity” in a patronizing, idealistic sense of the word; on the contrary, Nietzsche respects them for their ability to spontaneously create and destroy, and embrace danger. They love creating, but they also love destroying, and the anticipation at having the opportunity to create again.³¹

[A character called “the Heraclitean” in] Lucian’s *Philosophers for Sale* says of the entire world, “Joy and joylessness, wisdom and unwisdom, great and

³¹ The original German text of Nietzsche’s lectures on the pre-Platonics contains copious amount of quotes in ancient Greek. Sometimes, these quotes are clearly demarcated from Nietzsche’s critical analyses, but often, Nietzsche integrates ancient Greek text directly into his German commentary. In this chapter, I cite Greg Whitlock’s translation of Nietzsche’s lectures. While they are highly accurate and readable, Whitlock effaces the distinction between the Greek and German text and devotes considerable efforts to cleaning up Nietzsche’s grammar and punctuation, which reflect the unrefined state of the manuscripts. Thus, Whitlock’s translations appear significantly different from the German text which I provide below, and contains numerous phrases in Greek.

small are all but the same, circling about, up and down, and interchanging in the game of Eternity." The Buyer [another character in Lucian's *Philosophies for Sale*] inquires, "And what is eternity?" The Heraclitean answers, "A child playing a game, moving counters, in discord, in concord." In his world-creating capacity, Zeus is compared to a child (as is Apollo) who builds and destroys sand castles on the beach at the sea. The river of Becoming, flowing uninterrupted, shall never stand still, and again [...]. These two opposing rivers are the opposed courses. "Opposition brings concord. Out of discord comes the fairest harmony." "Things taken together are whole and not whole, something which is being brought together and brought apart, which is in tune and out of tune; out of all things there comes a unity, and out of a unity all things." "People do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself. There is a harmony in the bending back, as in cases of the bow and the lyre." "Good and evil come together in the same thing, as in cases of the bow and lyre." [...] "As the two conflicting moments of the extinguished and re-kindled fire condition the phenomenon, so the straining apart of the arms of the bow and lyre conditions the tension." (PP 65-66)³²

This passage describes a cosmic process that bears a striking resemblance to the "primal unity" in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Strangely enough, Dionysus is completely absent from this text. Nietzsche actually describes Apollo and Zeus as gods that delight in the creative potential of two forces—the creative force of "Becoming" and the destructive force of Annihilation—in exactly the same way that Nietzsche describes children playing at the beach in *The Birth of Tragedy*. The gods seem to have internalized the Dionysian drives and they yield to the inherently destructive power of the primal unity on their own: they are

³² Von der ganzen Welt sagt Lucian (in der Versteigerung der Philosophen 14) „eines u. dasselbe ist Lust Unlust Wissen und Unwissen Großes Kleines aufwärts abwärts wandelnd und sich vertauschend in der Weltzeit Spiel ἐν τῇ τοῦ αἰῶνος παιδιῇ. Ein Kauflustiger fragt τί γὰρ ὁ αἰὼν ἐστί; Herakl. antwortet πᾶς παίζων πεσσεύων συνδιαφερόμενος (=ἐν τῷ διαφέρεσθαι συμφερόμενος. Zeus wird in seiner weltbildenden Thätigkeit mit einem Kinde verglichen das (wie Illias O 361 von Apollo gesagt wird) Sandhaufen am Strande des Meeres baut u. zerstört [...] „Der Strom des Werdens ununterbrochen fließend wird nimmer stille stehen u. wiederum [...] Diese beiden entgegengesetzten Ströme sind die ἐναντιοδρομία. „Aus dem sich Entzweienden entsteht die schönste Harmonie.“ [...] „Verbinde Ganzes und nicht Ganzes Zusammentretendes u. Auseinandertretendes, Stimmendes u. Nichtstimmendes, und aus allem wird eins u. aus einem alles.“ „Indem das All auseinandergehe, komme es wieder mit sich selbst zusammen, wie die Harmonie des Bogens u. der Leyer.“ „Das Gute und das Böse geht in dasselbe zusammen nach Art des Bogens und der Leyer.“ [...] „wie die beiden widerstrebenden Momente des verlöschenden u. sich entzündenden Feuers die Erscheinung bedingen, ebenso bedingt das Auseinanderstreben der Leyer u. Bogenarme die Spannung.“ (KGW II.4, 273-274)

Dionysian artists. This passage provides yet another piece of evidence that Nietzsche believed that the entire pantheon of Greek gods revered and nurtured the power of dissonance. Apollo and Zeus are also gods of dissonance.

Nietzsche describes “Becoming” and “Annihilation” as interchangeable processes that engage in a consistently eristic process in which it is impossible to distinguish one from the other. There is nothing inherently “positive” or “good” in “Becoming” nor “evil” or “bad” in “Annihilation”; each polarity of this process is merely a metaphor for the constant metamorphosis and violent change that occurs eternally throughout the universe. The words “Becoming” and “Annihilation” only have opposite meanings from an aesthetic perspective. This perspective endows humanity with the ability to recognize the creation and destruction of specific forms. These forces represent pure dissonance: the creation and negation of relationships between the manifold phenomena in the universe. Nietzsche’s perspective on these processes is fascinating, as it completely ignores the metaphysical framework that typically accompanies the discourse of “being” and “annihilation.” These concepts also exist in an entirely supplementary relationship with each other. We refer to one as “being” and the other as “annihilation” because they seem to conform to a process that we perceive with our senses. That is, some things are constantly coming into being around us, while others appear to slip into annihilation. But this dichotomy is merely a function of perspective. The destruction of one sand castle implies the creation of another sand castle, and yet another *ad infinitum*.

Harmony is not a function of the resolution of dissonance. On the contrary, Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus’ text indicates that “discord” and “opposition” is the source of harmony. For Nietzsche, Heraclitus’ worldview is completely dissonant. That which represents a state of pure dissonance is portrayed as “whole,” “harmonic,” “together,” and existing in a state of complete “unity.” To think otherwise represents a complete misunderstanding of the processes that govern the universe. The role of humanity in this universe is not to resolve dissonance, tension, and strife, but to ensure that it remains

vigorous and vital. The bow and lyre are two examples of human tools that utilize and cultivate the dissonant powers inherent to the primal unity. These two tools rely upon a “unity” of constant powerful tension in order to perform their function. According to Nietzsche, the “straining apart” of the components of these instruments literally conditions them to perform their functions more effectively. Nietzsche describes the functioning of the bow as something that actually “conditions” the tension—a marvelous image that suggests tension is something that can actually be *cultivated*.

Nietzsche draws upon the metaphor of the tension inherent in the “bow and lyre” throughout his works. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche refers to the “magnificent tension of the spirit” (BWN 192), while in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, images of the human being and the *Übermensch* as represented by tensions of many types: ropes, bridges, planks, and even “dangerous” emotional states. In an article on *Beyond Good and Evil*, Clark and Dudrick claim that neither the text of *Beyond Good and Evil*, nor the critical literature on the book, provide us with the philosophical or literary origins of this imagery. By the time we finish reading the preface of the book “we do not yet know anything about the two opposing forces that produce it” (149). Lampert and Clark contend that the depiction of tension in *Beyond Good and Evil* has its roots in Plato’s *Republic*. Referring to Laurence Lampert’s critique of *Beyond Good and Evil* in his book entitled *Nietzsche’s Task: An Interpretation of Beyond Good and Evil* (2001), Clark and Dudrick suggest that

[...] the most helpful source for the bow imagery [...] is Plato’s *Republic*, where Socrates uses it in a crucial argument to establish that there are different parts of the soul. Plato’s theory of the soul is in fact central to what Nietzsche is doing in *Beyond Good and Evil*. For present purposes, however, the most important point is Socrates’ observation that “it is wrong to say of the archer that his hands at the same time push the bow away and draw it towards him. We ought to say that one hand pushes it away and together draws it towards him” (438b-c). This suggests that we think of Nietzsche’s “magnificent tension of the spirit” as likewise the product of opposing tendencies of different parts or aspects of the philosopher’s soul, the part that pushes dogmatism away and the part that draws it back toward the philosopher. (149)

The line that Clark and Dudrick refer to is from the preface of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*. Nietzsche contends that "the fight against Plato, or to speak more clearly and for 'the people,' the fight against the Christian-ecclesiastical pressure of millennia [...] has created in Europe a magnificent tension of the spirit the like which had never yet existed on earth: with so tense a bow we can now shoot for the most distant goals" (BWN 193).³³ This passage does not refer to the tension in a philosopher's soul, but rather the tension between "nature" and "anti-nature," and between "this world" and "that world" that has dominated all human discourse since metaphysical thinking began predominating philosophy. These two diametrically opposed worldviews have created such powerful and uncanny tensions within us, that we now have the opportunity to use its potential energy to propel us into new and previously unimagined philosophical terrain—into a musical, dissonant future no less.

In the Introduction to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche seeks to encourage the reader to develop and cultivate the tensions that exist within him. The tension between "nature" and "anti-nature" has reached a climax never before seen in philosophy—a point that Nietzsche articulates more clearly in *Ecce Homo* in which he declares that his "revaluation of all values" represents a "fight with the lies of millennia," or quite simply, anti-natural, metaphysical epistemologies. Nietzsche believes that humanity is on the verge of creating a way of life out of a lie. But instead of creating an epistemology based on mendacity, why not use the power represented by the tension between "truth" and "life" as a foundation for philosophy? This new philosophy would completely destabilize the *foundation* of metaphysical philosophies and religions.

³³ Aber der Kampf gegen Plato, oder, um es verständlicher und für's „Volk“ zu sagen, der Kampf gegen den christlich-kirchlichen Druck von Jahrtausenden — denn Christenthum ist Platonismus für's „Volk“ — hat in Europa eine prachtvolle Spannung des Geistes geschaffen, wie sie auf Erden noch nicht da war: mit einem so gespannten Bogen kann man nunmehr nach den fernsten Zielen schiessen. (KSA 5, 12-13)

In a passage from Nietzsche's unpublished book fragment entitled *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (ca. 1873), Nietzsche employs the metaphor of children playing in a slightly different context. Here, Nietzsche emphasizes the importance of Heraclitus' worldview, which involves *avoiding* hubris. Heraclitus, like his nineteenth century interpreter Nietzsche, posits hubris as a condition that results from attempting to resolve or simply ignore the tension and dissonance that defines the universe:

That dangerous word hybris [sic] is indeed the touchstone for every Heraclitean. Here he must show whether he has understood or failed to recognize his master. Do guilt, injustice, contradiction and suffering exist in this world?

They do, proclaims Heraclitus, but only for the limited human mind which sees things apart but not connected, not for the con-tuitive god. For him all contradictions run into harmony, invisible to the common human eye, yet understandable to one who, like Heraclitus, is related to the contemplative god. Before his fire-gaze not a drop of injustice remains in the world poured all around him [...]. 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.[...] Transforming itself into water and earth, it builds towers of sand like a child at the seashore, piles them up and tramples them down. From time to time it starts the game anew. An instant of satiety—and again it is seized by its need, as the artist is seized by his need to create. Not hubris but the ever self-renewing impulse to play calls new worlds into being. The child throws its toys away from time to time—and starts again, innocent caprice. But when it does build, it combines and joins and forms its structures regularly, conforming to inner laws. (PTG 61-62)³⁴

³⁴ Jenes gefährliche Wort, Hybris, ist in der That der Prüfstein für jeden Herakliteer; hier mag er zeigen, ob er seinen Meister verstanden oder verkannt hat. Giebt es Schuld Ungerechtigkeit Widerspruch Leid in dieser Welt?

Ja, ruft Heraklit, aber nur für den beschränkten Menschen, der auseinander und nicht zusammen schaut, nicht für den contuiven Gott; für ihn läuft alles Widerstrebende in eine Harmonie zusammen, unsichtbar zwar für das gewöhnliche Menschaugenauge, doch dem verständlich, der, wie Heraklit, dem beschaulichen Gotte ähnlich ist. Vor seinem Feuerblick bleibt kein Tropfen von Ungerechtigkeit in der um ihm ausgegossenen Welt zurück; [...]. Ein Werden und Vergehen, ein Bauen und Zerstören, ohne jede moralische Zurechnung, in ewig gleicher Unschuld, hat in dieser Welt allein das Spiel des Künstlers und des Kindes. Und so, wie das Kind und der Künstler spielt, spielt das ewig lebendige Feuer, baut auf und zerstört, in Unschuld — [...] Sich verwandelnd in Wasser und Erde thürmt er, wie ein Kind Sandhaufen am Meere, thürmt auf und zertrümmert; von Zeit zu Zeit fängt er das Spiel von Neuem an. Ein Augenblick der Sättigung: dann ergreift ihn von Neuem das Bedürfnis, wie den Künstler zum Schaffen das Bedürfnis zwingt. Nicht Frevelmuth, sondern der immer neu erwachende Spieltrieb ruft andre Welten ins Leben. Das Kind wirft einmal das

According to Nietzsche's interpretation of Heraclitus, children and artists *intuit* the dissonant and discordant laws of the universe. They create structure and form, but can sense the moment when their creations have lived past their prime. Consequently, children and artists (at least *good artists*) engage in a process that is both creative and destructive. They recognize that the cosmic processes of the universe are symbolized by fire—the most dissonant of all the elements—which must be constantly conditioned, stoked, and managed so that it neither dies nor rages completely out of control. As long as the delicate balance between Becoming and Annihilation is maintained, the playful activity of artists and children is guaranteed to constantly give birth to “new worlds.”

Nietzsche does not depict “hubris” as equivalent to “excessive pride” in the conventional and somewhat pejorative sense. In the preceding passage, Nietzsche depicts “masters” of tragic play as god-like. He portrays children and artists as demiurges that have a nearly unlimited reserve of raw material to create and destroy at their disposal. Hubris only manifests itself when someone believes that he can rise above the “inner laws” and ordering [“*innere Ordnungen*”] of the universe. To put it plainly, no one is “too good” for musical dissonance and discord. Children and artists take only brief pleasure in the completion of their creations. They allow themselves only an “instant of satiety” before they yield to the drive to begin the process of creative destruction anew. However, Nietzsche implies that these children naturally act in accordance with the dissonant mechanics of the universe. In this way, the children are innocent, as their actions do not deviate from the divine “justice”—the justice of dissonance—which regulates the flow of the material universe. Certainly, these people can make “errors,” cause harm and destruction, and even break the laws of other systems of justice that do not have a foundation as dynamic as musical dissonance.

Spielzeug weg: bald aber fängt es wieder an, in unschuldiger Laune. Sobald es aber baut, knüpft und fügt und formt es gesetzmäßig und nach inneren Ordnungen. (KSA 1, 830-831)

The true “Heraclitean” must learn that feeling attached to any permanent or static value, idea, or concept is not only false, but also *not just*. In addition, the Heraclitean must understand that merely perceiving the universe as being governed by opposing forces or fixed binarisms—such as good and evil, or light and dark—is a fallacy as well. What makes the Heraclitean man so different from everyone else—and so much more *just* than everyone else—is that he yields to the supremacy of musical dissonance. The Heraclitean does not fool himself into thinking that permanence is more “just” or “better” than something that is transient, nor does he consider consonance to be more just or beautiful than dissonance. Nothing in the universe—no person, thing, or even a god—is above this process. To entertain such a notion would be an act of hubris, as well as an act of injustice.

According to Nietzsche, Heraclitus believed that he was living in a decadent age. Nor surprisingly, Nietzsche’s Heraclitus believed that his age was decadent because of the growing popularity of metaphysical epistemologies in a way that parallels Nietzsche’s critique of modernity as being an essentially metaphysical age. However, unlike Nietzsche, Heraclitus lived during the *advent* of Greek metaphysics, and not several millennia after it became the prominent, hegemonic epistemology of the Western world. Heraclitus was right on the front lines; he witnessed the decay of tragic Hellenism firsthand. He witnessed the collapse of a philosophical worldview that Nietzsche believed was fundamentally just, vital, and tragic, into one that was depleting and unjust.

According to Nietzsche, one of the great culprits in the demise of Hellenism was the philosophy of Anaximander (610–546 BCE), who developed a distinctly modern pessimism toward the inevitability of change and destruction in the universe. While Heraclitus maintains that there is no distinction between “Being” and “Becoming,” Anaximander hypothesizes that Being represents something eternal and immutable. Unfortunately, the result of this hypothesis is the conclusion that “this world” represents an injustice:

All of Becoming is emancipation from eternal Being; for this reason, [it is] an injustice consequently imposed with the penalty of perishing. We recognize the insight that all that becomes is not true. [...] He [Anaximander] needs a

background unity that can be described only negatively; the Unlimited, something that cannot be given any predicate from the actual world of Becoming and so something like the “thing-in-itself.” This was the incredible leap of Anaximander! [...] All of Becoming and Passing Away expiates, must give (penalty) and retribution for injustice! How can something that deserves to live pass away? Now we see all things passing away and consequently everything in injustice. (PP 33-34)³⁵

In his lecture on Parmenides (ca. 5th century BCE) and Xenophanes (ca. 570–475 BCE) (“Parmenides and His Forerunner Xenophanes” [*“Parmenides und sein Vorläufer Xenophanes”*]), Nietzsche emphasizes that Anaximander “introduced for the first time the dichotomy between a world of Being and a world of Becoming (Not-Being),” which unfortunately influenced Parmenides to follow suit. Nietzsche claims that Parmenides is a precursor to Socrates and Plato. Nietzsche depicts Parmenides as encouraging the rise of a metaphysical way of thinking, whose impact on Hellenic thought was similar to that of Socrates and Plato:

Here [in Parmenides’ philosophy] we have an unnatural tearing apart of the intellect. The consequence must finally be [a dichotomy between] spirit (the faculty of abstraction) and bodies [...], and we recognize the ethical consequences already in Plato: the philosopher’s task to liberate himself as much as possible from the bodily, meaning from the senses. [This is] the most dangerous of false paths, for no true philosophy can construct itself from this empty hull; it must proceed from intuition of reality [...]. As a critique of epistemological faculties, however, this raw distinction is of the greatest worth; it is the original source first of dialectic [...] and later of logic (in other words, we discover the mechanism of our abstraction in concepts, judgments, and conclusions). (PP 86)³⁶

³⁵ Alles Werden ist eine Emancipation von dem ewigen Sein: daher ein Unrecht, daher mit der Strafe des Unterganges belegt. Hier erkennen wir die Einsicht, daß alles, was wird, nicht wahrhaft *ist*. [...] Also braucht er eine dahinterstehende Einheit, die nur negative zu bezeichnen ist: τὸ ἄπειρον, etwas dem kein Prädikat gegeben werden kann aus der vorhandenen Welt des Werdens, so etwas wie das „Ding an sich“. Es war dies ein ungeheurer Sprung des Anaximander. [...] alles Werdende u. Vergehende büßt, muß τίσις und δίκη τῆς ἀδικίας geben! Wie kann etwas vergehen, was ein Recht hat zu sein! Nun sehen wir alles im Vegehen, folglich alles im Unrecht. (KGW II.4, 241-242)

³⁶ Hier haben wir eine unnatürliche Auseinanderreißung des Intellekts: die Konsequenz *muß* endlich sein Geist (Vermögen der Abstraktion) u. Körper [...] und bereits erkennen wir die ethischen Konsequenzen bei Plato, die Aufgabe des Philosophen, sich möglichst von dem Körper dh. von den Sinnen zu befreien. Der gefährlichste Irrweg! Denn aus jenen leeren Hülsen kann keine wahre Philosophie sich aufbauen: die vielmehr immer von dem Anschauen des Wirklichen auszugehen hat [...]. Jene rohe Scheidung ist aber, als Kritik des

Nietzsche's concern with Parmenides' legacy bears a remarkable similarity to his critique of Socrates and Plato in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Parmenides casts doubt on the primacy of the senses. He privileges the metaphysical and transcendent over this-worldly concerns, and aggrandizes the importance of abstract, conceptual logic. The language of the preceding passages indicates that Nietzsche believes that Parmenides' project is a deliberate and carefully developed critique of prevailing, less metaphysical philosophes—such as those of Heraclitus. The purpose of Parmenides' critique is to promote a metaphysical philosophy among the community of Greek philosophers.

The short phrase in parentheses at the end of this passage indicates Nietzsche's suspicion that Parmenides prefigures Kantian transcendental idealism, yet in the following he sentences cautions the reader not to confuse Kant's concept of the "thing-in-itself" and Parmenides' concept of the "Unlimited" (PP 87). Nietzsche's concern with Parmenides' philosophy is analogous to his concern with Kant's philosophy, which he echoes continually until the end of his career in 1888. Specifically, philosophy should never subjugate the importance of data garnered by the senses and affects in favour of purely "disinterested" and abstract knowledge. To do so is a disservice to the vitality of individuals and human civilization. It gives way to the denigration of the body, experiential knowledge, and a "weariness" of human life itself, as Nietzsche describes the long-term effects of Western philosophy since Plato on modernity in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "We are weary of man" ["*Wir sind des Menschen müde*"] (BWN 480; KSA 5, 278).

Nietzsche describes Parmenides to be an opponent of art in much the same way he describes Socrates to be an opponent (and murderer) of art in *The Birth of Tragedy*. In a manner reminiscent of his critique of Socrates in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche accuses Parmenides of reducing the universe into simple binarisms, such as the good versus the evil,

Erkenntnißvermögens, von höchstem Werth: von dort her stammt zunächst die Dialektik [...] später die Logik dh. man entdeckt den Mechanismus unsrer Abstraktion in Begriffen, Urtheilen, Schlüssen. (KGW II.4, 294)

and the intelligible versus the unintelligible. An aesthetic view of the world throws a monkey wrench into that project: “Here with Parmenides, everything aesthetic ends [...]. We see in this genius the struggle to overcome dualism, yet it transpires in only a mythical manner—the notion of reducing Becoming and passing away to a love struggle between Being and Not-Being!” (PP 83).³⁷

Whereas Nietzsche depicts Parmenides as a philosopher bent on reconciling every discomfiting contradiction and dualism in the universe, Heraclitus sees no contradictions in the universe worth resolving. Naturally, the universe is filled with a plurality of contradictions. However, the forces that create these contradictions are not polarized by their affinity with intransigent binarisms such as Being and Not-Being, Annihilation and Creation, or good and evil. All of these apparent binarisms are equivalent and reflect the “endless transformation of one fire in all qualities” [“*unendliche Wandlungen des einen Feuers sieht*”] (PP 83; KGW II:4, 290). The particular qualities of any apparent binarism or contradiction are merely aesthetic. They reflect a particular *set of relationships*, and not a constellation of fixed values. These values can and *should* continue to change.

Whereas Anaximander and Parmenides find “injustice” in a pluralistic universe, in which everything constantly transforms, dirempts, and deindividuates, Heraclitus finds justice. According to Nietzsche, thinkers such as Parmenides and Anaximander seek solace in the knowledge that “Being” represents something static and pure—quite literally without “qualities”: “Anaximander taught, ‘Everything with qualities arises and perishes mistakenly: thus there must be a qualityless Being.’ Becoming is an injustice and is to be atoned for with Passing Away” [“*‘Alles mit Qualitäten Versehene entsteht u. vergeht: also muß es ein qualitätsloses Sein geben’*”] (PP 63; KGW II.4, 271). This line of thinking indicates

³⁷ Hier, bei Parm., hört alles Aesthetische auf [...] In dieser δαίμων sehen wir das Bestreben, den Dualismus zu überwinden: aber es geschieht nur auf eine mythische Weise. — Sehr bedeutend ist sodann die Conception, das Werden u. Vergehen auf einen Kampf u. eine Liebe des Seienden u. Nichtseienden zurückzuführen: eine gewaltige Abstraktion! (KGW II.4, 290)

dissatisfaction with the dissonant conditions of *this* world and the longing for a transcendental world. This inclination toward a metaphysical view of the universe annoys Nietzsche, but also his Hellenic comrade in arms against metaphysics: Heraclitus. For Heraclitus, the road to justice leads through the realm of dissonance:

Rather, the principle (ἀρχή), the One within Arising and Passing Away, must also be rightful in its qualities: in opposition to Anaximander, it must accordingly have *all* predicates, *all* qualities, because all witnesses swear by justice. Heraclitus thus places the entire world of differences around the One in the sense that it evidences itself in all of them. In this manner, however, Becoming and Passing Away constitute the primary property of the principle. The Passing Away (φθορά) is in no way a punishment. Thus Heraclitus presents a *cosmodicy* over against his great predecessor, the teacher of the injustice of the world. (PP 63)³⁸

Levésque claims that for Nietzsche it is absurd to find a stable principle or origin [*archê*] in a dissonant universe. However, Nietzsche maintains that we can find a “principle” [*archê*] that reflects the unity of the universe—as long as we seek this unity in dissonance. “The One” [*Der Eine*] finds its unity in its plurality, in the same manner that harmony finds its stasis in constant discord and tension. The only “unity” in the universe exists in a state of constant dissonance.

Through his interpretation and commentary on Heraclitus’ philosophy, Nietzsche actually posits dissonance as the criteria for universal *justice*:

Then the famous passage: “This universe, which is the same for all, has not been made by any god or man, but it always has been, is, and will be—an ever-living fire, kindling itself by regular measures and going out by regular measures.” The trial of this justice is war, the third main concept. [...] Fragment 80 names it directly: “It should be understood that war is the

³⁸ Vielmehr muß die ἀρχή, das Eine im Entstehen u. Vergehen, also auch in seinen Qualitäten im Recht sein: im Gegensatz zu Anaximander muß es demnach *alle* Prädikate, *alle* Qualitäten haben, weil alle Zeugniß von δίκη ablegen. Die ganze Welt des Verschiedenen legt also H. dem Einen um, in dem Sinne, daß es in ihnen allen sich offenbare. Damit aber ist das Werden u. Vergehen die Haupteigenschaft des Princips. Die φθορά ist also keinesfalls eine Strafe. So stellt Heraclit seinem großen Vorgänger dem Lehrer der ἀδικία der Welt gegenüber eine *Kosmodicee*. (KGW II.4, 271)

common condition, that strife is justice, and that all things come to pass through the compulsion of strife. (PP 64)³⁹

Nietzsche explains that the Greeks' first, "specifically Hellenic idea in philosophy" is the concept of "war-justice" [*"Der Gedanke von Πόλεμος – δίκη (pólemos díkē) ist der erste spezifisch hellenische Gedanke in der Philosophie"*] (PP 64; KGW II:4, 272). According to Nietzsche, *pólemos-díkē* structured nearly *every aspect* of the Greek state. His contention that "war-justice" is the first truly "Hellenic" idea in philosophy implies that it qualifies as a *national*, and not a universal, characteristic. Moreover, only the Greeks had the opportunity to discover such sublime thoughts as cosmodicy.

Nietzsche describes the significance of this eristic view on the development of the Greek state in his essays "Homer's Contest" and "The Greek State" [*"Der griechische Staat"*] (1871-2). In "Homer's Contest" Nietzsche suggests that attempting to truly understand the Greeks from a Greek perspective might be more than the modern reader can handle. In the second paragraph of the essay, he discusses the Greeks' celebration and ecstasy in artistic and literary images of brutal strife. He makes the following observation regarding the weakness of the nineteenth century intellectual: "I fear we have not understood these [images of strife] in a sufficiently 'Greek' way, and even that we would shudder if we ever did understand them in a Greek way" [*"Ich fürchte daß wir diese nicht ‚griechisch‘ genug verstehen, ja daß wir schaudern würden, wenn wir die einmal griechisch verstünden"*] (TNR 95; KSA 1, 784). According to Nietzsche, the ancient Greeks valued their actions, institutions, and environment in accordance with the vitality of their inherent strife and erism. He contrasts this worldview with that of the decadent, nineteenth century European worldview:

³⁹ Dann berühmte Stelle Clem. Strom V 599 κόσμον τόνδε τὸν αὐτὸν ἀράντων οὔτε τις θεῶν οὔτε ἀνθρώπων ἐποίησεν. ἀλλ' ἦν αἰεὶ καὶ ἔσται πῦρ αἰέζων, ἀπτόμενον μέτρα καὶ ἀποσβευνόμενον μέτρα (sich entzündend nach Maßen und verlöschend nach Maßen). Der Prozeß dieser Δίκη ist der Πόλεμος, der dritte Hauptbegriff. [...] c. Cels. VI 42 heißt es geradezu: man muß wissen, daß der Krieg gemeinschaftlich ist und die Δίκη Streit ist u. daß alles gemäß dem Streite geschieht. (KGW II.4, 271-272)

Hellenic popular teaching commands that every talent must develop through a struggle: whereas modern educators fear nothing more than the unleashing of so-called ambition. Here, selfishness is feared as 'evil as such' [...]. They seem to believe that selfishness, i.e., the individual, is simply the most powerful *agens*; which obtains its character of 'good' and 'evil' essentially from the aims towards which it strives. But for the ancients, the aim of agonistic education was the well-being of the whole, of state society [*staatlichen Gesellschaft*]. For example, every Athenian was to develop himself, through competition, to the degree to which this self was of most use to Athens and would cause least damage. It was not a boundless and indeterminate ambition like most modern ambition: the youth thought of the good of his native city when he ran a race or threw or sang; he wanted to increase its reputation through his own; it was to the city's gods that he dedicated the wreaths which the umpires placed on his head in honour. (TNR 98)⁴⁰

Nietzsche describes a form of "selfishness" that accords with his hostile stance toward modern individuality. An individual human being has the responsibility to cultivate and define himself as an eristic being; only by doing so can he or she reflect the eristic spirit of his society. The entire society thrives and depends on each individual's ability to cultivate his eristic spirit. Only in this way can the health and vitality of a civilization and its institutions thrive.

According to Nietzsche, Greek youths were "brought up to compete with one another" and "their educators in turn were in rivalry with each other" [*"Jünglinge mit einander wettkämpfend erzogen wurden, so waren wiederum ihre Erzieher unter sich im Wettstreit"*] (TNR 99; KSA 1, 790). However, this eristic attitude did not "degrade" society through "in-fighting"; on the contrary, it was the source of strength and vitality. In the arts, "the most

⁴⁰ Jede Begabung muß sich kämpfend entfalten, so gebietet die hellenische Volkspädagogik: während die neueren Erzieher vor Nichts eine so große Scheu haben als vor der Entfesselung des sogenannten Ehrgeizes. Hier fürchtet man die Selbstsucht als „das Böse an sich“ [...]. Sie scheinen zu glauben, daß die Selbstsucht d.h. das Individuelle nur das kräftigste Agens ist, seinen Charakter aber als „gut“ und „böse“ wesentlich von den Zielen bekommt, nach denen es sich ausreckt. Für die Alten aber war das Ziel der agonalen Erziehung die Wohlfahrt des Ganzen, der staatlichen Gesellschaft. Jeder Athener z.B. sollte sein Selbst im Wettkampfe soweit entwickeln, als es Athen vom höchsten Nutzen sei und am wenigsten Schaden bringe. Es war kein Ehrgeiz in's Ungemessene und Unzumessende, wie meistens der moderne Ehrgeiz: an das Wohl seiner Mutterstadt dachte der Jüngling, wenn er um die Wette lief oder warf oder sang; ihren Ruhm wollte er in dem seinigen mehren; seinen Stadtgöttern weihte er die Kränze, die die Kampfrichter ehrend auf sein Haupt setzten. (KSA 1, 789)

general way of teaching, through drama, was only brought to the people in the form of an immense struggle of great musicians and dramatists" [*"selbst die allgemeinste Art der Belehrung, durch das Drama, wurde dem Volke nur ertheilt unter der Form eines ungeheuren Ringens der großen musikalischen und dramatischen Künstler"*] (TNR 99; KSA 790). Nietzsche emphasizes the interconnected nature of Greek social and political institutions, which was also modeled upon erism. Each member of every social and political institution attempts to strengthen their talents by cultivating their envy and competitive ambition. It makes them stronger.

Nietzsche distinguishes the life-affirming, "competitive spirit" of "envy" and "jealousy" from the decadent "vengeful" attitudes that led to the downfall of Hellenic civilization. According to Nietzsche, the Greeks did not bother to critique each other's weaknesses. Instead, they focused their attention on each other's *strengths* and level of competitiveness: "And modern man fears nothing so much in an artist as personal belligerence, whilst the Greek knows the artist *only in personal struggle*. Where modern man senses the weakness of a work of art, there the Hellene looks for the source of its greatest strength!" [*"Und der moderne Mensch fürchtet nichts so sehr an einem Künstler als die persönliche Kampfbegier, während der Grieche den Künstler nur im persönlichen Kampfe kennt. Dort wo der moderne Mensch die Schwäche des Kunstwerks wittert, sucht der Hellene die Quelle seiner höchsten Kraft!"*] (TNR 99; KSA 1, 790). The belligerence that Nietzsche describes is not motivated out of *resentment* for the stronger and more powerful, but an individual's desire to attain an even greater stature with his talents. Concurrently, an individual or institution would never ask its competitors to lower their standards to accommodate a weak member. There is no room for weakness, indolence, or laxity in the Greek state.

According to Nietzsche, the Greek state declined through "hubris." Like the hubris Nietzsche describes in his writings on the pre-Platonic philosophers, the hubris of the Greek state did not stem from "excessive pride" in the simplistic sense. In "Homer's Contest,"

Nietzsche claims that the Greek state failed because of a lack of pride; that is, the pride in competition:

Both Athens, which had destroyed the independence of her allies and severely punished the rebellions of those subjected to her [...] made her superior strength felt over Hellas in an even harder and crueller fashion, brought about their own ruin [...] through acts of hubris. This proves that without envy, jealousy and competitive ambition, the Hellenic state, like Hellenic man, deteriorates. It becomes evil and cruel, it becomes vengeful and godless, in short, it becomes “pre-Homeric”—it then only takes a panicky fright to make it fall and smash it. (TNR 100)⁴¹

Clearly, Nietzsche is concerned that metaphysical ways of thinking have inspired a sense of hubris in modernity. The confidence and comfort that humanity feels in its ability to solve (or at least potentially solve) all problems through “Reason” has endowed it with a smug sense of self-confidence about its epistemology. Instead of feeling an eristic drive to compete with itself and others, it feels inspired to fuel *progress* and improve itself. Progress implies a teleological process that is predictable, ordered, and according to Nietzsche: mediocritizing. As Nietzsche states many years later in “We Homeless Ones” [“Wir Heimatlosen”], aphorism 377 of *The Gay Science*: “We ‘conserve’ nothing; neither do we want to return to any past periods; are not by any means ‘liberal’; we do not work for ‘progress’; we do not plug up our ears against the sirens in the market place who sing of the future; their song about ‘equal rights,’” or a “‘free society’” (GS 338).⁴² Nietzsche does not perceive progress as stoking the fire of society’s potential for erism, vitality, and dissonance.

⁴¹ Athen, das die Selbständigkeit seiner Verbündeten vernichtet hatte und mit Strenge die Aufstände der Unterworfenen ahndete [...] noch viel härterer und grausamerer Weise sein Übergewicht über Hellas geltend machte, haben auch [...] durch Thaten der Hybris ihren Untergang herbeigeführt, zum Beweise dafür, daß ohne Neid Eifersucht und wettkämpfenden Ehrgeiz der hellenische Staat wie der hellenische Mensch entartet. Er wird böse und grausam, er wird rachsüchtig und gottlos, kurz, er wird „vorhomerisch“ — und dann bedarf es nur eines panischen Schreckens, um ihn zum Fall zu bringen und zu zerschmettern. (KSA 1, 792)

⁴² Wir „conserviren“ Nichts, wir wollen auch in keine Vergangenheit zurück, wir sind durchaus nicht „liberal“, wir arbeiten nicht für den „Fortschritt“, wir brauchen unser Ohr nicht erst gegen die Zukunfts-Sirenen des Marktes zu verstopfen — das, was sie singen, „gleiche Rechte“, „freie Gesellschaft“ [...]. (KSA 3, 629)

The Problem of Metaphysics in Nietzsche's Early Works

As I discuss in the Introduction and earlier in this chapter, it is dangerous to claim that Nietzsche's early writings represent some type of aesthetic variation upon metaphysics. Although Nietzsche clearly draws upon the vocabulary and literary tropes of metaphysical philosophies, it is also clear that he attempts to extricate himself from it. This is supported throughout his early texts, but perhaps most concisely in a short, very fragmentary note written some time between 1870 and 1871: "My philosophy [is] *inverted Platonism*: the farther away from truthful Being, all the purer [and] beautiful [and even] better it is. Life as semblance as [the] goal [of my philosophy]" ["*Meine Philosophie umgedrehter Platonismus: je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so reiner schöner besser ist es. Das Leben im Schein als Ziel*"] (trans. mine, KSA 7, 199[7:156]). Right below this passage in his notebooks, Nietzsche describes the *primal unity* as a concept that is at bottom defined by a "contradiction" ["*der Widerspruch das Wesen des Ureinen ist*"] (KSA 7, 199[7:156]). In these notes, Nietzsche adamantly asserts that he wants to veer away from Platonism, and that he intends to remove the unchanging "forms" from the base of Platonic metaphysics and replace them with a complex and violent matrix of contradictory and dissonant forces.

In *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, Sarah Kofman contends that to claim that Nietzsche's philosophy represents an "inverted Platonism" is an insult: "There are those who, by forgetting the metaphorical status of the will to power, have managed to see Nietzsche as the last metaphysician, who simply inverted Platonism" (96).⁴³ Duncan Large claims that Kofman's criticism is directed at Heidegger, who frequently claimed that Nietzsche was the "last metaphysician" (176). Kofman is enraged at the legacy that Heidegger's critique of Nietzsche has had on Nietzsche scholarship. But this should not overshadow the fact that Nietzsche explicitly refers to his philosophy as "inverted Platonism" in his early notes, and

⁴³ En oubliant le statut métaphorique de la volonté de puissance on a pu prendre Nietzsche pour le dernier métaphysicien, pour celui qui aurait simplement renversé le platonisme. (Kofman 139)

implicitly described it this way in his later works, most notably his aphorism entitled “How the True World Became a Fable,” as I have already discussed. However, “inverting” a philosophy is not necessarily a *simple* or unimportant task. Nietzsche does not simply revolt against Platonism in some childish manner—he carefully *removes its metaphysical foundation* and replaces it with a foundation of musical dissonance. In the years to come, Nietzsche moves on to critique the metaphysical foundation of other metaphysical philosophies, such as science and Judeo-Christianity. He eventually develops the foundation for a new valuation based on musical dissonance. This is a major philosophical achievement.

As Nietzsche describes over fifteen years later in *Twilight of the Idols*, Platonism represents the first step in a long “history of an error,” a phrase that he uses in the title of one of the book’s most famous aphorisms: “How the ‘True World’ Finally Became a Fable: The History of an Error.” In this aphorism, Nietzsche describes the gradual process in which Platonic thought set the stage for the dominance of metaphysical, religious, scientific, and philosophical worldviews. These worldviews privilege values determined with respect to transcendent and otherworldly criteria in which eternal, immutable truths form the foundation for all existence. For Nietzsche, this realm may include the Platonic realm of “forms” or “ideas,” the Judeo-Christian notion of an eternal divine realm that transcends “this world,” or the rational-scientific confidence in objective and universally applicable laws of science, mathematics, and logic. According to Nietzsche, privileging metaphysical knowledge over this-worldly knowledge represents a life-denying of inversion of values. While the “fable” of a metaphysical worldview is certainly the intellectual product of a sensual, living being, it loses its vitality when its genesis *as a fable* has been forgotten. As I describe in the Introduction (see especially pages 38-39), a “truth” loses its life-affirming potential once its origin in a constantly transforming matrix of metaphors is lost. The same rules apply to narratives; once they become grand narratives and transcend the material and sensual world, they become life-constricting abstractions at best—life-denying abstractions at the worst. They become fables that have lost their “sensuous vigor.”

Nietzsche's early writings imply that the tendency to privilege the metaphysical and transcendent represents a defeat for humanity's fundamentally "this-worldly" existence. Heidegger describes Nietzsche's philosophy as heralding the "end of metaphysics" in many of his works, including "Overcoming Metaphysics" ["*Überwindung der Metaphysik*"] (1936-46), "The Word of Nietzsche: God is Dead" ["*Nietzsches Wort 'Gott ist tot'*"] (1943) and his collected lectures on Nietzsche, which have been assembled into a four volume book simply entitled *Nietzsche*. In the second chapter of Book One, entitled "*The Book, The Will to Power*" ["*Das Buch 'Der Wille zur Macht'*"] Heidegger claims "[...] we can never succeed in arriving at Nietzsche's philosophy proper if we have not in our questioning conceived of Nietzsche as the end of Western metaphysics and proceeded to the entirely different question of the truth of Being" (10).⁴⁴ In a similar tone, Deleuze claims "Nietzsche's struggle against nihilism and the spirit of revenge will therefore mean the reversal of metaphysics, the end of history as history of man and the transformation of the sciences" (*Nietzsche* 35).⁴⁵ Both Heidegger and Deleuze emphasize the far-reaching significance of Nietzsche's refutation of metaphysical constructs as the basis for a new, post-metaphysical epistemology.

In the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism," Nietzsche argues with an imaginary interlocutor who suggests that Nietzsche's book is merely a book of metaphysics in new clothing. This is an understandable concern, as both in Nietzsche's day, and the present day, Nietzsche skeptics have had an extremely difficult time attempting to extricate Nietzsche from the thick layers of Schopenhauerian subtexts that loom beneath *The Birth of Tragedy* and other early works. There can be no doubt that Nietzsche borrowed ideas from Schopenhauer, but that should not imply that Nietzsche borrowed Schopenhauer's metaphysics. When the

⁴⁴ Niemals aber ist dieses Eigentliche zu leisten, wenn wir nicht im Fragen Nietzsche als das Ende der abendländischen Metaphysik begriffen haben und zu der ganz anderen Frage nach der Wahrheit des Seins übergegangen sind. (1, 18-19)

⁴⁵ La lutte de Nietzsche contre le nihilisme et l'esprit de vengeance signifiera donc renversement de la métaphysique, fin de l'histoire comme histoire de l'homme, transformation des sciences. (40)

fictional antagonist asks whether or not metaphysics would be necessary for a man of a new “tragic age,” Nietzsche replies with a resolute “No”:

“Would it not be *necessary*?”—No, thrice no! O you young romantics: it would *not* be necessary! But it is highly probable that it will *end* that way, that *you* end that way—namely, “comforted,” as it is written, in spite of all self-education for seriousness and terror, “comforted metaphysically”—in sum, as romantics end, as *Christians*. (BWN 26)⁴⁶

In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche associates metaphysics with “comfort.” In this particular instance, Nietzsche’s self-critique is true to his texts. One way of writing about *The Birth of Tragedy* would be to describe it as a book that advocates anti-comfort. From the very first page until the very last, Nietzsche emphasizes over and over again that tragedy, knowledge, art, music—essentially every aspect of human existence—should never lead to a permanent sense of comfort. As I describe in the previous section, it would be *unethical and unjust* to do so. Temporary comfort, that is, briefly taking solace in the “beauty of mere appearance” is perfectly acceptable, and as long as we remember that we must return to the musical, dissonant realities that surround it.

In short, the charge that Nietzsche’s texts present a metaphysical worldview, and the contention that Nietzsche simply “ended” metaphysics are both untenable hypotheses. We know from Nietzsche’s earliest writings that he wanted to postulate an epistemology and a philosophy that created values *without* recourse to “another world,” but we also know that Nietzsche deliberately preserved aspects of some of the most powerful concepts of metaphysical philosophies. I argue that Nietzsche considered humanity’s proclivity toward embracing, or at least imagining, metaphysical, “otherworldly” ideas to be a completely normal and natural result of a highly advanced civilization living in a universe that is fundamentally indifferent to its existence, uncontrollable, and terrifying. Denying, “ending,” or “overcoming” metaphysics, would in effect represent the repression of

⁴⁶ „Sollte es nicht *nöthig* sein?“ ... Nein, drei Mal nein! ihr jungen Romantiker: es sollte *nicht* nöthig sein! Aber es ist sehr wahrscheinlich, dass es so *endet*, dass *ihr* so endet, nämlich „getröstet“, wie geschrieben steht, trotz aller Selbsterziehung zum Ernst und zum Schrecken, „metaphysisch getröstet“, kurz, wie Romantiker enden, *christlich* (KSA 1, 22)

humanity's basic instincts, and quite likely, facilitate its return in full force. If Nietzsche did not believe this, it would not be necessary to postulate a musical, dissonant epistemology that is so disruptive and violent, and one which forms the foundation for a musical *askêsis* that will remind humanity of its responsibility to never allow its musical, dissonant "metaphor drive" to be outdone by its decadent, metaphysical "truth drive." As I develop in the upcoming chapters, Nietzsche transforms philosophy by "revaluating" and "rehabilitating" it. Nietzsche maintained a stalwart anti-metaphysical stance throughout his career. However, to identify elements of metaphysical and otherworldly philosophies in Nietzsche's early texts—in order to claim that he has merely dressed-up metaphysics in new clothes—is not fair. The "metaphysical" words that we see in Nietzsche's texts—gods, unities, divine, and foundation, for example—appeal to a wholly this-worldly authority of meaning. They represent the shells of old metaphysical concepts that are infused with this-worldly, musical, dissonant meanings. In Chapters Three and Four, I return to this topic, and discuss Nietzsche's "revaluation" and "rehabilitation" of Judeo-Christian concepts such as "redemption."

CHAPTER TWO

THE REHABILITATION OF SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY THROUGH MUSICAL DISSONANCE: *THE GAY SCIENCE* AND THE “HERACLITEAN FIRE MACHINE”

Nietzsche had his own conception of physics but no ambition as a physicist. He granted himself the poetic and philosophical right to dream of machines that perhaps one day science will realise by its own means. The machine to affirm chance, to cook chance, to produce the number which brings back the dice throw, the machine to release these immense forces by small, multiple manipulations, the machine to play with the stars, in short the Heraclitean fire machine. (Deleuze, *Nietzsche* 30)¹

A Performative Science

In the chapter entitled “Nietzsche’s Method” in *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, Walter Kaufmann discusses some of the strengths and weaknesses of Nietzsche’s philosophical approach—particularly with respect to *The Gay Science*. As a substantial amount of my analyses throughout the remainder of this study relies upon Kaufmann’s comments on *The Gay Science*, I quote from it at length. Referring to Nietzsche’s preference for writing about science in a fragmented, aphoristic style, Kaufmann claims:

His position seems plausible when one takes into account what it was that he opposed in systems. His attack was aimed at the presumption—common in the Germany of his day—that a system as such has a special claim to truth. Although lacking any thorough training in mathematical or logical theory, Nietzsche realized that the coherence of a finite system could never be a guarantee of its truth. [...] The “gay science” which he opposed to the Idealists’ conception of philosophy seems fruitful and deserves attention. Nietzsche, however, overlooked the possibility that systematization might be one of the most useful tools of the experimentalism he envisaged.

In the first place, systematization reveals errors. Previously unnoticed inconsistencies became apparent when one attempts to integrate a host of insights into a coherent system. And internal consistency, while admittedly not a sufficient condition of the truth of a system, is surely a necessary

¹ Nietzsche a une certaine conception de la physique, mais nulle ambition de physicien. Il s’accorde le droit poétique et philosophique de rêver de machines que la science, peut-être un jour, est conduite à réaliser par ses propres moyens. La machine à affirmer le hasard, à faire cuire le hasard, à composer le nombre qui ramène le coup de dés, la machine à déclencher des forces immenses sous de petites sollicitations multiples, la machine à jouer avec les astres, bref la machine à feu héraclitéenne. (35)

condition. The discoveries of inconsistencies should prompt not automatic compromise but further inquiry and eventual revision. The same consideration applies to external inconsistencies: the ultimate test of the truth of an observation is consistency with the rest of our experience—and thus systematization of wider and wider areas of knowledge may raise ever new questions. Again, the new insight should not be sacrificed unscrupulously to entrenched prejudice—the great danger of systematizing; rather traditional beliefs should be subjected to ever new questioning in the light of new experiences and ideas. In this sense, a new insight is not exploited sufficiently, and the experiment is stopped prematurely if systematization is not eventually attempted in the very service of the “gay science.”

The last point may be restated separately: while offering many fruitful hypotheses, Nietzsche failed to see that only a systematic attempt to substantiate them could establish an impressive probability in their favor. Hence his experiments are often needlessly inconclusive. Though a system may be false in spite of its internal coherence, an unsystematic collection of sundry observations can hardly lay any greater claim to truth. (94-95)

Kaufmann’s attitude toward Nietzsche’s “gay science” is ambivalent. On the one hand, he praises Nietzsche’s courageous and novel approach toward understanding science through the unconventional perspectives he presents in *The Gay Science*. He admires the text’s heterogeneous mixture of songs, aphorisms, stylistic discontinuities, and Nietzsche’s unusual, experimental style. Nietzsche’s critiques, which constantly strive to develop new, provocative perspectives, modes of critical thinking, and literary styles, inspire Kaufmann. Kaufmann believes *The Gay Science* paves the way toward a new episteme in the philosophical and scientific disciplines. Yet, he is disappointed that Nietzsche did not realize the full implications of his critique of science and formally introduce a complete, polished philosophical system. He claims that only a systematic approach can “substantiate” the many “fruitful hypotheses” in *The Gay Science*.

Kaufmann’s commentary portrays annoyance with Nietzsche’s decision to vigorously eschew the creation of a new system. He supports Nietzsche’s objections to metaphysical philosophical systems such as Christianity and Platonism. However, Kaufmann does not believe that Nietzsche offers his readers an effective countermeasure to combat the seductive and tenacious grip that metaphysical systems have had on the arts, sciences, and philosophy. He contends that Nietzsche *should have* crystalized a solid and

distinctly systematic alternative to the idealistic metanarratives of Platonism, Judeo-Christianity, and modern science. Kaufmann's ultimate assessment is that Nietzsche's "experiment" is "needlessly inconclusive" and can "hardly lay any greater claim to truth." Kaufmann's conclusions resulted in his failure to see the far-reaching accomplishment of *The Gay Science* as a potentially systematic and scientific work, as he was simply not willing to take the title of Nietzsche's book seriously and look beyond *his own* attachment to conventional definitions of "science" and "system." By systematic, I do not refer to the "Idealist's" notion of systematic philosophy and science, as discussed by Kaufmann, but a structured, rigorous, yet musical approach to conducting scientific and philosophical investigation—or as I refer to it in the Introduction, an "anti-system" (see page 14). Nietzsche's anti-system serves to ensure that scientific and philosophical knowledge is entirely this-worldly and emancipated from metaphysical, otherworldly systems of thought. It encourages thinkers to think of science as a way of thinking that is inextricably connected to music, dance, and sensual engagement with the world.

In *The Twilight of the Idols*, published in 1888, only a year after the second edition of *The Gay Science* (1887), Nietzsche offers a short, vitriolic epigram against systems and the systematizers who create them: "I mistrust all systematizers and I avoid them. The will to a system is a lack of integrity" [*"Ich misstraue allen Systematikern und gehe ihnen aus dem Weg. Der Wille zum System ist ein Mangel an Rechtschaffenheit"*] (TPN 471; KSA 6, 63). Although I believe we should take this epigram seriously, we must examine it within the context of Nietzsche's philosophical and literary approach. In this study, I frequently suggest that we should consider the merits of Sarah Kofman's application of the word "rehabilitation" to describe Nietzsche's revaluation of all values, as in many cases, his revaluations amount to the revitalization of existing "values" using musical dissonance, which Nietzsche claims constitutes the "foundations of all existence" (see Chapter One, pages 64-65). However, Kaufmann is not willing to explore this possibility. He takes Nietzsche's vitriolic comments about systems at face value, and does not examine the vast amount of evidence that

suggests that Nietzsche wants to provoke his reader into exploring alternative, “rehabilitated” ways of understanding “science and system”:

Systems, says Nietzsche, are good insofar as they reveal the character of a great thinker—but this goodness is independent of the truth of the system. The system is reducible to a set of premises which cannot be questioned within the framework of the system— [...] The thinker who believes in the ultimate truth of his system, without questioning its presuppositions, appears more stupid than he is [...]. No one system reveals the entire truth; at best, each organizes one point of view or perspective. We must consider many perspectives, and a philosopher should not imprison his thought in one system. (81)

Kaufmann explains Nietzsche’s ambivalence toward systems and systematizers. He concedes that Nietzsche believes that systems have their merits, but only insofar as they generate more “perspectives” to add to a philosopher’s portfolio of critical approaches. For Kaufmann, the mere accumulation of different perspectives cannot equate to a system, because a system forces a philosopher to remain faithful to a stable matrix of premises and truths. The problem with Kaufmann’s critique is simply that he refuses to look beyond established definitions of basic philosophical vocabulary, such as “system,” “premise,” and “truth.” Kaufmann compares and contrasts Hegel’s and Kant’s approaches to philosophy, and uses their understanding of “premise” and “truth” as yardsticks to assess Nietzsche’s use of these words. In doing so, however, Kaufmann demonstrates the intractability of his own philosophical training. He refuses to open his mind to the possibility that Nietzsche *has* developed a “system” of philosophical and scientific investigation that relies on entirely rehabilitated concepts of “truth,” such as I have described in the Introduction and in Chapter One.

Nietzsche’s system is *not* a “coherent system” that has a “special claim” to some sort of logically derived, ultimate set of truths. On the contrary, it encourages a musical, dissonant way of thinking that precludes the creation of such truths. It accomplishes the goals that Kaufmann believed that *The Gay Science* failed to achieve. *The Gay Science* inspires thinkers to explore “wider and wider areas of knowledge” and “raise ever new questions.” In addition, it demands that thinkers *question* their presuppositions at any given time. In

this way, *The Gay Science* presents an *anti-system*. It prevents thinkers from being satisfied with any one perspective or truth and encourages them to constantly seek new knowledge, formulas, perspectives, and even systems (in the traditional sense of the word). Thus, the goal of Nietzsche's anti-system is a continual process, and not a set of penultimate truths. In the opening paragraphs of the first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, entitled "On the Prejudices of Philosophers" ["*Von den Vorurtheilen der Philosophen*"], Nietzsche describes systems as the inevitable result of humanity's "will to truth" ["*Der Wille zur Wahrheit*"] (BWN 199; KSA 5, 15). We fall prey to the seductive allure of philosophical systems in the hope that they may satisfy this urge. They allow humanity the satisfaction gained by "baptiz[ing] 'truths'" ["*'Wahrheiten' taufen*"] (BWN 203; KSA 5, 19). *The Gay Science*, offers its readers a way to transform its "will to truth" into a will to *many truths*—musical, dissonant truths—and the desire that the arduous, yet joyful process of discovering new truths will never cease.

Although many generations of critics have expanded upon Kaufmann's critiques of Nietzsche's oeuvre, their contributions to Nietzsche scholarship continue to reflect Kaufmann's hesitation to accept Nietzsche's claim that *The Gay Science* describes a new form of *science*, and therefore, that it presents a type of *system* (or what I refer to as an "anti-system" in this chapter). Yet, this hesitation completely overlooks the vast amount of evidence in Nietzsche's writings to suggest that it is indeed about science. This hesitation to take the title of *The Gay Science* seriously represents a bias toward *metaphysically oriented* conceptions of science, exactly as Nietzsche describes in aphorism 344: "it is **still a metaphysical faith** upon which our faith in science rests" ["*dass es immer noch ein metaphysischer Glaube ist, auf dem unser Glaube an die Wissenschaft ruht*"] (GS 282-283; KSA 3, 577).² In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche offers a glimpse of what science might look like without a foundation of "metaphysical faith."

² Please see page 33 in the Introduction for a more complete discussion of aphorism 344.

Nietzsche's "rehabilitated" science represents a "system" that rests upon a foundation of musical dissonance instead of metaphysical abstractions. Nietzsche's "science" and the "system" that it contains might be entirely antithetical to prevailing notions of "science" and "system," but they might very well serve analogous functions: to provide a rigorous method of gathering knowledge about the world using a highly disciplined modality of critical thinking. The "rigour" in Nietzsche's "gay science" derives its strength from its "musical *askêsis*" that I describe in the Introduction (see pages 13-14). Yet, Nietzsche's "gay" science does not defer to a metaphysical or otherworldly authority for deriving meaning. Nietzsche's "gay science" is a different kind of science, which appeals to a radically different authority of meaning, and employs an equally radical approach to gathering scientific knowledge.

In addition to the presence of the word "science" in the book's title, the most compelling evidence that the text is a book about science is in its final lines, in a song entitled "To the Mistral" [*An den Mistral*]. Nietzsche added this song to the expanded 1887 edition of the book. In the sixth stanza, the singer implores his listeners to "dance in a thousand ways" and to "be free." He claims that only through *dance* and *song* can "our art be known,/ Gay—our science!" [*Tanzen wir in tausend Weisen,/Frei — sei unsre Kunst geheissen,/Fröhlich — unsre Wissenschaft*] (trans. mine, KSW 3, 650). Nietzsche appears to proclaim a new science, but one that relies upon the scientist's willingness and ability to *dance* and *sing*. In addition, his science represents a deeply personal method of gathering and evaluating knowledge. He claims that the "gay science" is "our" science because it only belongs to scientists who are singers and dancers like himself. Each singer and dancer will gather different knowledge and create unique perspectives.

In his introduction to *The Gay Science*, Walter Kaufmann emphasizes that the primary purpose of the title is to convey that

[...] serious thinking does not have to be stodgy, heavy, dusty, or, in one word, Teutonic. The German *Wissenschaft* does not bring to mind only—

perhaps not even primarily—the natural sciences but any serious, disciplined, rigorous quest for knowledge [...]. (5)

I agree with the spirit of Kaufmann's assertion that Nietzsche wants the reader to overcome the notion that science needs to be dry or dusty, and that it encompass a wide variety of methodological approaches. Yet, Nietzsche clearly states that his book is not just about approaching existing forms of science with a new attitude. *The Gay Science* outlines a new form of science that uses music and dance as the basis of its method of scientific investigation. While this new form of science incorporates the discourse of many other forms of science and "rigorous quests for knowledge," it requires that the "scientist" be a musician and a dancer above all. This type of singing and dance requires that the philosopher-artist embrace musical dissonance.

In the epigraph of this chapter, I quote a passage from Deleuze's book on Nietzsche that suggests that Nietzsche had "no ambition as a physicist," but only the "poetic right" to "dream" of machines that science would "realise by its own means" (30). I disagree with Deleuze only on one point. Nietzsche, the author of *The Gay Science*, does believe that he is a physicist and a scientist, and has indeed created a machine such as the one that Deleuze describes. It is, as Deleuze describes, a machine that is capable of "produc[ing] the number which brings back the dice throw" and "plays with the stars" (30). That machine represents the method of scientific inquiry outlined in *The Gay Science*; it is a method that portrays Deleuze's "Heraclitean fire machine." In this chapter, I argue that *The Gay Science* portrays a method of scientific investigation that accords with Nietzsche's vision of humanity as a manifestation of a "becoming-human of dissonance." *The Gay Science* is not only a book about science; it is a text that actually performs the science that it describes. The text actually provokes the reader to think musically and dissonantly. In this way, it represents Deleuze's "Heraclitean fire machine."

***The Gay Science* in Context**

Renowned Nietzsche critics Walter Kaufmann and David Allison identify *The Gay Science* as a pivotal and encyclopedic text, which contains the key to understanding the core concepts and imagery of Nietzsche's later works. According to David Allison, *The Gay Science* occupies a unique place in Nietzsche's thought:

The Gay Science (or *Joyful Wisdom*) is probably his most important text. Nietzsche not only came to think of it in later years as his most congenial and personal work, but he often referred to it as his 'most *medial* book,' the one that stood at the midpoint of his life and served as a fulcrum for his subsequent thought. (71)

It is here, at the "fulcrum" of Nietzsche's life, that readers witness the convergence of the ideas contained in his youthful and passionate works of the early and mid 1870s, such as *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Untimely Meditations*, and the more restrained, yet aphoristic achievements of his early thirties, such as *Daybreak* (1881) [*Morgenröte*] and *Human, All Too Human* (1878) [*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*]. In the former, Nietzsche offers radical and fresh interpretations and "rehabilitations" of aesthetics and Hellenism, as well as fundamental concepts such as "history" and "truth." In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche begins to employ his rehabilitated concepts in a way that sets them against predominant modes of scientific and philosophical thinking.

The Gay Science is a fragmented, disorienting, and centrifugal text. Its hundreds of aphorisms address a manifold of topics that are equal in scope to Michel de Montaigne's *Essais*. It contains personal anecdotes, general observations about life, songs, poems, and short essays on science, history, and literature. Although key themes emerge throughout the text, it is difficult to isolate a central thesis in *The Gay Science*. The text presents these many themes and images in a variety of perspectives that often contradict or undermine one another. Accordingly, the book's narrative structure poses many challenges to the literary critic, as it is difficult—if not impossible—to link the text's many themes and symbols according to a conventional, systematically organized philosophy or method of scientific investigation. By all measures, *The Gay Science* is a self-critical metatext with a decentralized

and disorienting structure that provokes the reader to think critically about literature, philosophy, and fundamental questions about existence, consciousness, and identity.

The text consists of five books. Nietzsche published the first four books in 1882 and the fifth book in 1887, after the publication of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1883-85) and *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886). Nietzsche frames the five books with cycles of poetry and songs that convey a light-hearted and playful mood that has both confused and delighted critics. The 1882 edition begins with a "Prelude in German Rhymes" ["*Vorspiel in deutschen Reimen*"] entitled "Joke, Cunning, and Revenge" ["*Scherz, List und Rache*"] and the 1887 edition concludes with an appendix entitled "Songs of Prince Vogelfrei" ["*Lieder des Prinzen Vogelfrei*"]. The name Vogelfrei contains a humorous pun that renders the title "Songs of Prince 'Free-as-a-bird'" and provides positive proof that Nietzsche intended *The Gay Science* to be a witty, humorous, but also musical book. Kathleen Higgins refers to these lyrics as Nietzsche's "nursery rhymes," which above all, are the key to understanding the "gay" and jubilant nature of the "science" that Nietzsche refers to in the book's title (see Higgins' *Comic Relief*, particularly pages 3-44).

The relationship between the various collections of songs and books is highly unconventional for a philosophical work and has earned a great deal of controversy over the years. Only the fourth and fifth books have titles—"Sanctus Januarius" and "We Fearless Ones" ["*Wir Furchtlosen*"] respectively—which provide little hint of an overarching polemic. Among the text's many eccentricities is the notable absence of a stable and distinct narrative voice. There are, in fact, many voices. Although the text conveys a general sense that a narrator is present, the identity and location of this narrator are far from clear. The aphorisms present the reader with a variety of perspectives and literary styles. Many aphorisms, including number 125 in Book Two, "The Madman" ["*Der tollere Mensch*"], and number 341 in Book Four, "The Greatest Weight" ["*Das grösste Schwergewicht*"]—two of the most famous aphorisms—contain several distinct voices. As a whole, *The Gay Science* contains many incongruities, discontinuities, and inconsistencies. Its centrifugality derives

from its tendency to steer the reader away from any central authority of meaning in the broadest sense of the word. Its dissonant, internal dialogism consistently draws attention to the pluralities of its styles, symbols, ideas, perspectives, and metaphors. *The Gay Science* has an extraordinarily dynamic rhythm and tempo. Indeed, the text sends the reader on a rocky voyage, a metaphor that I use quite deliberately, as it accords with the profusion of seafaring imagery throughout the text. I discuss this theme in the following pages.

The publication history of *The Gay Science* adds a very significant dimension to the text's decentred, fragmentary structure. Nietzsche wrote most of the aphorisms included in Book Five and the "Songs of Prince Vogelfrei" during the same period in which he composed *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil*. *The Gay Science* serves as an important mechanism of self-critique with respect to Nietzsche's later works. That is, the later material portrays the development and refinement of the ideas Nietzsche that published in the 1882 edition. Many of the aphorisms that appear in the first four books herald some of the famous concepts that appear in Nietzsche's later works, including Nietzsche's description of "the death of God" (no. 125) in Book Two, or "eternal recurrence" (no. 345) in Book Four. Yet, by the time Nietzsche published the second edition of *The Gay Science* in 1887, he had already developed these ideas in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Thus, I frequently refer to other texts composed by Nietzsche during the mid-1880s to contextualize my discussion of *The Gay Science*. Many of them pertain to science, and have been carefully anthologized by Walter Kaufmann in his edition of *The Will to Power*. Walter Kaufmann arranged hundreds of passages from the *Nachlass* (Nietzsche's unpublished writings) into a large volume based on Nietzsche's abandoned sketches, tables of contents, and drafts of *The Will to Power* (see Kaufmann's introduction to *The Will to Power*). A substantial portion of the text contains a sustained critique of modern science that elucidates the significance of the "science" in *The Gay Science*.

Redefining “Science” and “System”

Almost every scholarly discussion of Nietzsche’s critique of science acknowledges that *The Gay Science* is not simply a haphazard collection of aphorisms. Perhaps the most famous and adamant defender of this position is Walter Kaufmann, who rightly claims that that *The Gay Science* is a “carefully crafted composition.” He complains that “in flat defiance of Nietzsche’s own repeated pleas to the contrary,” many readers and critics persist on reading snippets of the book out of context—a statement that unfortunately still applies today (GS 15). Kathleen Higgins, who wrote one of the few books devoted exclusively to the study of *The Gay Science*, entitled *Comic Relief: Nietzsche’s Gay Science* (2000), contends that Nietzsche’s book is a “unified project,” filled with a tightly knit collection of themes and commentaries about many subjects (5). Yet, like other critics, Higgins claims that Nietzsche’s “frolicking” [sic] worldview does *not* necessarily “add to a growing train of thought” (5). However, I contend that we can regard it as a “growing train of thought,” and a legitimate method of scientific investigation, as long as we are willing to consider Nietzsche’s invitation to explore a new science that is compatible with music and dance. Although Higgins’ ubiquitous descriptions of Nietzsche’s *gai saber* as “frolicking” are important testimonials to the significance of music and gaiety in the book, they are also vague, and they detract the reader’s attention away from *The Gay Science*’s significance as a legitimate contribution to science.³ That is, they portray Nietzsche’s text as a “light-hearted” critique of prevailing forms of science, and not a new form of science.

The Gay Science respects a musical, dissonant mode of thinking, in which there is no central authority for deriving truth and meaning. Above all, this fact is reflected in the book’s fragmentary, disconnected, and heterogeneous structure. Many critics assert that *The Gay Science* portrays a form of “perspectivism.” The impetus behind this perspectivism is to

³ To avoid confusion with the title of the book, I will use the term *gai saber* when referring to the modality of scientific inquiry described in the book. “*Gai saber*” is the Provençal term for “gay science,” which inspired Nietzsche’s conception of the book (see discussion below).

destabilize and undermine the authority of modern scientific thinking—to expose its limitations and flaws, and critique it from a light-hearted perspective. Yet, as indicated by Higgins’ analysis of the text, looking at Nietzsche’s text in this way obscures the possibility that Nietzsche’s aesthetically pleasing, musical, and seemingly “perspectival” text has a very “serious”—although not stodgy—agenda: that it represents a prolegomena toward a fundamentally new type of scientific inquiry. *The Gay Science* and Nietzsche’s other late works definitely represent a movement away from the *foundation* of metaphysical abstractions that support the edifice of modern science.

The problem with using the term “perspectivism” (or “perspectivalism” as the case may be) to describe Nietzsche’s thinking, is that it often leads critics to conclude that Nietzsche simply cannot yield a “single answer” or a “final signified,” as Burgard argues in his introduction to *Nietzsche and the Feminine* (3). These statements typically inspire critics to categorize Nietzsche’s discussions of science as “pluralistic” in a way that seems to disqualify them as unscientific. In her book entitled *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Science: Reflecting Science on the Ground of Art and Life* (1994), Babich explores the problem in greater depth, but implies that Nietzsche’s project is to delineate the limits of rational-scientific epistemology, and not establish an alternative epistemology. She claims that Nietzsche’s “perspectivalism” does not present a productive critique of rational-scientific discourse: “[...] Nietzsche’s perspectivalist position is methodologically problematic. Thus, denying the ‘facts’ in order to valorize interpretation effectively advances an ultimate interpretation: the claim or ‘fact’ that there is only interpretation. This is a classically circular procedure: a *circulus vitiosus veritatis*” (47). Babich admires Nietzsche for putting all facts into question, and that he emphasizes the importance of subjective interpretation. Yet, she claims that Nietzsche “denies facts.” While there are certainly instances in which Nietzsche denies the veracity or legitimacy of a certain fact or truth, Nietzsche inspires his readers to reevaluate old truths and discover new truths. There are many instances where Nietzsche *points out the limitations of a fact*, or that a given fact is composed of a *plurality of conflicting truths*.

Nietzsche is an “affirmer” and not a “denier.” Additionally, this plurality of conflicting truths represents more than a series of arbitrary interpretations; Nietzsche seems to imply that his science will increase the vitality, musicality, and richness of a scientist’s experience and knowledge. While this process is not teleological, it is not “circular” either, as it does indeed lead to new valuations and ways of thinking—if not a “final signified.”

For example, in “On Truth and Lies in a Extra-Moral Sense,” does Nietzsche deny the existence of truths? Alternatively, does he simply exclaim that any given truth is actually one small part of an extremely complex and multidimensional network of signification? If the latter is the case, then is it possible that Nietzsche’s critiques of science represent more than a *circulus vitiosus veritatis* (an elegant and complex hermeneutic circle)? Indeed, Nietzsche’s *The Gay Science* does present more than simply a hermeneutic circle, as the process of continual interpretation and reinterpretation that he advocates is intended to strengthen our critical faculties, our bodies, our spirit, or in short our “will to power.” While there can be no doubt that Nietzsche’s “science” is *aesthetic*, and does valorize the importance of hermeneutics, *The Gay Science* does not attempt to compete with conventional science, deny it, or even subvert it. It attempts to offer the reader something *new*, and something that defers to an entirely different authority for deriving truth and meaning. This authority is a decentred, musical, dissonant theory of knowledge that does not recognize the need to find a “final signified,” but seeks to create new, ever more dissonant and discordant truths that provoke scientists to continually explore new relationships, and discover new methods of interpretation.

The “gay science” rehabilitates and reevaluates the edifice of metaphysical science, in a way that allows the scientist to effortlessly and joyfully dance over the life-denying restrictions of its metaphysical ways of thinking. It represents a movement past science, but also past aesthetics, in the sense that aesthetics can or should represent something that is *antithetical* to science. *The Gay Science* operates on its own terms; it has literally moved “beyond” science as we know it. Yet, in deference to Kaufmann and other critics who are

suspicious of the “scientific” nature of the text, *The Gay Science* does represent a work in progress. The text portrays the *voyage* beyond the horizons of metaphysics. As I hope to demonstrate in the coming pages, it is the act of embarking on a voyage that characterizes the *gai saber* and makes it so different from the metaphysical sciences, as it implies a system that is predicated upon *unpredictability, uncertainty, untruths*, and *dangers*, just like an Odyssean voyage.

A Science of “Twists and Turns”

The first aphorism of Book Five (no. 343), entitled “On the Meaning of Our Cheerfulness” [“*Was es mit unserer Heiterkeit auf sich hat*”], concludes by suggesting that “We”—the narrator of the aphorism and his readers—are about to embark on a voyage with no specific itinerary or goal other than to explore the horizons of knowledge:

At long last the horizon appears free to us again, even if it should not be bright; at long last our ships may venture out again, venture out to face any danger; all the daring of the lover of knowledge is permitted again; the sea, *our* sea, lies open again; perhaps there has never yet been such an ‘open sea.’—“
(GS 280)⁴

As described by Henning Hufnagel, the seafaring imagery in *The Gay Science* symbolizes the abandonment of stable, centripetal epistemologies by asserting that there isn’t any more *ground*—that is, any stable “scientific ground” [“*keinen festen wissenschaftlichen Grund*”]—upon which we can depend (151). Hufnagel emphasizes that the metaphor of the sea voyage [*Seefahrtmetaphorik*] is an intimate component of the *gai saber*—“the gay science”—that encourages the scientist to embark upon an endless and perilous voyage whose dangers are symbolized by a hazardous geography of oceans, rocky cliffs, dangerous harbours, and unexplored lands. The significance of the seafaring imagery includes the lack of stable

⁴ [...] — endlich erscheint uns der Horizont wieder frei, gesetzt selbst, dass er nicht hell ist, endlich dürfen unsre Schiffe wieder auslaufen, auf jede Gefahr hin auslaufen, jedes Wagniss des Erkennenden ist wieder erlaubt, das Meer, *unser* Meer liegt wieder offen da, vielleicht gab es noch niemals ein so „offnes Meer“. — (KSA 3, 574)

ground, the absence of a homeport, a journey without end, danger, the unknown, but also the lack of *gravity* in the book.

By the lack of “gravity,” I refer to the decentralized nature of the book’s approach to science, which involves the exploration of knowledge without reference to a central authority of meaning. This is reflected in the unstable natural imagery and symbols of the text. The lack of a stable and central criterion for deriving meaning does not imply or conjure a feeling of nostalgia for “metaphysical comforts,” nor does it depict the fear that the universe might be devoid of intrinsic meaning. On the contrary, it symbolizes liberation and the opportunity to explore new vistas in science and knowledge. The centripetal, gravitational force previously attributed to God is no longer a burdensome “gravitational force” in the text. The “centre” of meaning exists *everywhere*; it is distributed diffusely throughout the realm of knowledge. Science has *moved on*.

In the famous aphorism entitled “The Madman” [“*Der tolle Mensch*”] (often referred to as “The Parable of the Madman”), in the third book of *The Gay Science* (no. 125), an anonymous narrator relates the account of a seemingly crazed and agitated man who ventures into a village marketplace to announce the “death of God.” The people in the marketplace, which appear to include many atheists and educated individuals, are completely unable and unwilling to interpret the significance of the madman’s words—they seem paralyzed and stunned. However, it is not the madman’s proclamation that “God is dead” that frightens them. Their sense of astonishment is the result of the madman’s description of a godless universe as one that lacks an eternal, central authority for deriving meaning. Without this comfortable point of reference, familiar binarisms such as “up and down,” “right and left,” and “correct” or “incorrect,” have little or no significance. The breakdown of these simple binarisms is clearly symbolic of the breakdown of a metaphysically based system of valuation, which has given rise to concepts such as good and evil, and heaven and earth:

“Whither is God?” he cried; “I will tell you. *We have killed him*—you and I. All of us are his murderers. But how did we do this? How could we drink up the sea? Who gave us the sponge to wipe away the entire horizon? What were we doing when we unchained the earth from its sun? Whither is it moving now? Whither are we moving? Away from all suns? Are we not plunging continually? Backward, sideward, forward, in all directions? Is there still any up or down? Are we not straying as through an infinite nothing? Do we not feel the breath of empty space?” (GS, 181)⁵

As David Allison explains in *Reading the New Nietzsche*, the death of God represents the “toppling of metaphysics” in the broadest sense of the word:

The *death* of God, then, does not just mean that a social or political revolution will simply choose to dispense with the organized practice of a particular religious faith. Rather, what is at stake—and this is why the malingerers and idlers of the marketplace do not fully comprehend the *magnitude* of God’s death—is the rejection, the toppling, of metaphysics: the very demise of ontotheology. The event of God’s death, therefore, signifies the passing away of religion, philosophy, and morality as we have come to know them—as we have come to know it—across the history of Western thought. (92)

The “unchaining of the earth from its sun” clearly symbolizes the Copernican and Galilean revolutions in astronomy that undermine the notion that the centre of the universe is the earth. Concurrently, the denigration of the centrality of the Earth as a stable reference and locus for deriving meaning in the cosmography of the universe is a metaphor for humanity’s incredulity toward the Judeo-Christian god as a central authority of meaning. However, Allison’s analysis does not emphasize the madman’s explicit reference to the *many centres* of the universe—that is, that the death of God is symbolic of the death of *all centres of meaning*. The narrator of the parable does not merely describe the reorientation of meaning from the earth to the sun. He describes humanity’s growing incredulity toward

⁵ „Wohin ist Gott? rief er, ich will es euch sagen! *Wir haben ihn getödtet*, — ihr und ich! Wir Alle sind seine Mörder! Aber wie haben wir diess gemacht? Wie vermochten wir das Meer auszutrinken? Wer gab uns den Schwamm, um den ganzen Horizont wegzuwischen? Was thaten wir, als wir diese Erde von ihrer Sonne losketteten? Wohin bewegt sie sich nun? Wohin bewegen wir uns? Fort von allen Sonnen? Stürzen wir nicht fortwährend? Und rückwärts, seitwärts, vorwärts, nach allen Seiten? Giebt es noch ein Oben und ein Unten? Irren wir nicht wie durch ein unendliches Nichts? Haucht uns nicht der leere Raum an?“ (KSA 3, 480-481)

any metanarrative that privileges a fixed, stable, and central authority of meaning.⁶ Indeed, the universe contains a plurality of shifting, transforming centres.

The madman emphasizes that it is now humanity's responsibility to create its *own* centres in a godless universe. This places a great burden onto the people in the marketplace, as they must either create their own tables of values without deferring to a metaphysically oriented science or religion, or continue to perpetuate a metaphysical episteme even though its greatest symbol—the Judeo-Christian God—is dead. The madman departs from the marketplace realizing that no one is prepared to shoulder this burden. He throws his lantern to the ground and exclaims: "I have come too early, [...] my time is not yet" [*"Ich komme zu früh, [...] ich bin noch nicht an der Zeit"*] (GS 182; KSA 3, 481). By extinguishing the lantern's light, he allows the people of the marketplace to return to their "unenlightened" trance that reflects their lingering faith in metaphysics. The light of the lantern represents the madman's faith that humanity can construct systems of valuation that are this-worldly. The light is artificial; it emanates from a manmade tool, and not from another world.

The narrator of the aphorism explains that although the death of God has already occurred, the reverberations of this event have yet to be felt. Thus, the truly tremendous, "monstrous event" [*"Diess ungeheure Ereigniss"*] has yet to come (GS 182; KSA 3, 481). This event refers to the devastation and transfiguration of human civilization that will occur once the shockwaves of God's death are truly felt. Nietzsche compares the death of God to thunder and lightning, each of which represents the sensual experience of an event, and not the event itself. He also uses the metaphor of the light of distant stars to emphasize the gradual, very long time that it takes for events to be felt. The madman reminds his listeners in the marketplace that stars are visual representations of violent eruptions of energy that happened long ago and far away:

⁶ Here I refer to Lyotard's claim that postmodernity represents the "incredulity toward metanarratives" (*Postmodern Condition* xxiv).

This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant from them than the most distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves. (GS 182)⁷

In the context of Nietzsche's late works, including *The Gay Science* and *Twilight of the Idols*, the "death of God" serves as a metaphor for a multitude of metaphysical philosophies that privilege a central authority of meaning that is *otherworldly*: Judeo-Christianity, positivism, Platonism, and rationalism are just a few examples. The movement "away from all suns" not only represents the end of a tendency to privilege a *specific* central authority of meaning (such as "the sun" or "God"), but the end of a worldview that enshrines *any* central authority—or authorities—for deriving truth and meaning. It describes a centrifugal topography of power relations. The madman suggests the possibility that humanity must learn to navigate a universe in which dissonance is entirely emancipated—that is, in which there are many, variable centres of force that constitute a constantly shifting hierarchy of power relations. Although we might choose to pick one direction for a certain amount of time to represent "up" or "down," for example, we must bear in mind that this decision is completely an arbitrary matter of choice. We might reorient ourselves tomorrow, as the future might present circumstances that will compel us to choose different ways of representing "up" and "down" and other binary oppositions.

"The Madman" is an allegory about the emancipation of dissonance in human epistemology. The topography of the madman's universe is one in which the "centre is everywhere." Nietzsche's description of the aphorism's protagonist as *toll*—a word that can mean "mad," but also "stunning" or simply "amazing"—indicates the madman's

⁷ Diess ungeheure Ereigniss ist noch unterwegs und wandert, — es ist noch nicht bis zu den Ohren der Menschen gedrungen. Blitz und Donner brauchen Zeit, das Licht der Gestirne braucht Zeit, Thaten brauchen Zeit, auch nachdem sie gethan sind, um gesehen und gehört zu werden. Diese That ist ihnen immer noch ferner, als die fernsten Gestirne, — *und doch haben die dieselbe gethan!* (KSA 3, 481-482)

exceptional nature and the outlandishness of his ideas. What makes him “mad” is not mental illness, but the provocative, *untimely* attributes of his ideas.

The aphorism depicts a universe that has no specific centre of gravity, but rather a complex, unstable network composed of centres of force that are continually transforming and moving. In accordance with Nietzsche’s descriptions of the will to power in the *Nachlass*, the centre is both everywhere and nowhere (see Introduction, pages 24-30). However, this does not imply mysticism or the lack of order. Above all, the constantly shifting hierarchy of power among the universe’s many centres of force represents a variable ordering of rank. That is, although the universe does not consist of fixed centres of power from which we can derive a *stable* hierarchy of meaning, it does contain a hierarchy of power relations that exists at any given moment. In addition, where human beings are concerned, there is an additional tier of force that determines the order and rank of power relationships: the power of an individual’s unique perspective.

As I describe in the Introduction, Nietzsche maintains that human beings are manifestations of the will to power; each human being represents a centre of force in a vast, cosmic network of power relations. Human beings have the potential to intervene in these vast networks of power—each in accordance with their own volition, abilities, and intelligence. The madman suggests that human beings can influence the order and rank of cosmic power relations. Humanity has the ability to create values and reevaluate established values in accordance with an inexhaustible set of patterns, perspectives, and systems. Once humanity recognizes that the belief in a central authority of meaning is a myth—and a dangerous and decadent one at that—human beings will have the ability to decide how they want to order and rank the manifold centres of force that they find around them. Somehow, the madman believes that humanity will eventually be faced with a decision: it will either have to learn to create new tables of values that correspond to a universe that is bereft of a metaphysical, central authority of meaning, or face a period of protracted chaos and even self-annihilation. Either path will be fraught with disarray and dangers.

"The Madman" exemplifies the centrifugal structure of *The Gay Science* in many respects. The many disjointed and contradictory aphorisms in the text offer the reader a manifold of possibilities from which to temporarily build a sense of orientation in an environment in which there is no *inherently* stable ground. In this way, the reader's role is remarkably close to that of the sea voyagers depicted throughout the book. The practitioner of the *gai saber* might find himself drawn to one perspective and then to another, and then perhaps experience a philosophical "shipwreck" of sorts, in which one circumstance or another will bring about the failure of a given set of values. Learning how to be a scientist or a philosopher entails learning how to travel and accept both the pleasures and dangers inherent to undertaking a major voyage. According to Nietzsche, philosophers must learn to accept the fact that the universe will never provide them with a stable reference point for deriving truth and meaning. Humanity must accept its responsibility to orient and *reorient* itself in a decentred universe that offers no stable ground.

Allison claims that *The Gay Science* represents a potentially "terrifying agency of critique." He maintains that the book represents a heterogeneous matrix of "oppositions [that] are directed back against themselves, back against similarly paired oppositions in the system of our reflection on ethical and moral concepts" (82). On pages 82–83, Allison provides the reader with a wide variety of oppositions including "absolute/relative," "life/death," and "utility/truth." He asserts that these contradictions cannot be thoroughly resolved. Any attempt to do so will simply lead the reader to an even more complex set of contradictory relationships. Citing Deleuze's essay "Nomad Thought," Allison implies that Nietzsche "'confounds all codes'" (82). However, the book is even more terrifying than Allison imagines. *The Gay Science* actually portrays an approach to scientific investigation that inspires readers to ceaselessly create new "codes," binaries, oppositions, and pluralities. It forces the reader to reorder the universe on his own, with, or without the help of others. *The Gay Science* represents a machine that not only "confounds" codes, but also initiates a process of continually confounding and reconfounding of codes.

The title of Derrida's book, *Spurs: Nietzsche's Style* [*Éperons: les styles de Nietzsche*], refers to the seafaring and nature imagery in *The Gay Science*, which depicts many objects that function like "spurs," including cliffs, crags, and slippery rocks. These "spurs" represent moments of discontinuity and fragmentation in Nietzsche's text, and help to fuel the book's centrifugal forces. The following passage contains an excerpt of Derrida's reading of the second sentence of aphorism 60, entitled "Women and their Action at a Distance" ["*Die Frauen und ihre Wirkung in die Ferne*"] which Kaufmann translates as follows: "Here I stand in the flaming surf whose white tongues are licking at my feet" (GS 123).⁸ Derrida interjects commentary in his translation of aphorism 60 to emphasize the violent interaction between the narrator of the passages and his environment. The narrator of Nietzsche's aphorism encourages the reader to engage with the text in a similar manner. That is, the narrator encourages the reader to clash with the text as if he or she were a ship crashing on a spur.

The following is one of the most important and relevant of Derrida's translation-commentaries in *Spurs* (the brackets in the following quote are Derrida's):

[...] It is the seething surf, the waves rolling back over themselves as they crash against the rocky shoreline or break on the reefs, the cliffs, the *éperons*,] whose white flames fork up to my feet [so I too am an *éperons*];—from all sides there is a howling, threatening, crying, and screaming at me, while in the lowest depths the old earth shaker sings his aria [...]. (43)⁹

Derrida's suggestion that the philosopher actually constitutes one of the "spurs" in the text is provocative. The narrator in Nietzsche's aphorism does not simply fall on rocks and crags; he represents a constantly shifting, transforming, and disruptive centre of force that actually affects his environment. The philosopher interprets and observes nature; however,

⁸ Hier stehe ich inmitten des Brandes der Brandung, deren weisse Flammen bis zu meinem Fusse heraufzüngeln [...]. (KSA 3, 424)

⁹ [...] le retour sur elles-mêmes des vagues quand elles rencontrent des chaînes de rochers ou qu'elles se brisent sur les écueils, les falaises, les éperons, etc.] dont l'écumeux retour de flammes blanches jaillit jusqu'à mes pieds [donc je suis aussi l'éperon] — ce ne sont que hurlements, menaces, cris stridents qui m'assaillent, tandis que dans son antre le plus profond l'antique ébranleur de la terre chante sourdement son air [...]. (42)

he also interacts with it passionately and sensually. Unlike conventional, metaphysical science, which requires that the scientist be a dispassionate and disinterested observer of nature who should take whatever precautions are necessary to avoid being “subjective,” Derrida believes that Nietzsche wants the scientist to interact with nature as much as possible. The philosopher-artist must touch it, smell it, taste it, and hit it, not unlike like the ship that Nietzsche describes in aphorism 60. This interaction takes place on an intellectual, emotional, and physical dimension. The art of scientific investigation is a wholly sensual activity.

It is worth noting that Nietzsche takes advantage of a play on words that neither Kaufmann nor Derrida can convey in English or French. The root of the words for “flames” and “surf” in German (*flammen* and *écumeux* in Derrida’s French, respectively) is *Brand*, a word whose meanings includes “conflagration.” This wordplay is more than a convenient rhyme. It emphasizes the conflation of fire and sea imagery in *The Gay Science*. As I have discussed throughout this study, fire represents an important metaphor for the processes that underpin the will to power in Nietzsche’s writings. Nietzsche begins to juxtapose discussions of fire and the power of the will in his early writings. He is inspired, at least in part, by the philosophy of Heraclitus. However, in *The Gay Science*, the sea (including the surf, spurs, turbulent currents, and other perils) functions in a manner analogous to fire in Nietzsche’s other works. Whereas fire might serve as a metaphor for the “primal unity” in *The Birth of Tragedy*, which underpins all activity in the universe, the ocean is a far more appropriate metaphor for the processes specifically related to human life. For all of its perils, the ocean represents a natural phenomenon that is much safer for humans to touch. For example, the sea serves as a medium for human transportation. Additionally, the primary ingredient of the ocean, salt water, is also the primary ingredient of the human body. Human beings can safely touch it and interact with it. Yet, the sea also represents a powerful, disruptive, and destabilizing force that challenges humanity to be resourceful and face the many challenges that it poses.

The ubiquitous maritime imagery in *The Gay Science* is a manifestation of the “Ulysses theme” in the text. Here I refer to the title of W. B. Stanford’s famous book that describes the evolution of the many themes and tropes that distinguish Homer’s *Odyssey*. Stanford discusses the texts that prefigure the composition of the *Odyssey*, as well as the many books that it has influenced. Arguably, the most important *Ulysses* theme is the association of the word *polytropoi* [πολύτροποι] with Odysseus. In an aphorism entitled “How We, Too, Are Still Pious” [“Inwiefern auch wir noch fromm sind”] that immediately follows “The Meaning of Our Cheerfulness,” Nietzsche declares that “life has always shown itself to be on the side of the most unscrupulous *polytropoi*” (GS 282).¹⁰ In his translation of *The Odyssey*, Robert Fagles translates this word into a phrase: “twists and turns.” Epithets such as *polytropoi* have inspired many critics, such as Stanford, to assert that Odysseus’ unique form of “adaptability” is one of the epic’s most important themes. Stanford describes Odysseus’ adaptability as “chameleonic” (91). Thus, readers of Fagles’ translations of *The Odyssey* know Odysseus as the “man of twists and turns.”

The first line of Book One of the *Odyssey*, as translated by Fagles, reads: “Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns” (77). In his commentary to *The Gay Science*, Walter Kaufmann asserts, “Nietzsche’s point is, of course, that Odysseus owed his survival on many occasions to his virtuosity in deception” (282). It is fortunate that Nietzsche makes this comment in “How We, Too, Are Still Pious,” otherwise, it would require a great deal of scholarly research to *prove* that his constant references to ocean-related imagery are inspired by Homer’s tale of the “man of twists and turns.” This connection is important here, as it emphasizes that the scientific *Odyssey*, which Nietzsche describes in *The Gay Science* requires that scientists actually be *Odyssean*. Specifically, it requires that the philosopher be a “man of twists and turns.” To use Derrida’s words, a philosopher must also be a “spur.”

¹⁰ [...] die grosse Form des Lebens sich immer auf der Seite der unbedenklichsten πολύτροποι gezeigt hat. (KSA 3, 576)

Walter Kaufmann arrives at his interpretation of *polytropoi* by exploring several German and English translations of the word: “The meaning [of *polytropoi*] ranges from much turned to much traveled, versatile, wily, and manifold. In German there are two good ways of rendering it: *den vielgewandten* and, better yet, *dem vielverschlagenen*. *Viel* is much; *gewandt*, turned, skilled, dexterous; *verschlagen*, driven off course, shipwrecked or stranded—and crafty” (GS 282). Being a “man of twists and turns” does not imply that one can—or even should—escape dangerous situations, as according to Kaufmann, being “crafty” and “dexterous” goes hand in hand with being “shipwrecked.” Thus, the method of scientific investigation that Nietzsche presents in *The Gay Science* demands that its practitioner have the qualities of an epic hero: he must be clever, but also reckless. Like Odysseus, he must be willing to achieve his goal through self-deception, deceiving others, and occasionally allowing oneself to face the possibility of self-destruction. He must be “chameleonic,” as Stanford puts it.

These ocean-related metaphors represent a model by which we can interpret the centrifugal structure of *The Gay Science*. It is a book of “twists and turns” designed for the philosopher of “twists and turns.” The “twists and turns” of *The Gay Science* help the text to portray a method of scientific and philosophical investigation that thinkers can use to explore knowledge in a decentred universe. This methodology takes into account the relationship between the philosopher, his or her body, and the dissonant, decentred universe in which they exist and carry out scientific investigation.

The voyage of science—the process of gathering knowledge—should never permit us “to *stop* before any ultimate wisdom, ultimate goodness, ultimate power” [“*vor einer letzten Weisheit, letzten Güte, letzten Macht stehen zu bleiben*”] (GS 230; KSA 3, 527). This phrase comes from aphorism 285, entitled “Excelsior,” in Book Four, which depicts a mysterious voice who tells us that we should never yield to any form of knowledge that provides comfort or certainty:

“You will never pray again, never adore again, never again rest in endless trust; you do not permit yourself to stop before any ultimate wisdom, ultimate goodness, ultimate power, while unharnessing your thoughts; you have no perpetual guardian and friend for your seven solitudes; [...].” (GS 229)¹¹

The quoted passage is followed by what appears to be the remarks of an anonymous commentator who suggests that the strength needed to maintain such a courageous philosophical attitude is comparable to the strength of a lake that *decides* to dam *itself* off, in order to increase its strength and potential energy. That is, we must actively decide to structure our worldview in a way that will help us to eschew the tempting comforts of metaphysical abstractions. Nietzsche explains that the lake must build a dam to *renounce* [*entsagen*] the power of gravity that pulls it toward an external, central locus of power. By creating a dam, and creating a point of *indifference*—that, of tension—between itself and the seemingly all-powerful gravity well that surrounds it, the lake can actually create a locus of power within itself (see Chapter One, pages 98-99 for a discussion of Nietzsche’s use of the word “indifference”). Likewise, Nietzsche suggests that human beings can fight the seemingly unstoppable flow of energy into “a god”: “Perhaps this very renunciation will also lend us the strength needed to bear this renunciation; perhaps man will rise ever higher as soon as he ceases to *flow out* into a god” (GS 230).¹² Clearly, “a god” refers to a metaphysically oriented way of thinking.

The *gai saber* is a method of gaining knowledge by embarking upon a rough, perilous, and hazardous voyage in which the scientist constantly faces dangers everywhere. But it also requires that the scientist continually strengthen his own reserve of power. The scientist is an explorer of new vistas and perspectives. He gains strength and power

¹¹ „Du wirst niemals mehr beten, niemals mehr anbeten, niemals mehr im endlosen Vertrauen ausruhen — du versagst es dir, vor einer letzten Weisheit, letzten Güte, letzten Macht stehen zu bleiben und deine Gedanken abzuschirren — du hast keinen fortwährenden Wächter und Freund für deine sieben Einsamkeiten — [...]“ (KSA 3, 527)

¹² Vielleicht wird gerade jene Entsagung uns auch die Kraft verleihen, mit der die Entsagung selber ertragen werden kann; vielleicht wird der Mensch von da an immer höher steigen, wo er nicht mehr in einen Gott *ausfließt*. (KSA 3, 528)

through his explorations. He does not allow himself to succumb to an external locus of power. Alternatively, he engages in a constant process of “renunciation” which allows him to engage the world with greater force and vivacity.

In his chapter on *The Gay Science* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche claims that the poem “To the Mistral,” evokes the Provençal concept of the “*gaya scienza*” which represents a “unity of singer, knight, and free spirit” [“*jene Einheit von Sänger, Ritter, und Freigeist*”] (BWN 750; KSA 6, 333-344). Nietzsche further claims that this song depicts a type of understanding that permits one to “dance right over morality” [“*über die Moral hinweggetanzt wird*”] (BWN 750; KSA 6, 333-344). As I discuss at the beginning of this chapter, it is here that Nietzsche explicitly associates dance, music, and Odyssean imagery with “our science.” Thus, this poem implies that the scientist’s voyage requires levity, rhythm, and tempo. A scientist must be transformed into a singer and a dancer as well as a thinker. And as the voyage continues, and the scientist continues to “dance over” the world of continually transforming values and concepts, his movements become more trenchant, disruptive, and destabilizing.

The philosopher engages in an exhausting, athletic experience that affects his emotional and physical state of being. Nietzsche’s interpretation of *polytropoi* is musical. The science of “twists and turns” is a musical science that requires knowledge of melody and choreography. The practitioner of the *gai saber* does not “use” a scientific approach, or “defer” to a scientific approach, he dances *with it*. He uses song and dance to interact with knowledge and the means of acquiring it. The *gai saber* represents an intrinsically *subjective* and *sensual* method of scientific inquiry. That is, the scientist-dancer must rely upon his or her subjective impressions to produce scientific knowledge about the world. In addition, the practitioner of the *gai saber* must use his or her body, senses, and instinct for adventure as scientific tools to test, measure, and understand objects of scientific inquiry.

Despite the apparently universal message of the emancipation of dissonance as implied by the “death of God” in the parable of “The Madman,” it is important to consider that this book is also about *Nietzsche* and *his* approach to the *gai saber*. On the title page of

the 1887 edition of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche places a small verse at the bottom of the page that reads “I live in my own house,/ Have never copied anyone/ And—I would laugh at any Master,/ Who has not laughed at himself./ *Over the Door to My House*” (trans. mine).¹³ This aphorism emphasizes that *The Gay Science* is far from a dispassionate outline for an objective, “metaphysical” science. It is a highly personal document. It represents *Nietzsche’s approach*. The book depicts Nietzsche’s tastes, Nietzsche’s tempo, and Nietzsche’s idiosyncrasies, which have facilitated *Nietzsche’s* own understanding and interpretation of the *gai saber*.

The ability to “laugh” at oneself represents more than just a sense of humour, but the ability and willingness of an individual to pave the way toward the self-overcoming of oneself, and the eventual fragmentation and dissemination of one’s identity and ideas. Referring specifically to *The Gay Science*, Kathleen Higgins discusses the significance of laughter in Nietzsche’s writings:

Laughter resolves self-doubt, not by insisting on the unquestionable importance of that self, but by allowing for the disintegration of one’s “self” and allowing the parts of one’s psyche to rearrange themselves. Indeed, laughter literally initiates physiological transformation, for it marks respiration, which continually reconfigures one’s bodily relationship to the external environment. Laughter commonly affirms the continued interaction of self and the world, and the transformation of self that is involved. To laugh at oneself out of the whole truth would be to be flexible in one’s identity. Metaphorically, laughter is a gesture of sloughing off one skin and beginning to use another. (48-49)

Higgins’ analysis emphasizes the broad transformative power of laughter, as well as its ability to reconfigure and disrupt one’s sense of self, identity, and perspective. Laughter is musical, dissonant, and it represents a centrifugal force that generates movement away from all centres.

It is a particularly appropriate image for *The Gay Science*, as it represents an activity that involves every aspect of the human being, including the body, emotions, and intellect.

¹³ Ich wohne in meinem eigenen Haus,/ Hab Niemandem nie nichts nachgemacht/ Und — lachte noch jeden Meister aus,/ Der nicht sich selber ausgelacht./ *Ueber meiner Hausthür* (KSA 3, 343).

Intense laughter inspires an enormous amount of self-critique, as it provokes the one doing the laughing to look at things from a wide variety of perspectives, while experiencing many different emotional and physical states. Like dance, laughter involves sensual engagement with the surrounding environment.

Nietzsche in Provence

Nietzsche subtitles *The Gay Science*, “la gaya scienza” (the Italian translation of the Provençal phrase, *gai saber*), which as Nietzsche explains to his readers in *Ecce Homo*, is a reference to a medieval Provençal chivalric aesthetic that represents a “unity of singer, knight, and free spirit which distinguishes the wonderful early culture of the Provençals from all equivocal cultures” (BWN 294).¹⁴ In the final sentence of his chapter on *The Gay Science* in *Ecce Homo*, he claims that it is the “very last poem above all, ‘To the Mistral’” [“das allerletzte Gedicht zumal, ‚an den Mistral’”]—one of the songs in the appendix, entitled “Songs of Prince Free-as-a-Bird”—in which “one dances right over morality” [“über die Moral hinweggetanzt wird”] (BWN 750; KSA 6, 334). This dance, Nietzsche emphasizes, represents “a consummate Provençalism” [“ein vollkommener Provençalismus. —”] (BWN 750; KSA 6, 334). In this section I explore Nietzsche’s concept of “Provençalism”—a worldview that embraces the tripartite aesthetic of the Dionysian singer, the bold and courageous knight, and the “free spirit.” By exploring the nature of Nietzsche’s “Provençalism,” we can synthesize a contextual interpretation of Nietzsche’s “science of twists and turns.” For example, in the poem “To the Mistral,” Nietzsche describes a scientific Odyssey—“our science”—from his own personal perspective. It contains a specifically *Nietzschean* set of “twists” and “turns.”

According to Nietzsche, the “Provençal” knight represents a unity of the following archetypes: singer, knight, and free spirit. He embraces an aesthetic in which all three are closely intertwined. These three archetypes represent a trio of advanced drives or

¹⁴ [...] an jene Einheit von *Sänger, Ritter und Freigeist*, mit der sich jene wunderbare Frühkultur der Provençalen gegen alle zweideutigen Culturen abhebt [...]. (KSA 6, 334)

tendencies—not unlike the Apollonian and Dionysian drives he describes in *The Birth of Tragedy*—which enable the modern philosopher to engage in a truly joyful scientific examination of the world. The philosopher–artist who is able to balance his threefold identity will be able to orchestrate a new and completely modern technique of harnessing the Apollonian and Dionysian drives, an art that had been lost before the advent of Platonism in ancient Greece.

The social and physical geography of Provence is characterized by a variety of distinguishing features. It represents a geopolitical link between northern and southern European cultures. Over the centuries, Provence has been the site of linguistic, cultural, and political convergence. The inhabitants of the territory have included Celts, Goths, Arabs, the Greeks, Berbers, and a variety of Romantic peoples. Its cultural heritage includes the customs, laws, and artistic accomplishments of various major empires, including the Roman Empire, the Holy Roman Empire, and the rule of the Moors.¹⁵ In *The Gay Science*, the mistral wind symbolizes the destabilizing and discordant attributes of this region. It is a strong, climactic system that brings dry, cold wind from Northern Europe over the mountains and hills of Provence, which circulates throughout the Mediterranean region near Corsica and the Balearic Islands. The etymology of the word “mistral” reaches back to the Old Provençal word for “masterly” and “dominant” (*Oxford English Dictionary*). Throughout the middle and latter portion of his career, particularly in *The Genealogy of Morals* and *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche consistently represents master morality as a system that generates life and strength-promoting values and vitality among its purveyors. Thus, it is not surprising that the mistral is renown for bringing fresh air, and crisp, invigorating weather to Provence.

The practitioner of the *gai saber*, who embodies the dancer, knight, and free spirit, is on a new adventure, which takes place on a new terrain. The textual terrain of *The Gay*

¹⁵ See Durrell’s *Provence*, which surveys the history and geography of the area.

Science facilitates the ability of the reader and the writer to engage in “Provençalism.”

Provençalism represents Nietzsche’s specific and personal approach to the *gai saber*. It provides readers with very personal information about the nature of *his* science. What sort of imagery has motivated him to develop the modality of scientific investigation presented in the book? How does Nietzsche’s choice of images, symbols, styles, and literary subtexts affect the reader and his journey through this spur-ridden text?

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes the “French character” [*Wesen der Franzosen*] as portraying a “halfway successful synthesis of the north and the south” [“eine halbwegs gelungene Synthesis des Nordens und Südens gegeben”] (BWN 384; KSA 5, 199-200). He claims that this hybrid nature is largely due to the influence of “Provençal and Ligurian blood” which “protects them against the gruesome northern gray on gray and the sunless concept-spooking and anemia—the disease of *German* taste [...]” [“bewahrt sie vor dem schauerlichen nordischen Grau in Grau und der sonnenlosen Begriffs-Gespenserei und Blutarmuth, — unsrer deutschen Krankheit des Geschmacks”] (BWN 384; KSA 5, 200). At the end of the aphorism from which I cite these passages, Nietzsche claims that it was “for them that Bizet made music, this last genius to see a new beauty and seduction—who discovered a piece of *the south of music*” [“Für sie hat Bizet Musik gemacht, dieses letzte Genie, welches eine neue Schönheit und Verführung gesehen, — der ein Stück Süden der Musik entdeckt hat”] (BWN 385; KSA 5, 200). As noted by Bertram, Love, and other critics, Nietzsche became obsessed with the South—particularly liminal zones such as Provence—as the inspiration for a revitalizing and refreshing form of music: “In *Beyond [Good and Evil]*, he then composes a fugue in which these two leitmotifs, ‘music’ and the ‘south,’ become a vision for the ear, a premonitory dream of a future ‘Mediterranean’ music” (Bertram 219). As I describe throughout this section, *The Gay Science*, particularly in its final version with its framework of songs, represents an attempt to infuse science with this “Mediterranean” music of the future, as Bertram puts it. In this way, science can be true to “nature,” which as we know, Nietzsche associates with “good music” (see Introduction, pages 6-8). It provides him with

the means to overcome metaphysical systems of science, which he associates with the North, by infusing it with the rhythms, melodies, and imagery of the South and Southern music.

Many studies have focused on the unique qualities of *The Gay Science*. Walter Kaufmann's canonical 1974 introduction to the book emphasizes the importance of the Provençal troubadours and their chivalric ideal of the "gay science" [in Provençal: *lo gai saber*]. Kaufmann claims that Nietzsche's decision to associate his book with Provence portrays his belief that science does not have to be "stodgy," heavy, or "northern," but also:

[...] be "southern," by which [Nietzsche] means Mediterranean—and he refers again and again to Genoa and the Provence. Those who cannot readily understand Nietzsche's feeling for "the south" should think of another Northerner who discovered the Provence at the same time: Van Gogh. (5)

Kaufmann refers to the Provence's significance as the convergence of Northern and Southern styles, attitudes, histories, cultures, and spiritualities. As Nietzsche emphasizes in nearly all of his major works—ranging from his student days until the end of his career—the North and the South represent a wide range of closely related, yet often conflicting, "dissonant" metaphors. These analogies not only refer to stereotypes and generalizations (which Nietzsche often makes) about Mediterranean and Teutonic attitudes, religions, and philosophies, but the geographic significance of diet, music, clothing, and other day-to-day concerns. Not surprisingly, Nietzsche portrays the differences between North and South throughout *The Gay Science* in both the aphorisms and the songs. Nietzsche often juxtaposes climactic imagery with cultural, artistic, and philosophical attitudes.

There are many examples of discordant climactic imagery in the collection of songs at the end of the book: "Songs of Prince Vogelfrei." The poem entitled "In the South" [*Im Süden*] juxtaposes geographic and climactic imagery with philosophical meaning. In the final stanza, the singer associates the "north" with overbearing metaphysically oriented systems of thinking:

So young, so false, so distracted
You seem captive to love
and every charming diversion?
Up north—I'll avow it with hesitation—

I loved a dame, so old I shudder:
"Truth" was her name, this old hag... (trans. mine)¹⁶

This stanza describes the final observations of a traveler from the north, who has fled to the sunnier skies of the south—perhaps Provence. Of particular significance is the fact that the space in which the poem seems to be set is neither the North nor the South, but a medial terrain. Here, the philosopher is able to gain perspective on the harsh realities of Northern—specifically German—worldviews and metaphysical philosophical concepts such as "truth" and "reason." The poem depicts these concepts as life-denying, ascetic, and terrible, and actually personifies them as an "old hag."

"Woman" always represents a complex and ambiguous symbol for "truth" in Nietzsche's writings. Nietzsche often depicts women as beings that help men to construct their own patriarchal, metaphysical, otherworldly notions of truth. But unlike the image of younger women, whom Nietzsche consistently describes as naïvely perpetuating the illusion of metaphysical truth, old women seem to be completely aware that "man's" belief in metaphysical truth is entirely delusional. Whereas men and younger women might be curious about the nature of the concept of truth, old women are completely comfortable with their own resignation that "truth" is a *fallacy*—a fallacy that has been perpetuated by *men*. They represent, in short, the penultimate nihilists, as Nietzsche emphasizes in aphorism 64 of *The Gay Science* entitled "Sceptics" ["*Skeptiker*"]:

I am afraid that old women are more sceptical in their most secret heart of hearts than any man: they consider the superficiality of existence its essence, and all virtue and profundity is to them merely a veil over this "truth," a very welcome veil over a pudendum—in other words, a matter of decency and shame, and no more than that (GS 125)¹⁷

¹⁶ So jung, so falsch, so umgetrieben/Scheint ganz ihr mir gemacht zum Lieben/Und jedem schönen Zeitvertreib?/Im Norden — ich gesteh's mit Zaudern —/Liebt' ich ein Weibchen, alt zum Schaudern:/„Die Wahrheit“ hiess dies alte Weib. . . (KSW 3, 642)

¹⁷ Ich fürchte, dass altgewordene Frauen im geheimsten Verstecke ihres Herzens skeptischer sind, als alle Männer: sie glauben an die Oberflächlichkeit des Daseins als an sein Wesen, und alle Tugend und Tiefe ist ihnen nur Verhüllung dieser „Wahrheit“, die sehr wünschenswerthe Verhüllung eines pudendum —, also eine Sache des Anstandes und der Scham, und nicht mehr! (KSA 3, 426)

According to the speaker in this aphorism, the only truth perceived by old women is the *superficiality* of metaphysics. She does not believe in immutable truths and essentialisms extolled by metaphysicians, nor rehabilitated conceptions of truth, such as those presented in *The Gay Science*. This virtually depicts women as bitter quietists, who perceive that existence might be nothing more than “will and representation,” and feel neither disappointment nor anger at that fact; they merely consider it a matter of “decency” to maintain the illusion. In these respects, old women represent the gradual apotheosis of mendacity that Nietzsche describes in aphorism 344, in which he describes the gradual emergence of an actual metaphysics of *mendacity* in Europe (see Introduction, page 34). Does Nietzsche believe that Europe is gradually turning the world into a race of “old women” who bitterly and spitefully preserve the superficial structures of metaphysical systems, such as Judeo-Christianity and science—out of habit? For lack of a better alternative? For lack of anything better to do?

The previous stanzas of “In the South” describe the singer’s jubilation at being able to move, dance, sing, and think in a “southern” way. By allowing himself to be captive to the musical, dissonant, and unpredictable patterns of the climate, natural surroundings, sensations, and emotions, he enjoys a sense of intellectual liberation: “Thus I hang from crooked branches/ and swing away my weariness./ A bird invited me here to stay,/ a bird’s nest is where I stay./ Where am I then? Oh far! Oh far!” (trans. mine).¹⁸ The speaker is far from the rigidly ordered world of the “old woman”—where people are guided by the consonant motions of metaphysics and metaphysically oriented modalities of thinking. In the third stanza, Nietzsche makes a clear connection between the north and the decadent, gravity-laden and heavy [*schwer*] worldviews that predominate German culture and philosophy. The south, however, represents a place that resists the rigid metaphysical

¹⁸ So häng’ ich denn auf krummen Aste/ Und schaukle meine Müdigkeit./ Ein Vogel lud mich her zu Gaste,/ Ein Vogelnest ist’s, drin ich raste./ Wo bin ich doch? Ach, weit! Ach, weit! (KSA 3, 641)

ordering of the north. The singer describes his home as a rather haphazard and crooked place that is temporary like a bird's nest. Everything appears to resist linearity, consonance, and a central locus of structure; the environment is ordered by an irregular array of centres of force.

In Nietzsche's late works, "woman" always symbolizes an elusive truth. However, she does not always appear as an old hag. Often, she appears as a beautiful woman. The most poignant representation of "truth" as a beautiful woman in *The Gay Science* is in the second book, in the aphorism entitled "Woman and Their Action at a Distance." The narrator claims that the tendency to patronize and apotheosize "woman" in literature and philosophy indicates that she represents something that transcends this-worldly existence:

A spiritlike intermediate being: quietly observing, gliding, floating? As the boat with its white sails moves like an immense butterfly over the dark sea. Yes! To move *over* existence! That's it! That would be something!

It seems as if the noise here had led me into fantasies. All great noise leads us to move happiness into some quiet distance. When a man stands in the midst of his own noise, in the midst of his own surf of plans and projects, then he is apt also to see quiet, magical beings gliding past him and to long for their happiness and seclusion: *woman*. (GS 124-125)¹⁹

The natural imagery of this aphorism corresponds with the Provençalism of the poems and the text in general. The speaker claims that "man" has apotheosized woman as a representation of other-worldliness and *metaphysical comfort*, which we know from passages throughout Nietzsche's works (most notably "Excelsior" in *The Gay Science*) is simply anathema to his ideas.

Amidst the imagery of metaphysical comfort in this aphorism, however, there is a great deal of turbulence as well. At the beginning of the aphorism, the speaker claims that

¹⁹ Als ein geisterhaftes, stilles, schauendes, gleitendes, schwebendes Mittelwesen? Dem Schiffe gleichend, welches mit seinen weissen Segeln wie ein ungeheurer Schmetterling über das dunkle Meer hinläuft! Ja! Ueber das Dasein hinlaufen! Das ist es! Das wäre es! — — Es scheint, der Lärm hier hat mich zum Phantasten gemacht? Aller grosse Lärm macht, dass wir das Glück in die Stille und Ferne setzen. Wenn ein Mann inmitten *seines* Lärmes steht, inmitten seiner Brandung von Würfen und Entwürfen: da sieht er auch wohl stille zauberhafte Wesen an sich vorübergleiten, nach deren Glück und Zurückgezogenheit er sich sehnt, — *es sind die Frauen*. (KSA 3, 424)

he is “standing in the flaming surf whose white tongues are licking” [“*stehe ich inmitten des Brandes der Brandung, deren weisse Flammen bis zu meinem Fusse heraufzüngeln*”] his feet; he hears “howls” and feels the earth shake (GS 123; KSA 3, 424). However, when a “sailboat,” which the speaker equates with “woman” floats by, suddenly the world seems to be “at a distance.” It is clear that the speaker is being sarcastic here, and refers to how *others* might feel in such a situation. “Woman” not only has the ability to give men the feeling of “metaphysical comfort”—she is able to make him entirely oblivious to the events around him. He is no longer able to “dance” with the wide variety of disruptive phenomena that are transpiring around him. Men draw upon the image of transcendental, feminine beauty to construct the criteria and foundation for their worldviews: “The magic and the most powerful effect of women, is in philosophical language, action at a distance, *actio in distans*; but this requires first of all and above all—*distance*” (GS 124).²⁰ Simply put, Nietzsche suggests that women can hinder men from thinking like *musicians* and *dancers*. Women are often like the Sirens, Circe, and the many other beautiful, yet seductive and dangerous feminine characters portrayed in *The Odyssey*. Women can make distracting sounds and “noises” that divert and confuse men. They have the ability to impede and distract men from Odyssean adventures with their beauty and promise of comfort.

The famous first lines of Nietzsche’s preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*—“Supposing, truth is a woman—what then?” [“*Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist —, wie?*”]—has a variety of implications—and not all of them disparage women. In the following lines, Nietzsche suggests that *male* philosophers have been *bad lovers*—“dogmatists” [“*Dogmatiker*”]— who have been “poor at understanding women” [“*sich schlecht auf Weiber verstanden*”] (trans. mine, KSA 5, 11). Perhaps the veiled sailboat that Nietzsche describes as “woman” in *The Gay Science* can be loved and understood in a different way? Perhaps if she

²⁰ Der Zauber und die mächtigste Wirkung der Frauen ist, um die Sprache der Philosophen zu reden, eine Wirkung in die Ferne, eine *actio in distans*: dazu gehört aber, zuerst und vor Allem — *Distanz*! (KSA 3, 425)

is treated differently she might act differently? It is possible that she has no idea how she *should* behave, as she has always been patronized and apotheosized as the torchbearer for metaphysical, otherworldly ways of thinking?²¹

This is a controversial topic, and one that Derrida discusses at great length in *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Derrida suggests that the concept “woman” has been essentialized in Western discourse, and that the key to developing a stronger relationship with women is by carefully deconstructing these complex layers of metaphysical essentialism: “That which will not be pinned down by truth is, in truth—*feminine*. This should not, however, be hastily mistaken for a women’s femininity, for female sexuality, or for any other of those essentializing fetishes which might tantalize the dogmatic philosopher” (55).²² Indeed, it is important to unveil that which veils our concepts of “truth” and “woman” in order to increase *our* understanding of them and how they affect us—but what about *them*? What are we to do with “truth” and “woman”? Derrida does not provide a clear answer to this question.

We know that Nietzsche believes that science can and should be for the *lover of knowledge*. Additionally, we know that Nietzsche believes that most scientists and philosophers are bad lovers, bad dancers, and bad laughers. Perhaps Nietzsche’s journey into this textual Provençalism—this escape from the wicked truth-hag from the north—represents a search for love. The lack of a Beatrice or Gretchen in *The Gay Science* does not mean that Nietzsche’s love is not there; it simply means that the reader and Nietzsche himself is not able to identify her. She is not only lost in the “machine” of the text; she might not even know that she is there or how to make her presence known. It is not my

²¹ There are many scholarly defences of Nietzsche’s discussions of women and femininity. A strong overview of the controversy includes “Woman All to Woman?,” a chapter in Higgins’ *Comic Relief*.

²² Ce qui à la vérité ne se laisse pas prendre est — *féminine*, ce qu’il ne faut pas s’empresse de traduire par la féminité, la féminité de la femme, la sexualité féminine et autres fétiches essentialisants qui sont justement ce qu’on croit prendre quand on en reste à la niaiserie du philosophe dogmatique [...]. (54)

intention to be deliberately obscure or mystical with regard to this assertion, but merely to suggest that there is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Nietzsche's desire to create a new science using "gaiety" might also represent a search for emotional and erotic fulfillment—perhaps for a woman (or at least someone). The textual space that we come to know as Provence in *The Gay Science* not only represents a territory in which one can find, analyze, and generate knowledge, but a space in which one can find his or her love. In the poem "In the South," it seems rather clear that the birds that invite the speaker to stay in the South represent both knowledge and an erotic attachment of some sort.

In the chapter entitled "Why I Write Such Good Books" [*"Warum ich so gute Bücher schreibe"*] in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche tells us a bit about the type of woman that he considers to be ideal: "the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves" [*"das vollkommene Weib zerrisst, wenn es liebt"*] (KSA 6, 306):

May I here venture the surmise that I *know* woman? That is part of my Dionysian dowry. Who knows? Perhaps I am the first psychologist of the eternally feminine. They all love me—an old story—not counting *abortive* females, the "emancipated" who lack the stuff for children. — Fortunately, I am not willing to be torn to pieces: the perfect woman tears to pieces when she loves.—I know these charming maenads.—Ah, what a dangerous, creeping, subterranean little beast of prey she is! And yet so agreeable! (BWN 722)²³

We know that one of many myths of Dionysus that greatly influenced Nietzsche relates to the ancient Greek ritual of *spargamos*, in which an animal or human being is sacrificed on a regular basis through dismemberment. According to these myths, Dionysus willingly participates in this ritual, and it is the Maenads—the followers and servants of Dionysus—

²³ Darf ich anbei die Vermuthung wagen, dass ich die Weiblein *kenne*? Das gehört zu meiner dionysischen Mitgift. Wer weiss? vielleicht bin ich der erste Psycholog des Ewig-Weiblichen. Sie lieben mich Alle — eine alte Geschichte: der *verunglückten* Weiblein abgerechnet, die „Emancipirten“, denn das Zeug zu Kindern abgeht. — Zum Glück bin ich nicht Willens mich zerreißen zu lassen: das vollkommene Weib zerreisst, wenn es liebt... Ich kenne diese lebenswürdigen Mänaden... Ah, was für ein gefährliches, schleichendes, unterirdisches kleines Raubthier! Und so angenehm dabei! (KSA 6, 305-306)

who are kind enough to perform this loving ritual on his behalf.²⁴ These devoted women are anything but the sailboats, spiritlike creatures, or spiteful old women that Nietzsche describes in *The Gay Science*. They are beings that mirror the processes described by the “Dionysian,” musical dissonance, and the will to power. The Maenads represent a powerful, decentred, and centrifugal force that actually generates knowledge through their destructive behaviour. In *The Birth of Tragedy* and other early works, Nietzsche describes the dissonant forces of the “primal unity,” the Dionysian, and Heraclitean fire as relatively impersonal forces with which human beings can engage if they so chose. They can sculpt them, “play” with them, and use them as a model for social behaviour, but Nietzsche stops short of endowing them with personality and agency. The Maenads *love* Dionysus, and Dionysus *loves* them. This love comes at a price: complete and total destruction on a regular basis. But the frenzied love they give him is entirely devoid of the metaphysical comforts that Nietzsche ascribes to women in aphorism 60 of *The Gay Science*.

Derrida also relates the imagery of the frenzied, destructive women that Nietzsche describes in *Ecce Homo* to knowledge. With respect to this particular passage, he asserts “The question of the woman suspends the decidable opposition of true and non-true and inaugurates the epochal regime of quotation marks which is to be enforced for every concept belonging to the system of philosophical decidability. The hermeneutic project which postulates a true sense of the text is radically disqualified under this regime” (107).²⁵ There can be no question that the Maenads destabilize “decidable opposition[s] of true and non-true.” What is questionable however, is whether or not they want to destabilize or deconstruct philosophical decidability—or even if that is Nietzsche’s intention. Derrida

²⁴ See the chapter entitled “*The Gay Science*” in David Allison’s *Reading the New Nietzsche* for a detailed discussion of the various myths that Nietzsche probably consulted while developing his interpretation of Dionysus.

²⁵ Dès lors que la question de la femme suspend l’opposition décidable du vrai et du non-vrai, instaure le régime époqual des guillemets pour tous les concepts appartenant au système de cette décidabilité philosophique, disqualifie le projet herméneutique postulant le sens vrai d’un texte [...]. (106)

immediately effaces the presence of a plurality of women from his analysis. The manner in which Nietzsche describes it, each member of the plurality rips and tears “decidable” oppositions into a wide range of fragments. It represents a process that is far more disruptive and dissonant than subverting and destabilizing oppositions. Certainly, Nietzsche uses the word “woman,” but he immediately follows up by describing the Maenads, which I argue represents *women*.

Nietzsche’s portrayal of sexual love in *Ecce Homo* is dynamic and even *explosive*, which as I describe in Chapter Four, represents a metaphor for a completely disruptive force. The word that Nietzsche uses in this passage to express *spargamos*—that is the act of “tearing to pieces”—is the verb *Zerreissen*—a word whose connotations are far more disruptive and disorienting than “tear,” which might refer to something as simple as tearing something in half. The word implies pulling apart from many directions, dencentring, mauling, rupturing, and dirempting. It does much more than destabilize binary oppositions—it destroys forms and shatters them into a variety of irregular fragments. In this way, the women function like Deleuze’s “Heraclitean fire machine,” in that they disharmonize the stability of everything around them.

The final selection from *The Gay Science* contains a poem entitled “To the Mistral: A Dancing Song” [“*An den Mistral: Ein Tanzlied*”]. This poem provides an interesting example of how Nietzsche employs the imagery of “Provence” to symbolize a passionate and erotic love relationship with knowledge, but also a diffuse feminine presence in the text. Nietzsche portrays the mistral phenomenon as a metaphor for the type of thinking he presents in *The Gay Science*. The first stanzas represent the mistral as a powerful and transformative force that physically and spiritually awakens the dancing philosopher:

Mistral Wind, you rain cloud hunter,
Murderer of Tribulations, Marauder of Heaven,
Roaring One, O how I love you!
Were we two not generated
from one womb, predestined
for one lot for eternity?

Here on slippery crags on rocky paths
I run toward you dancing,
Dancing, as you whistle and sing:
You, who without ship or ruder
As with the freedom of the freest brother
Leap over the wild seas. (trans. mine)²⁶

These lines depict the mistral as a force that permeates the singer's sensual world of physical existence, as well as the internal, psychic realm. The mistral impels the singer to imitate its actions and dance freely and erratically throughout its surroundings. True to the science of "twists and turns," the philosopher-dancer slips on rocky paths and is tossed about on rough seas. It is in the sixth stanza, however, that the singer makes an explicit connection between his sensual dance and the joyful art of scientific investigation:

Dance on a thousand backs,
the backs of waves and the waves of malice —
Hail to those who make new dances!
Let us dance in a thousand ways,
Free—thus shall *our* art be known,
Gay—*our* science! (trans. mine)²⁷

Scientific investigation is represented as anything but a detached and impersonal activity—it is irregular, tempestuous, and unpredictable. New sciences require new *dances*.

Therefore, the vitality of a science is proportional to the creativity and artistic ingenuity of the scientist.

Accordingly, this vitality is proportional to the dancer-scientist's ability to sense the multiplicity of tempos, melodies, and directions of his sensual and psychic environment.

He performs science in *conjunction* with the mistral wind. Being "gay" involves rapid and

²⁶ Mistral-Wind, du Wolken-Jäger, / Trübsal-Mörder, Himmels-Feger, / Brausender, wie lieb' ich dich! / Sind wir Zwei nicht Eines Schoosses / Erstlingsgabe, Eines Looses / Vorbestimmte ewiglich?

Hier auf glatten Felsen Felsenwegen / Lauf' ich tanzend dir entgegen, / Tanzend, wie du pfeifst und singst: / Der du ohne Schiff und Ruder / Als der Freiheit freister Bruder / Ueber wilde Meere springst. (KSW 3, 649-650)

²⁷ Tanze nun auf tausend Rücken, / Wellen-Rücken, Wellen-Tücken — / Heil, wer *neue* Tänze schafft! / Tanzen wir in tausend Weisen, / Frei — sei *unsre* Kunst geheissen, / Fröhlich — *unsre* Wissenschaft! (KSW 3, 650)

impulsive movement across the terrain, like wind: “Let us break from every flower / One fine blossom for our glory / And two leaves to wind a wreath!” (trans. mine, stanza seven). Provençalism encourages the scientist to allow himself to be guided by intuition and the hazardous forces of the external world, such as the wind. Such a dance truly represents the spirit of Provençalism, which requires an equal proportion of “knight,” “free spirit,” and “singer”: “Let us dance like troubadours / Between holy ones and whores, / Between God and World, the dance!” (trans. mine).²⁸ The dancing philosopher courageously fluctuates between various states, unable to adhere to a particular polarity. He challenges and conflates the limits and definitions of accepted categories, holy and base, as well as divine and mortal. The natural imagery represents a complex matrix of “spurs” that tosses the singer from one perspective and state of being to another.

Provençalism is much more than a light-hearted spirit of adventure: it is a statement about *love*. It cannot be extricated from Nietzsche’s understanding of philosophy and science. The final stanzas of the poem clearly indicate that the singer is not merely being randomly tossed about by the wind—he is trying to be a good *lover* to the wind. The first two of the final three stanzas end with first person plural imperatives: “Let us whirl the dust on the streets!” [“*Wirbeln wir den Staub der Strassen*”] and “Let us hunt those who cloud up the skies!” [“*Jagen wir die Himmelstrüber*”]. These two lines suggest that both the singer and the wind flush out the heavy, dust, and fog-laden imagery out of the picture. The last stanza suggests a partnership:

—And to eternal memory
Such fortune, take its legacy,
Take the wreath with you above!
Toss it higher, farther, onward,

²⁸ The following passage contains the complete German text of stanza seven:

Raffen wir von der jeder Blume / Eine Blüthe uns zum Ruhme / Und zwei Blätter noch zum Kranz! / Tanzen wir gleich Troubadouren / Zwischen Heiligen und Huren, / Zwischen Gott und Welt den Tanz! (KSW 3, 651)

Storm it up the ladder of heaven,
Hang it—on top of a star! (trans. mine)²⁹

This final stanza is clearly a parody of the final stanza of Goethe's *Faust*, which as I previously mention, occurs on a number of occasions in the book (see Chapter One, pages 71-72). The stanza portrays the outcome of the partnership between the mistral wind and the singer, as well as the celebration of a successful and rather dangerous dance. What goes "higher," "farther," and "onward" is not a "soul" as in the end of Goethe's *Faust*, but the fortune represented by the relationship between the singer and the wind. The end of Goethe's *Faust* suggests that the "eternal feminine" lures "us" "upwards," toward some sort of metaphysical, otherworldly destination. However, the language of Nietzsche's poem suggests that the relationship propels them *forward*, to *another point*, or to *another perspective*.

It is therefore easy to see how Nietzsche feels justified stating that he is the first "true" philosopher of the eternal feminine. If the eternal feminine represents the emancipation of "woman" from her association with metaphysically oriented truths, it appears that she could manifest herself as a group of Maenads or a violent mistral climactic system. In either case, she represents a metaphor for truth—which for Nietzsche represents a complex process, a multicentred network of signification, and a metaphorical system with a "thousand eyes."

Dialogism in *The Gay Science*

Throughout this dissertation, I refer to centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in the language, structure, and metaphors of Nietzsche's texts. My inspiration for using these metaphors derives from Bakhtin's descriptions of *language* in his famous essay "Discourse in the Novel," in which he describes human language as an immense quantum of discursive forces that is characterized by musical, dissonant processes. This process is driven by the constant, violent interactions between the many languages, dialects, and utterances that

²⁹ — Und dass ewig das Gedächtniss/Solchen Glücks, nimm sein Vermächtniss,/Nimm den Kranz hier mit hinauf!/Wirf ihn höher, ferner, weiter,/Stürm' empor die Himmelsleiter,/Häng ihn — an den Sternen auf! (KSA 3, 651)

constitute human language. Each component of language closely corresponds to Nietzsche's description of the manifold "centres of force" that constitute the "will to power" in the *Nachlass*. In "Discourse in the Novel," Bakhtin describes this process as the constant interplay between centrifugal and centripetal forces:

Alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward. (272)

Bakhtin portrays the totality of human discourse as representing an immense quantum of dissonant forces, which interact in a way that corresponds almost exactly to Nietzsche's description of the universe as a "monster of energy" in *The Will to Power*. For Bakhtin, "language" represents the sum total of human expression at any given moment. The way in which Bakhtin refers to "language" as a unitary structure that envelopes the totality of human expression—which I refer to as "human discourse" in this chapter—brings to mind Saussure's appellation for humanity's faculty to speak and write: *langage*. Following Saussure's lead as portrayed in *Course in General Linguistics*, Bakhtin describes the sum total of all languages as a single, immense process, despite the fact that it represents a plurality of independent languages. Thus, Saussure and Bakhtin both regard *langage* as a unity that represents a multiplicity of independent languages. However, while Saussure describes *langage* synchronically, as a unity that encompasses clearly delimited languages that follow an *orderly*, logical system of differentiation, Bakhtin describes *langage* diachronically. For Bakhtin, *langage* represents a disorderly, illogical conglomeration of languages that are constantly evolving and changing. Their limits and boundaries are never stable. They all exist in a constant state of tension.

For Saussure, *langage* refers to the totality of individual languages and dialects used in speech and writing by human beings everywhere at any given moment. Yet, despite Saussure's acknowledgement that each language [*langue*] that constitutes the overarching system of *langage* represents a system of *differences*, he does not fully explore the complex

and violent system of *dissonances* that create the many systems of difference. Saussure's texts portray *langage* as a complex matrix of stable languages [*langues*]*—*distinct and different languages, such as French, English, and Chinese*—*that represent a nearly infinite number of *arbitrary differences*. Saussure emphasizes that it is not possible to cross-reference the words, tenses, and moods of the world's languages to a matrix of transcendental signifieds. Languages do not represent different ways of saying the "same thing." As Saussure repeatedly states (in one form or another): "In language itself, there are only differences" (118). However, Bakhtin's essays on language reveal the limitations of Saussure's thinking by destabilizing the structural integrity of the individual languages within *langage*.

Bakhtin's concept of "language"*—*what Saussure refers to as *langage**—*represents a system of irreconcilable *dissonances*. These dissonances do not simply represent irreconcilable differences between languages and dialects, but constantly shifting and transforming definitions, grammatical rules, boundaries between languages and dialects, and so forth. Bakhtin describes "unitary language" as something that is inherently *unstable*; everything is in a constant state of flux and transformation. These motions are governed by the unceasing, violent struggle between centrifugal and centripetal forces that manifest themselves within the infinite number of dialects that constitute the macrocosm of "unitary language." These dialects represent every conceivable social subdivision of human existence, including class, profession, institution, nation, ethnicity, and literally every classification imaginable.

Bakhtin literally "revaluates" the term "unitary language" in his essay. In the previous pages of his essay, Bakhtin claims that the concept of a "unitary language" is merely an arbitrary construction by linguists. This arbitrary construction is a convenient tool for linguists who attempt to superimpose abstract and rigid concepts upon the turbulent and disobedient system of utterances that constitute human discourse: "Unitary language constitutes the theoretical expression of the historical process of linguistic

unification and centralization, an expression" (270). Bakhtin proceeds to redefine "unitary language" as a constantly transforming quantum of discourse, whose transformation is driven by competing "centripetal" and "centrifugal" forces. This is especially ironic, as Bakhtin—like Nietzsche—posits "unity" as something whose power and relevance increases with its plurality, dissonance, and heterogeneity. Thus, the manner in which Bakhtin describes languages serves a function that is akin to Nietzsche's concept of a "primal unity" in *The Birth of Tragedy* and his early works, and the monstrous "quantum of force" in *The Will to Power*, each of which underpins the structure of the universe, and each of which represents a unity that is defined by its plurality and dissonance.

At the core of these forces is the utterance of the individual human being. An individual represents a seemingly small and insignificant voice among the millions of other human beings that create discourse every day. Yet, every human being represents a unique locus of force within the total quantum of force that Bakhtin calls "language." As an individual centre of force, a human being represents a unique set of relationships with respect to the other centres of force that constitute "unitary language." Each individual has the ability to initiate dramatic changes in the topography of human discourse. He or she is an "active participant" in the constantly transforming quantum of force that Bakhtin calls "living heteroglossia":

Every concrete utterance of a speaking subject serves as a point where centrifugal as well as centripetal forces are brought to bear. The processes of centralization and decentralization, of unification and disunification, intersect in the utterance; the utterance not only answers the requirements of its own language as an individualized embodiment of a speech act, but it answers the requirements of heteroglossia as well; it is in fact an active participant in such speech diversity. And this active participation of every utterance in living heteroglossia determines the linguistic profile and style of the utterance to no less a degree than its inclusion in any normative-centralizing system of a unitary language. (272)

Bakhtin's description of an individual's role in creating living "utterance" is ambiguous. He carefully avoids making a statement about the agency or intention of the speaker. On the one hand, it seems as though Bakhtin's system of living heteroglossia is deterministic—that

is, that the utterances of individual human beings merely reflect their relationship to the utterances of others. However, Bakhtin clearly states that language represents the work of *actively participating* individuals. Thus, an individual's agency is an important component of Bakhtin's theory of *langage*. The final sentence of the passage plainly demarcates the active participant in language as something just as significant—if not even more significant—than the abstract rules and regulations that traditional linguistics ascribes to individual languages. For example, the agency of an active participant in living language might seem to be insignificant when compared to the rules of “standard North American English,” the discourse of atomic physics, or the heterogeneous utterances heard at a county fair. The active engagement of individuals in living discourse fuels the engines of the centripetal and centrifugal forces that constantly transform “unitary language.”

Bakhtin's theories provide a useful tool for analyzing *The Gay Science* and other texts by Nietzsche. His description of the interplay between centrifugal and centripetal discursive forces in language parallels Nietzsche's presentation of a heterogeneous and dissonant array of “perspectives” that comprise *The Gay Science*. *The Gay Science* and many of Nietzsche's late works are inherently dialogic and represent complex sets of “processes of centralization and decentralization,” and “unification and disunification,” which prevent the reader from finding closure or comfort of any sort. Additionally, they provoke the reader to embrace a text's dialogism, seek out new dissonances, and actually contribute to its discursive power. Just as Bakhtin describes language as a system that constantly produces dissonant linguistic relationships in a field with many centres of force, *The Gay Science* presents a dissonant system of producing knowledge through the conflict—the “twists and turns”—between competing perspectives, metaphors, and sensual experiences.

Science and Metaphor

Parable. — Those thinkers in whom all stars move in cyclic orbits are not the most profound. Whoever looks into himself as into vast space and carries galaxies in himself, also knows how irregular all galaxies are; they lead into the chaos and labyrinth of existence. (GS 254)³⁰

Walter Kaufmann translates the title of aphorism 322 as “Parable.” The German word that he translates into “parable” is *Gleichniss*, which has a variety of related meanings, including “simile,” “allegory,” and “analogy.” The word refers to “metaphor” in the broadest sense of the word. As I discuss in Chapter One, metaphor is central to Nietzsche’s conception of truth, as well as his understanding of dissonance. These two concepts are closely and intimately related. If Nietzsche simply wanted to refer to a literary genre, such as a fable, he might have chosen the Latin-derived word *Parabel*, whose meaning is similar to its English cognate. Perhaps the title “*Gleichniss*” does not refer to a literary genre, but a complex cognitive, existential process, as is so often the case in Nietzsche’s writings. By existential, I refer to a sensual and this-worldly process of philosophical investigation that does not appeal to metaphysical, deterministic, or transcendent values.

In Nietzsche’s “Parable,” the narrator suggests that only those thinkers who are able to apprehend the self as a vast and decentred network of discordant systems are truly “profound.” The narrator casts suspicion on those thinkers who attempt to philosophize by building upon a notion of the self as a conglomeration of regular, predictable, and calculable systems. Nietzsche tends to favour those systems that generate knowledge and inspire action through unpredictability, irregularity, and contradiction. These systems generate a potentially infinite number of metaphors, and raw thematic material for creativity.

Nietzsche’s choice of words to represent “galaxy” is interesting. As with many of Nietzsche’s descriptions of natural phenomena, Nietzsche chooses a word that reflects

³⁰ *Gleichniss.* — Jene Denker, in denen alle Sterne sich in zyklischen Bahnen, sind nicht die tiefsten; wer in sich wie sie einen ungeheuren Weltraum hineinsieht und Milchstrassen in sich trägt, der weiss auch, wie unregelmässig alle Milchstrassen sind; sie führen bis in’s Chaos und Labyrinth des Daseins hinein. (KSA 3, 552)

Germanic etymology. Nietzsche could have chosen the word *Galaxie*, a Greco-Latin cognate; however, he instead chooses the word *Milchstrasse*, which literally means Milky Way. Nietzsche's use of this word in the plural demonstrates the plurality of directions, centres, and trajectories that exist within the cosmic space [*Weltraum*] of the self. Presumably, the philosopher who perceives such spaces will have the ability to cognize the outer world using the same model. Such a model establishes a relationship between the inner world of the self and the outer world that is based on "parable" [*Gleichniss*]. The dissonant world of the self extends into a metaphorical understanding of the outside world. While the cosmos of conflicting milky ways of the inner world continually generate new metaphors—and consequently perspectives, affects, and "values," in the broadest sense of the word—the practitioner of the *gai saber* has the ability to shape and mould the external world according to the complex patterns that exist within.

The Gay Science is more than a collection of aphorisms. It is a complex mechanism that generates a continual stream of metaphors, in the broadest and most dynamic sense of the word. Whereas *The Birth of Tragedy* and the other early works that I examine in Chapter One provide a theoretical foundation for understanding *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*—a "becoming-human of dissonance"—and its implications on epistemology, values, and language, *The Gay Science* provides a framework from which the thinker can put this epistemology into practice. *The Gay Science* contains a diverse and complex network of aphorisms and songs of varying lengths, styles, tempos, perspectives, and voices whose primary function is to train the participants of the text—both reader and writer—to think in a manner consistent with the definition of *Gleichniss* as presented in aphorism 322. *The Gay Science* actually prepares the reader to move into a praxis-oriented stage, in which he or she may engage in an ardent and impassioned "revaluation of all values." This revaluation begins as an internal examination of one's own most personal attributes and develops into an examination of the external world of interpersonal and material relationships.

Nietzsche's usage of the word *Gleichniss* to address difficult existential questions is not without precedent. I refer here specifically to the end of Goethe's *Faust*, which is an important subtext of *The Gay Science*. A comparative and contextual reading of Nietzsche and Goethe's use of the word *Gleichniss* holds the key to understanding the significance of *The Gay Science*, as an important component of Nietzsche's musical, dissonant philosophy.

The final lines (12104-12111) of Goethe's *Faust* read (the English text contains my own awkward, yet literal translation):

Chorus Mysticus:

Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichniß;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird's Ereigniße
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist's gethan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns hinan.
(KSW 18:1, 351)

Chorus Mysticus:

Everything ephemeral
Is but a metaphor;
The insufficient,
Here it will happen
The indescribable,
Here it will be done;
The Eternal-Feminine
Lures us upward.

The *Chorus Mysticus*—a group of spirits who guide Faust's entelechy into the afterlife—state that everything “destructible” (or simply changeable and transient) is a *Gleichniss*. *Gleichniss* refers to a complex network of metaphorical relationships. The following lines declare that that which is indescribable and unattainable manifests itself *as action* in the drama. The result of these revelations leads to further action: the “self” is transformed by something that the chorus refers to as the “eternal feminine.”

The exact nature of the “eternal feminine” and the transformation it creates have been a matter of constant debate among scholars for almost two centuries, yet one thing is certain: Goethe's *Chorus Mysticus* delineates a relationship between transient phenomena of *this world* and the phenomena signified by the word *Gleichniss*. The lesson that Faust—and the reader—learns from the experience of the drama is that understanding life as a function of *Gleichniss*, and benefiting from this process, relates to a fundamentally feminine force. Thus, understanding that life *is a complex relationship of metaphors* represents a cognitive process that in itself can propel an individual—and perhaps a society—“onward” (*hinan*,

“on high”). This passage appears to equate the “feminine” with the elusive notion of “truth” decades before Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science*.

Nietzsche, however, spent his entire career feeling angry with Goethe for penning these lines. The reason for this is clearly the metaphysical tone of the passage. According to Van der Laan, who discusses the relationship between Nietzsche and Goethe in great depth in a chapter entitled “Beyond Good and Evil” in his book entitled *Seeking Meaning in Goethe’s Faust* (2007), Nietzsche’s seemingly irrational disdain for Goethe’s *Faust* can be summed up by a fundamental difference between their two projects:

Nietzsche wanted to exemplify and praise a model, ideal, future type of human being. As Nietzsche rejected Goethe’s *Faust* (who in so many ways resembles Zarathustra and the overman) as the personification of a modern, sick, and decadent humanity, so Goethe also would have spurned Nietzsche’s Zarathustra, his sovereign, autonomous, great man, as the model of any higher, true, and whole person. (97)

As I discuss at various points in this chapter, Nietzsche found the imagery—particularly the term “eternal feminine”—to be unbearable. Van der Laan’s analysis indicates that Nietzsche believed that the phrase simply *sounds* too common, decadent, and sentimental. Although a close reading of Goethe’s literary masterpiece reveals many possible interpretations of the last line that are not necessarily metaphysical, Nietzsche’s annoyance with Goethe’s drama seems to be with its legacy. For centuries, scholars from nearly every branch of the arts and sciences have speculated upon the metaphysical significance of the “eternal feminine” (see Van der Laan, especially Chapters 2 and 4, as well as Eichner, and Hamlin). Nietzsche expresses his irritation adamantly in the first poem of the “Appendix in Songs” entitled: “To Goethe” [*An Goethe*]:

The indestructible
Is your metaphor!
God the captious one
Is the Poet–Fraud

World-wheel, the rolling one,
Streaks from goal to goal:
Need: the resentful one calls it,
The fool calls it—game...

World-game, the masterly,
Mixes up Being and Semblance:—
The Eternal-Foolish
Mixes *us* up—into it! (trans. mine)³¹

Nietzsche's song to Goethe blames the poet for perpetuating the notion that everything is eternal and indestructible. Additionally, he blames Goethe for leaving open the possibility that there is an omnipotent god, who remains enshrined as the author of a mendacious, metaphysically based epistemology and worldview. These strategic errors on Goethe's part have not only inspired thinkers to continue their apotheosis of the "feminine" (however ironic Goethe's intentions might have been), but also encouraged his readers to perpetuate metaphysical, teleological thinking. All in all, Nietzsche portrays the legacy of Goethe's *Faust* as a disaster.

The Emancipation of Dissonance in *The Gay Science*

Sarah Kofman approaches the question of science from a literary and aesthetic perspective. Yet, she is one of the few critics who support the notion that Nietzsche was developing a system that he both promoted and believed had the integrity to withstand the scrutiny of its critics. She refers to Nietzsche's perspectivism as the state of having a "thousand eyes":

Knowledge and mastery are one and the same thing: one cannot aim at "objectivity" by cutting oneself off from every 'point of view' but, on the contrary, one needs to multiply perspectives in order to see 'the world' with the greatest possible number of 'eyes', constructing and deconstructing worlds as an artist. The multiplication of metaphors symbolizes the plurality of the points of view with which the seeker after knowledge must play; it is this play, which coincides with '*amor fati*', the affirmation of life in all its forms. It is the *will* to a total art form. To make a *systematic* [emphasis mine] use of metaphor is to respect 'justice' which wills perspective and difference, by arming oneself against the "injustice" of the concept, the shield of the

³¹ Das Unvergängliche/Ist nur dein Gleichniss!/Gott der Verhängliche/Ist Dichter-Erschlechniss.../Welt-Rad, das rollende,/Streift Ziel auf Ziel:/Noth — nennt's Grollende,/Der Narr nennt's — Spiel.../Welt-Spiel, das herrische, Mischt Sein und Schein: – /Das Ewig-Närrische/Mischt *und* — hinein!... (KSA 3, 639)

weak who set up as a norm their fixed perspective cut off from becoming.
(102)³²

Kofman suggests that Nietzsche wants to make “systematic” use of metaphor. This system is a crucial part of ensuring the integrity of the “justice” of metaphor. Metaphors are powerful, polyvalent, *marital* signifiers that guard against the injustice of the fixed and cadaverous “concept.” They are the guardians of Nietzsche’s musical, dissonant system of ethics. According to Kofman, Nietzsche’s use of the word “concept” is faithful to the text of “On Truth and Lies on a Extra-Moral Sense” and other writings of the period. She claims that in mainstream philosophy, concepts represent abstract, rigid, and often metaphysical constructions. Kofman emphasizes the *ethical* implications of Nietzsche’s metaphor-based method of scientific and philosophical investigation. In order for something to be “just,” something must cultivate its potential to produce *discord* and *plurality*, as I discuss at the end of Chapter One with regard to Nietzsche’s early lectures on Heraclitus (see especially pages 106-124). Kofman’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s “system” requires the constant and *rigorous* “multiplication” of perspectives to counteract the creation of powerful and overbearing “concepts.” The “multiplication” of metaphors does not simply represent a plurality of views, garrulousness, or a demonstration of the limits of epistemology, but the *will and drive* to constantly and ceaselessly create new perspectives.

Nietzsche’s aesthetically oriented science “coincides with ‘*amor fati*’, the affirmation of life in all its forms.” This is a very prevalent theme in Nietzsche’s works. However, it is also one of the most terrifying aspects of Nietzsche’s works. It is ultimately the reason why science—and philosophy or art for that matter—must be “*frightening*,” as suggested by

³² Connaître et dominer ne font qu’un: ce n’est pas viser à « l’objectivité » en se coupant de tout « point de vue », c’est, au contraire, multiplier les perspectives afin de voir « le monde » avec le plus grand nombre « d’yeux » possible, de construire et de déconstruire les mondes en artiste. La multiplication des métaphores symbolise la pluralité des points de vue avec lesquels doit jouer celui qui cherche la connaissance; elle *est* ce jeu qui ne fait qu’un avec « l’*amor fati* », l’affirmation de la vie sous toutes ses formes. Elle est *volonté* d’un art total. Faire un usage systématique de la métaphore, c’est respecter la « justice » qui veut la perspective et la différence, en s’armant contre « l’injustice » du concept, bouclier des faibles qui érigent en norme leur perspective figée, coupée du devenir. (150)

Strong in his article entitled “Wonder, Science, and the Voice of Philosophy” (199). Nietzsche’s notion of what humanity “needs” to make it “stronger” and “better” is ambiguous, but it is clear that Nietzsche defers to the processes represented by the “Dionysian,” as he describes it in his early works, and “the will to power,” as he describes it in his late works, as criteria. We cannot conduct scientific investigation, understand ourselves, create art, and build a civilization, unless these acts resonate with the musical, dissonant processes that govern the universe.

Kofman suggests that “the multiplication of metaphors is not purely rhetorical: attaching new metaphors to old ones or reiterating them implies a revaluation of their meaning according to the hypothesis of the will to power” (104).³³ This passage underscores the fact that Nietzsche is a *rigorous* thinker, and that he directs his rigour toward goals that would seem completely absurd to many “proper” scientists and philosophers. Nietzsche’s philosophy portrays rigour as the scientist’s desire and willingness to utilize every method and instrument at his disposal—including his own body and senses—to *ensure* that knowledge and human understanding conform to the processes that define the will to power. This commitment includes defending *his* definition of metaphor and truth, for example, which he believes is more “just” and true to the dynamic and dissonant nature of the universe than those offered by traditional modalities of scientific and philosophical thought.

Nietzsche’s metaphor-driven science is not merely a rhetorical process, nor is it a process that privileges the ocular senses: it is a *synesthetic* process.³⁴ The “thousand eyes” is merely a metaphor for *all* the ways in which a human being can “see”—though its eyes—but also through different combinations of its other senses, including taste, touch, erotic contact,

³³ La multiplication des métaphores n'est donc pas purement rhétorique: l'adjonction de nouvelles métaphores aux anciennes ou leur réitération implique une réévaluation de leurs sens en fonction de l'hypothèse de la volonté de puissance. (152)

³⁴ My description of Nietzsche’s writing as synesthetic is inspired by Diana Behler’s 1993 article entitled “Synaesthesia in Nietzsche’s *Die Geburt der Tragödie* and its Correlation to French and Russian Symbolism.”

and smell. The last of these is one of Nietzsche's favourites, which Kofman suggests is due to its low rank in the hierarchy of senses privileged by Western epistemology (105; 153). Although Kofman suggests that Nietzsche the scientist is a "virtuoso" of the five senses, I would go so far as to say that Nietzsche challenges the limits of metaphors that represent them. Why should "sight," "hearing," "smell" and touch, represent absolute faculties of the senses? As Nietzsche emphasizes in *The Birth of Tragedy*, it is important that humanity strive to fashion ways of creating art and science that "go beyond" all hearing and seeing and constantly gesture toward the *infinite* [*das Unendliche*] (see Chapter One, pages 95-96).

One of the many relevant passages discussed by Kofman is a short aphorism from the chapter entitled "The Wanderer and His Shadow" [*"Der Wanderer und sein Schatten"*] in *Human All too Human* in which Nietzsche emphasizes the *plurality* of sensual metaphors that are signified by a specific word (Kofman 107; 156). This plurality emphasizes the fundamental, dissonant forces that underpin *life*:

Odour of Words. — Every word has its odour: there exists a harmony and disharmony of odours and thus of words. (trans. mine)³⁵

The methodology implied by this aphorism is crucial to understanding *The Gay Science*. If we expand the applicability of this passage to include not only "words," but also all metaphors, and by extension, *all phenomena and things*, then the scientist's responsibility is far from the detached role of an armchair philosopher who attempts to "imagine" a different, heterogeneous array of perspectives. The scientist's task requires that he *use* his senses, affects, and body in his quest to conduct scientific investigation. He must ensure that these results are reflected in the act of writing. That is, the body of the scientist is his own, unique scientific instrument. It is his own "spur."

We should consider the possibility that Nietzsche's works represent a revaluation of the concept of "systematic philosophy," or to use the language of Sarah Kofman, a

³⁵ *Geruch der Worte.* — Jedes Wort hat seinen Geruch: es giebt eine Harmonie und Disharmonie der Gerüche und also der Worte. (KSA 2, 604).

rehabilitation of the concept of systematic philosophy. As I have previously discussed, the term “anti-system” seems appropriate. For Kofman, the “rehabilitation” of metaphor involves the un-forgetting of metaphor; that is, the anamnesis of the process of stratification in language that led to “cadaverous” notions of the truth in Western philosophy. By anamnesis, I refer to the manner in which *The Gay Science* surveys and recollects vast tracts of human knowledge from new, musical, dissonant perspectives.³⁶ This process generates uncertainty, and perhaps even fear, but also draws attention to a wide variety of new vistas that could potentially enrich and vitalize the human experience.

In Nietzsche’s science, the emancipation of dissonance goes hand in hand with the emancipation of the senses and perspectives. *The Gay Science* portrays a scientific approach that represents the thousand eyes of the senses, the body, emotional states of being, and location. Emancipating all of the “eyes” in a text provokes the reader to constantly shift from one perspective to another. Additionally, the emergence of a stable, central authority of meaning is precluded. The truths produced by the *gai saber* accords with Nietzsche’s understanding of truth as a complex and dynamic metaphor.

Musical Askêsis and the *Gai Saber*

An important aspect of science is rigour. And *The Gay Science* is not without rigour. In an aphorism entitled “Mathematics” [“*Mathematik*”] in the fourth book of *The Gay Science* (no. 246), Nietzsche emphasizes that it is important to preserve the rigorous characteristic of conventional, metaphysically oriented science in his *rehabilitated* science:

Let us introduce the refinement and rigor of mathematics into all sciences as far as this is at all possible, not in the faith that this will lead us to know things but in order to *determine* our human relation to things.

³⁶ My analysis is inspired by Jean-François Lyotard’s description of postmodernity at the end of the essay “Defining the Postmodern” as a “process [...] of *ana*-lying, *ana*-mnesing, [and] reflecting” (1468). Lyotard compares anamneses to “psychoanalytical therapy” in which “the patient elaborates his present trouble by freely associating the more imaginary, immaterial, irrelevant bits with past situations” (1468).

Mathematics is merely the means for general and ultimate knowledge for man. (GS 215)³⁷

This remarkable little aphorism completely *revaluates* the function of mathematics along the lines of Nietzsche's persistent emphasis on the utility of knowledge for enhancing life. The purpose of mathematics is not to provide *positivistic* truths or knowledge in the conventional sense, but knowledge about *processes and relationships*. This represents a new way of understanding the concept of "ultimate" knowledge. However, this aphorism presents an entirely ironic conception of ultimate knowledge, as here, "ultimate" refers to nothing more nor less than the full acceptance of the "perspectival" nature of human knowledge! Yet, Nietzsche insists that the practitioner of the *gai saber* can arrive at this knowledge using methods that are just as rigorous [*streng*] and refined [*fein*] as mathematics—a method of determining "truths" that is always systematic. Does Nietzsche imply that we should adopt a perspectival scientific method with the same quantity of rigour and refinement that is traditionally associated with mathematics, but without all the formulas, axioms, and theorems? Perhaps. Yet, I contend that Nietzsche's revaluated science also contains a *revaluated set of formulas* for deriving truths. These formulas generate musical, dissonant relationships, and not purpose-oriented facts and causal relationships.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche "emancipates" the dissonant qualities that he believes are being held hostage by modern philosophy and science. While I do not intend to imply that Nietzsche attempts to create a totalistic system that ensures the supremacy of the "dissonance," as Schoenberg describes in "Opinion or Insight?," for example, he does create a system that provokes and inspires thinkers to think musically and dissonantly. Coercion and totalistic thinking are not cornerstones of Nietzsche's works. This is particularly true of

³⁷ *Mathematik*. — Wir wollen die Feinheit und Strenge der Mathematik in alle Wissenschaften hineintreiben, so weit diess nur irgend möglich ist, nicht im Glauben, daß wir auf diesem Wege die Dinge erkennen werden, sondern um damit unsere menschliche Relation zu den Dingen *festzustellen*. Die Mathematik ist nur das Mittel der allgemeinen und letzten Menschenkenntniss. (KSA 3, 514-515)

his more mature works, published after *The Birth of Tragedy*, in which he appears to deliberately flush overt nationalistic, pan-Germanistic, rhetoric from his writings. Nietzsche's middle and late writings, including *The Gay Science*, contain *invitations* to his readers to adopt a more life-affirming epistemology and a musical, dissonant philosophy. Although there are structuring elements in many of Nietzsche's ideas, including the Apollonian-Dionysian dynamic, the overman, and the will to power, Nietzsche carefully stops short of infusing his ideas with imperatives, or as he refers to them in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*—"thou shalt"—in any sense of the word.

Ultimately, the difference between Schoenberg's concept of dissonance and Nietzsche's conception may not be so different, as they share a common goal: to emancipate the dissonance held hostage by consonance and metaphysics in the hope of transforming a civilization's aesthetic and philosophical outlook. Yet, Schoenberg maintains that stringent, almost dictatorial measures must be taken to achieve this goal—particularly if we hope to see a musical, dissonance-based aesthetics emerge within our lifetimes. Schoenberg is confident that his authoritarian measures will successfully emancipate the dissonance in aesthetics and critical thinking in the near future. Nietzsche does not portray the impatience that we see in Schoenberg's texts. An important characteristic of Nietzsche's middle and late works is his belief that undoing the damage caused by Western metaphysics might take many generations.³⁸ In contrast to the metaphysical epistemologies that he critiques, one of the defining characteristics of Nietzsche's philosophy is his conviction that all systems of knowledge, including aesthetics, science, history, language, and philology, should *serve life*. The purpose and meaning of life should never be to serve an overarching ideology or rigid,

³⁸ In Chapter Four, I discuss Nietzsche's infamous prophesy that the "revaluation of all values" represents a process that will take many years to undo the "lies of millennia" and cause colossal political, social, and perhaps even environmental upheavals such as the world has never seen. Additionally, in Chapter Three, I discuss the significance of Zarathustra's struggle with the reality that the revaluation of all values and the appearance of the overman will probably not occur during his lifetime.

metaphysical system of science or philosophy. Philosophy, history, critical thinking and aesthetics should always serve the vitality of “life”; the opposite should never be the case.

For Nietzsche, a metaphysical epistemology—whether religious, philosophical, or scientific—can never serve life. Only “life,” which Nietzsche equates with the will to power—during the years in which he wrote *The Gay Science*—can serve as the basis for a scientific method of investigation. He maintains that science must be grounded in *reality*, not abstractions. As Nietzsche claims that the ultimate expression of “reality” is the will to power, then a sound method of scientific investigation must conform to the processes that define the will to power. *The Gay Science* represents an attempt to both “describe” such a science, and actually demonstrate it.

Nietzsche finds inspiration for his “rigour” in mathematics. However, Nietzsche’s vision of mathematics sharply contrasts with the type of mathematics found in most academic textbooks. In a brief, yet extraordinary epigram in *The Gay Science* entitled “One Times One,” which Walter Kaufmann entitles “Multiplication Table,” Nietzsche claims that “One is always wrong [*Unrecht*]: but with Two, truth begins. — One cannot prove his case: but Two, we cannot contradict” (trans. mine).³⁹ Later on in aphorism 355, “The Origin of Our Concept of Knowledge,” Nietzsche claims that we tend to rely upon familiar, comforting knowledge to serve as the foundation of our epistemologies. Unfortunately, these familiar patterns are deceptive in that they provide a tempting foundation from which to construct abstract and rigid “truths,” axioms, and theorems. In actuality, human beings should see the familiar as the path to *discovering the unfamiliar*. That is, if something looks too familiar and comfortable, we should immediately become suspicious of it and ask ourselves why we find it so familiar. What other types of knowledge have familiar

³⁹ “Ein Mal eins. — Einer hat immer Unrecht: aber mit Zweien beginnt die Wahrheit. — Einer kann sich nicht beweisen: aber Zweie kann man bereits nicht widerlegen” (KSA 3, 517). Indeed, the phrase *ein Mal eins* refers to the multiplication table. I capitalize the numerals “one” and “two” to emphasize that the original German text uses the words “Einer” and “Zweie” to refer to “one” and “two,” each of which can be used as numerals, pronouns, or reflect the singular or dual nature of a phenomenon, respectively.

patterns—such as the multiplication table—obscured from our view? Nietzsche suggests that there might be many:

How easily these men of knowledge are satisfied! Just have a look at their principles and their solutions of the world riddle with this in mind! When they find something in things—under them, or behind them—that is unfortunately quite familiar to us, such as our multiplication tables or our logic, or our willing and desiring—how happy they are right away! For “what is familiar is known”: on this they are agreed. [...] The great curiosity of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the critique of the elements of consciousness—one might almost say, with the *unnatural* sciences—is due precisely to the fact that they choose for their object what is *strange*, while it is almost contradictory and absurd to even *try* to choose for an object what is not-strange. (GS 301-302)⁴⁰

The Gay Science clearly indicates that experimenting with different methods of scientific investigation and using a plurality of perspectives is desirable. Thus, Nietzsche’s concern is not that thinkers use formulas, equations, and charts. The problem lies with how conventional science and philosophy employ these tools. Scientists find formulas and place them “beyond” or “under” their mode of scientific investigation, thereby enshrining them as if they were metaphysical forms. Nietzsche accuses the modern sciences of being lazy disciplines. Scientists and philosophers are too quickly satisfied with the comfort and convenience offered by formulas, such as the multiplication table, the periodic table of the elements, or theories of causality. This attitude discourages further investigation. Science no longer serves the cause of invigorating the human experience. Instead, we see human beings striving to serve the cause of science, which it has apotheosized into a metaphysical system of belief.

⁴⁰ —Oh über dieser Genügsamkeit der Erkennenden! man sehe sich doch ihre Principien und Welträthsel-Lösungen darauf an! Wenn sie Etwas an den Dingen, unter den Dingen, hinter den Dingen wiederfinden, das uns leider sehr bekannt ist, zum Beispiel unser Einmaleins oder unsre Logik oder unser Wollen und Begehren, wie glücklich sind sie sofort! Denn „was bekannt ist, ist erkannt“: darin stimmen sie überein. [...] Die grosse Sicherheit der natürlichen Wissenschaften im Verhältniss zur Psychologie und Kritik der Bewusstseins-Elemente — *unnatürlichen* Wissenschaften, wie man beinahe sagen dürfte — ruht gerade darauf, dass sie das *Fremde* als Objekt nehmen: während es fast etwas Widerspruchvolles und Widersinniges ist, das Nicht-Fremde überhaupt als Objekt nehmen zu *wollen*... (KSA 3, 594-595)

Nietzsche outlines one exception in this aphorism: psychology. At the time when Nietzsche wrote *The Gay Science*, modern psychology was in its infancy. Freud had not yet developed his theories of psychoanalysis. As indicated in this passage, Nietzsche admired psychologists for their tendency to examine the *unnatural* causes and explanations for human behaviour, as he believed that such an approach toward scientific investigation would open the door to new types of knowledge.

The Heraclitean Fire Machine

An epistemology based on a foundation of “emancipated” musical dissonance can hardly be defined by axioms and parameters of a metaphysical system of thought. Immutable abstractions have no meaning here. The “formulas,” “axioms,” and “methodologies” that describe and characterize Nietzsche’s musical, dissonant science must be as dynamic as the dissonance upon which it is based. According to Deleuze, Nietzsche hopes that one day, science will operate according to the rules of tragedy—a notion that is entirely concurrent with Nietzsche’s own comments about science throughout his career. The apparatus of science *must* correspond to the foundation that underpins its epistemology. In this case, the foundation is musical dissonance, which also constitutes the “foundations of all existence” [“*Fundamente aller Existenz*”] (BWN 143 and KSA 1, 155). Deleuze contends that the apparently haphazard, dissonant processes that define Nietzsche’s philosophy do not necessarily imply the lack of a system. His metaphor of the “fire machine” provides a useful framework for understanding how Nietzsche’s *gai saber* can be interpreted as functioning in a systematic way.

The image of the “dicethrow” [“*coup de dés*”] is central to Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s works. There are many ways that a critic can interpret the act of the dicethrow. For example, one might choose to emphasize the power of the “random element” and assert that the role of the dicethrower—the gambler—is entirely subordinate to a set of rigid, mathematical laws, tables, and statistical averages. This would affirm a rather conventional

scientific perspective that subordinates “man” to science. However, Deleuze emphasizes that humanity does not have to subjugate itself to the cold reality of mathematical calculations.

An alternative way of interpreting the role of the dicethrower is as an *artist*. The thrower has the power to interpret the results that appear on the dice; he can manipulate them artistically. This also accords with Derrida’s interpretation of the philosopher-scientist as an “éperon” (a “spur”), that is, a fully functional and integral part of the machine. The dicethrower is part of the machine in that he is the one that casts the die. He chooses when to do it, how to do it, and can either rejoice or lament in the results of the dicethrow. He also interprets the results of the dicethrow and decides whether or not to repeat and continue the process.

Deleuze describes the scientist as a cook—specifically someone who creates nourishment by using fire [*faire cuire*]. Someone who bakes, uses a kiln, and employs heat and fire to cook, exploits the basic processes that define the universe—at least from a Heraclitean point of view—to transform matter into a wide variety of foodstuffs. These foods can be healthy and nourishing, but they could also be a source of illness (both mental and physical), affect daily habits and rituals, and profoundly shape the aesthetics of all aspects of one’s environment. Although cooking can serve as a metaphor for the degree of humanity’s “control” over its environment, it can also serve as a metaphor for humanity’s *relationship* to its environment. Deleuze’s cook is not simply an artist in the general sense of the word—he is a tragic artist. He carefully orchestrates a drama that involves a high degree of engagement with the basic fabric of the universe: fire.

According to Deleuze, these processes can be accurately represented by the vocabulary of games of chance: the dicethrow [*le coup de dés*] and chance [*le hasard*]. The *coup* [the “stroke”], as reflected in the French language, implies a collision and destructive power, an important point that many Francophone writers, most notably Jacques Derrida, have taken great measures to underscore. As I have previously discussed, *Spurs: Nietzsche’s*

Styles, focuses upon the relationship between the sensual metaphors in Nietzsche's middle and late works—including *The Gay Science*—and philosophical meaning. According to Derrida, the word *coup* represents something that is meant *to be felt*—it represents the use of *force*. To use the language of deconstruction, the *coup* represents a violent collision between signifiers that demonstrates the incommensurability of meaning that they represent. These violent ruptures in meaning represent the manifold experiences of life that cannot be accurately represented using monologic, rational-scientific discourse. These include physical sensations, emotions, and the unpredictability of existence. Both Derrida and the author of the preface of *Spurs*, Stefano Agosti, emphasize that Nietzsche's philosophy is filled with "strikes" and "blows" [*coups*] that are represented by zones of incommensurability, abysses [*abîme*], and irregularity in the style, syntax, and semantics of Nietzsche's texts. These rules certainly apply to Deleuze's descriptions of the *coup de dés*, which are rich with the imagery of destruction. These apparently random throws of the dice represent a system that relies upon an epistemology without a central authority of meaning. The dicethrow is not random—it is *dissonant*. It is an entirely decentred system of meaning that privileges the process that continually transforms and shapes concepts, meaning, and abstractions over any specific phenomenon.

I would disagree, however, with Deleuze's contention that Nietzsche does not aspire to be a physicist. Nietzsche's own protestations that his works represent a fundamental problem of science are the strongest evidence that he *does* aspire to be one. But even if Nietzsche had never made such explicit statements, the high level of engagement with science throughout his middle and late works represent far more than a concern with science or a critique of science. They represent a rehabilitation of science through a radical reconstruction of the definition of science and its underlying epistemology.

Nietzsche does not reject the accomplishments of modern science. On the contrary, *The Gay Science* represents a multi-layered approach to investigation—as diverse and multi-layered as the activity of Deleuze's fire-cook—and incorporates the subtexts of many

“traditional” and “serious” approaches to scientific investigation along with its “non-traditional,” aesthetic approaches. As I discuss in the introduction, Nietzsche more closely resembles the *natural philosophers* of the Renaissance and early Enlightenment, such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes, or Margaret Cavendish, whose writings freely incorporate the discourses of other branches of human knowledge, despite their respective desires to approach scientific “truth” as much as possible. As Nietzsche emphasizes in *The Gay Science*, the trenchant categorization and institutionalization of knowledge had not yet reached the dramatic proportions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nietzsche’s admirers have focused their critiques of science along similar lines.

The counterevidence to Deleuze’s theory that Nietzsche’s writings represent a precursor to a “Heraclitean fire machine” hypothesis is massive. As Christa Acampora asserts in her article entitled “Between Mechanism and Teleology: Will to Power and Nietzsche’s *Gay Science*” (2004), there is “ample evidence in Nietzsche’s texts [...] to prove that he rejects conceptions of nature that render it as striving for some sort of specific end or as operating like a *great machine*” [emphasis mine] (172). Yet, this relies upon the assumption that a machine must “operate toward a specific end,” or have a teleological purpose. Acampora is correct, with regard to Nietzsche’s tirades against nineteenth century mechanistic thinking. Many aphorisms in Nietzsche’s late notebooks attack the foundations of “mechanistic” thought. Walter Kaufmann anthologized many of them in the section entitled “The Mechanistic Interpretation of the World” (no. 618) in *The Will to Power*.⁴¹ Nietzsche wrote the majority of the aphorisms in this section during the period in which he composed the final book of *The Gay Science*. They rail against the scientific concepts of “cause and effect,” “attraction and repulsion,” “necessity,” stratified scientific laws and tables, and atomism. However, Nietzsche also offers some hope that one day a more dynamic system of scientific investigation will dominate the scene:

⁴¹ See pages 332–341 in Kaufmann’s edition of *The Will to Power*.

Of all the interpretations of the world attempted hitherto, the mechanistic one seems today to stand victorious in the foreground. It evidently has a good conscience on its side; and no science believes it can achieve progress and success except with the aid of mechanistic procedures. Everyone knows these procedures: one leaves “reason” and “purpose” out of account as far as possible, one shows that, given sufficient time, anything can evolve out of anything else [...]. Meanwhile [...] [an] anxiety, is to be noted among select spirits involved in this movement, as if the theory had a hole in it that might sooner or later prove to be its final hole [...]. One cannot “explain” pressure and stress themselves, one cannot get free of the *actio in distans*: —one has lost the belief in being able to explain at all, and admits with a wry expression that description and not explanation is all that is possible, that the dynamic interpretation of the world, with its denial of “empty space” and its little clumps of atoms, will shortly come to dominate physicists; though an inner quality in *dynamis*— (WP 332)⁴²

Nietzsche describes “mechanism” as a crutch for modern philosophers and scientists. It makes thinking and solving problems easier, as it provides a metaphysical authority for interpreting data. Mechanism relies upon *reason* [*Vernunft*] and *purpose* [*Zweck*]⁴²—two emblems of the many epistemologies that Nietzsche contends are “metaphysical.” Mechanism, however, like modern “science” in general, represents the most mendacious of all the metaphysical arts—it has literally outdone itself. It encounters many phenomena that it cannot “explain.” It cannot reconcile “pressure” and “stress,” for example, with an atomistic theory, as the empirical prowess of modern science has already disproved many of its own atomistic theories of the universe. Tools and instruments have become ever more capable of peering deeper and deeper into the heart of natural

⁴² Von den Welt-Ausdeutungen, welche bisher versucht worden sind, scheint heutzutage die mechanistische siegreich im Vordergrund zu stehen: ersichtlich hat sie das gute Gewissen auf ihrer Seite; und keine Wissenschaft glaubt bei sich selber an einen Fortschritt und Erfolg, es sei denn, wenn er mit Hülfe mechanistischer Prozeduren errungen ist. Jedermann kennt diese Prozeduren: man läßt die „Vernunft“ und die „Zwecke“, so gut es gehen will, aus dem Spiele, man zeigt, daß, bei gehöriger Zeitdauer, Alles aus Allem werden kann [...]. Inzwischen giebt sich gerade bei den ausgesuchten Geistern, welche in dieser Bewegung stehen, ein Vorgefühl [...] wie als ob die Theorie ein Loch habe, welches über kurz oder lang zu ihrem letzten Loche werden könne [...] Man kann Druck und Stoß selber nicht „erklären“, man wird die *actio in distans* nicht los: — man hat den Glauben an das Erklären-können selber verloren und giebt mit sauertöpfischer Miene zu, daß Beschreiben und nicht Erklären, daß die dynamische Welt-Auslegung, mit ihrer Leugnung des „leeren Raumes“, der Klümpchen-Atome, in Kurzem über die Physiker Gewalt haben wird: wobei man freilich zur *Dynamis* noch eine innere Qualität — — — (KSA 11, 564-565[36:34])

phenomenon, and often cannot find a lowest common denominator—that is, either an irreducible “atom” or a truly “empty” space.

Nietzsche contends that science—in spite of itself—is gradually beginning to rely upon *descriptions* and *interpretations* of the world rather than “explanations.” He emphasizes the need to discover new processes and relationships and not specific “causes” and “effects.” Nietzsche’s tendency to place the word “explanation” inside of scare quotes dates back to his texts of the 1870s, in which he attacks Socrates for having promulgated the notion that an “explanation” is possible. The word that Nietzsche uses in his 1885 notebooks is simply *erklären* (in scare quotes, of course)—a word whose usage in the German language has not always implied a complete breakdown of all possible causes and reasons that lie behind a phenomenon. But when Nietzsche surrounds the word with scare quotes, that is precisely what he means: a neat and tidily packaged accounting of a phenomenon that defers to a “metaphysical,” central authority of meaning.

The word “description,” on the other hand, refers to a highly complex process of metaphor creation that has no specific beginning and no end, and is highly dependent upon what Nietzsche describes as the inner quality of *dynamis*. The Greek word *dynamis* appears only a handful of times in Nietzsche’s works (D’Iorio *Nietzsche Source*). *Dynamis* also appears in a rough, unpublished note from 1887, two years later, in which Nietzsche defines *dynamis* as a “‘genuine tendency toward action,’ still hemmed in, and that attempts to actualize itself’ / —‘will to power’ ‘elasticity’ / ‘accrued and accumulated tendency toward movement’” (trans. mine).⁴³ It is clear that *dynamis* represents a power—specifically a dissonant force that underpins all things. The word *dynamis* encapsulates Nietzsche’s definition of the term “will to power”—which is clearly his intention in this paragraph—but also the foundation for a modality of understanding.

⁴³ *Dynamis* „reale Tendenz zur Aktion“, noch gehemmt, die sich zu aktualisieren versucht — „Wille zur Macht“ „Spannkraft“ „aufgesammelte und aufgespeicherte Bewegungstendenz“ [I attempt to reproduce the irregular spacing depicted in the KSA] (KSA 12, 387[9:92])

A “dynamic” mode of understanding concurs with Deleuze’s interpretation of Nietzsche’s approach to science—although Deleuze does not emphasize the incredible significance of *potentiality* in his description of Nietzsche’s science. Nietzsche’s “fire machine” not only operates through a constant state of creation and destruction, blows [coups], and the transformation of phenomena (including ideas) from one state to another, but also by *relying* upon the infinite potential of its will to power. The dynamic potential in a centre of force does not only represent a given amount of force that can be discharged at any specific time, but a centre of force’s potential for discharge over a long period of time, and in a variety of different states. As Nietzsche emphasizes in the final aphorism of *The Will to Power*, a centre of force represents a plurality of identities—it represents both a unity and a plurality. The exact cartography of the plurality changes from moment to moment.

In his book entitled *Nietzschean Narratives*, Gary Shapiro maintains that Nietzsche’s last book *Ecce Homo* functions like an “infernal machine.” Although I discuss Shapiro’s theories about *Ecce Homo* in detail in Chapter Four, Shapiro’s theory of the “infernal machine” sheds some light on *The Gay Science* as well. Shapiro is inspired by Nietzsche’s vitriolic comments about his mother and sister in the section entitled “Why I Am So Wise” [“*Warum ich so weise bin*”] in which Nietzsche asserts that his revulsion toward his mother and sister instigated a horror within him. Nietzsche rather dramatically claims that this horror stoked the fire of an “infernal machine” in his consciousness. I cite Shapiro’s translation of this passage to preserve the clarity of his argument:

The treatment that I have experienced from the side of my mother and sister, up until this moment, fills me with an unspeakable horror: here a perfect infernal machine [*Höllenmaschine*] is at work, with an unfailing certainty as to the moment [*Augenblick*] in which I can be bloodily wounded—in my highest moments. . . then one lacks all strength to protect oneself against the poisonous worm . . . The physiological contiguity makes possible such a *disharmonia praestabilita* [pre-established disharmony]. . . . But I recognize that the deepest objection to “eternal recurrence,” my own most abysmal thought, is always mother and sister. [Shapiro’s translation and annotations] (151)

Shapiro suggests that Nietzsche's familial horror had such a profound affect on Nietzsche's spirit, body, and thinking that it inspired him to think in a systematic and dissonant way. The dissonance that manifests itself in *Ecce Homo* has a lack of structural, narrative, and epistemological unity: "The image of the machine and of the pre-established disharmony (an inversion of the Leibnizian world-order) suggest that he is not a masterful commanding subject [...]. He is, rather, caught in the machine, constantly susceptible to bloody wounds, and tempted to disavow his deepest thought" (151-152). According to Shapiro, Nietzsche's subjectivity is lost in the machine. Nietzsche depicts himself as a decentred authorial voice, whose plurality and fluid quality is part of a mechanism that generates contradictory and disharmonious data:

Such a narrative will be told by an imperfect narrator and its content, Nietzsche's life, cannot be a complete, well-rounded totality, but is a structure (perhaps a "machine") that will generate indefinitely many variations on the basis of certain fundamental oppositions. (152)

Unfortunately, Shapiro does not develop his hypothesis about the machinic nature of Nietzsche's writing into a concisely stated theory. However, his interpretation of *Ecce Homo* provides some informative insight in my discussion of *The Gay Science*. Shapiro's hypothesis relies upon Nietzsche's autobiographical representation of himself in *Ecce Homo*. In many respects, *The Gay Science* might appear to be wholly unautobiographical, as the book seems to depict a vast and heterogeneous plurality of voices. However, the lack of a consistent if not completely unstable narrative voice, such as the one that pervades *Ecce Homo*, creates a text that is no less characterized by its oppositions. *The Gay Science* presents an entirely different set of challenges for the reader.

Without a consistent narrative voice to guide the reader, the reader is forced to actively engage the text. In *Ecce Homo*, the reader must constantly question his or her assumptions about the reliability, consistency, and usefulness of the information that Nietzsche—the author of the book—presents throughout the text. However, in *The Gay Science*, the reader must compensate for the lack of a narrator by constantly reorienting

himself to the shifting perspectives and styles that he encounters. Thus, *The Gay Science* presents a system (or anti-system) for acquiring and interpreting knowledge that “cannot be a complete, well-rounded totality” and yet functions like a machine that will “generate indefinitely many variations” on the basis of a plurality of conflicting, dissonant—or as Deleuze would put it—“fiery” perspectives.

Shapiro uses the term “opposition,” which unfortunately does not reflect the power of his own machinic hypothesis. Oppositions—even a plurality of them—imply sets of binaries. However, *Ecce Homo* and *The Gay Science* do not merely destabilize oppositions. They generate complex networks of dissonant perspectives and fragments of information that are polyvalent, and not binaristic. Therefore, drawing upon Shapiro’s hypotheses about *Ecce Homo*, I suggest that *The Gay Science* is a machine that promotes scientific investigation by encouraging the reader to process enormous amounts of information generated by a variety of perspectives and the deployment of his or her manifold senses.

In *The Gay Science* (as well as *Ecce Homo*), it is not just Nietzsche, the author, who is lost in the narrative, but the readers as well. The reader of *The Gay Science* is forced to engage with the strange, destabilizing, and violent movements of the narrative. This activity provokes the reader to think critically and engage with the plurality of voices that are represented in the text. The reader must engage the text’s many “twists and turns.”

Just because Nietzsche did not find the word “mechanism” appealing does not mean that he did not like machines. Nietzsche certainly would not have dreamed of machines that systemize knowledge according to the rules of causality and impersonal, abstract tables and formulas. The German language has its own word for “machine”—one, which Nietzsche uses quite frequently throughout his works: *Werk*. The modern word *Werk* can be used on its own, and can be translated into English using the words “act,” “creation,” “factory,” “movement,” and “works.” But the historical usage of the word encompasses many nuances of the word “machine”—they do not always convey the sense of automation or the capitalist overtones carried by the word “machine” as it is used today. *Werk* can also

be used as a suffix and appears throughout Nietzsche's corpus in the following compound words: *Kunstwerk* ("work of art"), *Handwerk* ("handiwork"), *Blendwerk* ("work of falsification—illusion"), *Machwerk* ("botched effort"), *Bauwerk* ("work of construction"). In each case, it is important to bear in mind that the suffix *-werk*, does not refer to a completed and final state, particularly in Nietzsche's texts. It always refers the *processes* that lead to the phenomena. Additionally, its historical usages frequently emphasize the importance of *potentiality* of the doer in creating a "work" of whatever kind.

Although the word *Werk* is not an exact translation of the Latin-derived word *Maschine* [machine], it represents a more effective and exact signifier for the machinic processes that Deleuze attempts to describe, as well as those processes that characterize *The Gay Science*. These processes delineate a *system* of gathering, interpreting, and describing knowledge that is "dynamic" in every sense of the word. The system operates like a *Werk* in the sense that it requires that its participants contribute as much of their bodies, affects, sensual perceptions, talents, and "potentialities" as possible. It implies performance much more than the blind adherence to an abstract set of principles and imperatives.

In a short aphorism in the third book of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche emphasizes that the artist's *Werk*—his "machine" for lack of a better term in English—is a "magnifying glass," that is an important scientific instrument for others to gather knowledge: "*Work [Werk] and artist.*—This artist is ambitious, nothing more. Ultimately, his work is merely a magnifying glass that he offers everybody who looks his way" (GS 214).⁴⁴ Far from disparaging the work of an artist, the word "merely" actually indicates a manifold of provocative, new possibilities. "Nur" emphasizes that "this" artist is exceptional in that he understands that the purpose of art is science. The artist must offer possible magnifying

⁴⁴ *Werk und Künstler.* — Dieser Künstler ist ehrgeizig und Nichts weiter: zuletzt ist sein Werk nur ein Vergrößerungsglas, welches er Jedermann anbietet, der nach ihm hinblickt. (KSA 3, 514)

glasses—each of which might have a different strength, grind, and lens quality—to offer a nearly infinite diversity of data.

INCIPIIT ZARATHUSTRA!

Book Four of *The Gay Science* ends with four powerful aphorisms that culminate in a quotation from Nietzsche's next major work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. These aphorisms mark the end of the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science*, and clearly represent a transition and a prelude to Nietzsche's famous, fictional work. The first of this tetrad is entitled "*Vita femina*" (no. 339), an aphorism that implores readers to think of *life as a lover*—a "woman"—who needs to be courted, by both the reader's spirit and body. The lover should not be the object of idolatry or idealism, as this would limit the dynamic potential of one's relationship with life. The next aphorism, entitled "The Dying Socrates" ["*Der sterbende Sokrates*"] suggests that Socrates—a notoriously "cheerful" personage—was actually a "pessimist," as indicated by his last words "O Crito, I owe Asclepius a rooster" (Asclepius being a god of medicine), a seemingly absurd statement that Nietzsche believes to be a coded message that translates into: "O Crito, *life is a disease*" ["*Oh Kriton, das Leben ist eine Krankheit!*"] (GS 272; KSA 3, 569). Nietzsche interprets this statement as an admission that Socrates "*suffered life*" ["*Leben gelitten*"] (GS 272, KSA 3, 570). However, Socrates' admission comes only begrudgingly and with vengeance. The fact that suffering is a natural and even cardinal aspect of a healthy life is an important theme throughout Nietzsche's works; yet "suffering" should neither be considered regrettable nor should its value be denigrated.

Nietzsche's response to Socrates' declaration harshly criticizes its *tone*. The tone of Socrates' words motivates Nietzsche to declare that Socrates should have remained "taciturn" ["*schweigsam*"] in his final moments—if only to "belong to a still higher order of spirits" ["*vielleicht gehörte er dann in eine noch höhere Ordnung der Geister*"] (GS 272; KSA 3, 569). According to Nietzsche, Socrates was filled with the *lowest order* of all affects at this moment: "piety," "malice," "gruesome," and "blasphemous." A brief examination of all

Nietzsche's middle and late works demonstrates that he associates these affects with the "herd," and the moral constellation of slaves, priests, and other life-denying ascetics. In short, Socrates commits the transgression of exhibiting "slave morality," as Nietzsche outlines in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Socrates eschews and even resents a potentially life-affirming value.

The last two aphorisms of the coda of Book Four consist of "The Greatest Weight" [*"Das grösste Schwergewicht"*] in which Nietzsche poetically introduces the concept of "eternal recurrence," and *"Incipit tragoedia,"* a brief introduction to Zarathustra, the protagonist of Nietzsche's next book. This final section includes a speech that Nietzsche includes in the preface of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Although Nietzsche does not introduce eternal recurrence or the *Übermensch* as formal philosophical concepts, he introduces ideas that are too provocative to be anything other than thematic material for further development in a future work. Many commentaries of "The Greatest Weight" focus their interpretation of eternal recurrence in *The Gay Science* by taking the words of Nietzsche's demon—a *hypothetical* demon—at face value. The demon suggests that every human being is destined to relive every conceivable life experience an infinite amount of times:

What, if some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: "This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!" (GS 273)⁴⁵

⁴⁵ Wie, wenn dir eines Tages oder Nachts, ein Dämon in deine einsamste Einsamkeit nachschliche und dir sagte: „Dieses Leben, wie du es jetzt lebst und gelebt hast, wirst du noch einmal und noch unzählige Male leben müssen; und es wird nichts Neues daran sein, sondern jeder Schmerz und jede Lust jeder Gedanke und Seufzer und alles unsäglich Keine und Grosse deines Lebens muss dir wiederkommen, und Alles in her selben Reihe und Folge — und ebenso diese Spinne und dieses Mondlicht zwischen den Bäumen, und ebenso dieser Augenblick und ich selber. Die ewige Sanduhr des Daseins wird immer wieder umgedreht — und du mit ihr, Stäubchen vom Staube!“ (KSW 3, 570)

In a chapter entitled “Overman and Eternal Recurrence” in his book on Nietzsche, Kaufmann reminds us that this passage has inspired a variety of thinkers to either prove or disprove the validity and tenability of the demon’s suggestion. One of the most dramatic examples of this obsession includes the German sociologist Georg Simmel’s mathematical “proof” that Nietzsche is simply dead wrong (172-173). Bernd Magnus, whose classic critiques of the concept of eternal recurrence in the 1970s apparently overlooks the ambiguity in Nietzsche’s language and style, presumes that for Nietzsche, eternal recurrence represents a finite amount of energy and space, but an infinite amount of time, and like Simmel, concludes that Nietzsche’s “doctrine” is flawed (655). But he excuses Nietzsche’s fallacious argumentation, as he believes Nietzsche was driven by desperate measures to theorize away “eternity” for the good of a humanity that was “God-intoxicated” (615).

As with many of Nietzsche’s most dramatic and notorious proclamations, it is important to consider the literary implications of the passage. At no point does the narrator of this aphorism, who appears to represent Nietzsche’s perspective, ever suggest that the reader should accept the demon’s words as a doctrine or “truth.” The aphorism begins with the phrase “What, if some day” [*Wie, wenn dir eines Tages*“], which is both hypothetical and formulaic. After the demon finishes speaking, the narrator steps in once again, and offers a *hypothetical* response on our behalf. The narrator suggests that we might very well reply to the demon with awe and reverence: “‘You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.’ If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you” (GS 274).⁴⁶

Nietzsche’s favourite gods, Apollo and Dionysus, have access to great powers, yet these Gods proudly exhibit their human-like characteristics. As Nietzsche makes quite clear

⁴⁶ [...] „du bist ein Gott und nie hörte ich Göttlicheres!“ Wenn jener Gedanke über dich Gewalt bekäme, er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen; [...] (KSA 3, 570)

in both his early and late works, these truly life-affirming, powerful gods are not transcendent, purely metaphysical beings. These gods share human thoughts, struggles, fears and joys; indeed, they are our companions. Thus, there is no reason to assume that the “demon” (or “god”) should represent a transcendental truth or promulgate a metaphysical doctrine. Indeed, the demon seems to be offering humanity some friendly advice in the form of a parable or riddle for them to carefully consider time and time again. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche states that the Olympian gods are humanity’s *companions*; they represent and defend human values, their strengths and vulnerabilities, and their aspirations.

Perhaps the demon’s suggestion is no different than Silenus’ reply to King Midas, who asks the demigod what would be “best and most desirable for men” [“*was für den Menschen das Allerbeste und Allervorzüglichste sei*”] (BWN 42, KSA 1, 35). As Nietzsche summarizes in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Silenus replies “What is best of all is utterly beyond your reach: not to-be born, not to be, to be nothing. But the second best for you is—to die soon” (BWN 42).⁴⁷ There is little evidence to suggest that Nietzsche expects his readers to embrace non-being or to “die soon” any more than he would expect his readers to become paralyzed by the demon’s prophesy. Indeed, a contextual reading of Nietzsche’s discussion of the “wisdom of Silenus” in *The Birth of Tragedy* (back in 1872), and the demon’s “doctrine” of eternal recurrence (written over a decade later), suggests that in each case, the reader is confronted with a very deep-seated, very “human” fear. The fear is that there is no escape or cure for the imperfections of human existence. Indeed, what is “best for man” is to face them head on or will oneself into non-existence. This choice appears frequently in Nietzsche’s writings, in which Nietzsche attempts to convince his readers to “revaluate” their present epistemology and values, which have long-since ceased to serve and promote life, or to continue their decadent course, probably to extinction.

⁴⁷ “[...] Das Allerbeste ist für dich gänzlich unerreichbar: nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu *sein*, *nichts* zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich — bald zu sterben.” (KSA 1, 35)

Thus, it is possible to interpret the “Greatest Weight” in a number of different ways. While there can be no doubt that Nietzsche does believe that the universe operates by a ceaseless, repetitive, and dissonant process, the only “event” which is sure to recur continually is the process of transformation that defines the universe, as outlined in Chapter One. Concurrently, the one event that has always recurred in the lives of civilized human beings, and will continue to recur, is the confrontation with a musical, dissonant universe in which constant, repetitive struggle with an unpredictable, uncontrollable, and fundamentally dissonant existence is inevitable. Whereas some ancient civilizations, such as that of the ancient Greeks, devised Gods and worldviews that did not deny the “horror of existence,” but actually apotheosized them as affirmations of life, others, such as the Judeo-Christian civilizations of Europe, have promoted philosophies that denigrate the world of suffering in favour of an abstract, metaphysical world that promises comfort and certainty. Thus, the “greatest weight” might refer to a very basic problem, and one which humanity can approach in several ways. As Nietzsche’s narrator states, the thought of eternal recurrence can “change you as you are or perhaps crush you” [*“er würde dich, wie du bist, verwandeln und vielleicht zermalmen”*] (GS 274; KSA 3, 570).

The question can paralyze a reader, yet it can also present a potentially liberating and enlivening perspective on life—just like the question asked by King Midas to Silenus or even the “Madman’s” question to the villagers in aphorism 125 of *The Gay Science*, in which the narrator asks the reader to contemplate the implications of the Judeo-Christian god’s death. At the end of “The Greatest Weight,” the narrator suggests that the reader embrace the implications of the demon’s question: “Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate eternal confirmation [*Bestätigung*] and seal?” (GS 274).⁴⁸ Thus, the question of the greatest weight

⁴⁸ Oder wie müsstest du dir selber und dem Leben gut werden, um nach Nichts *mehr zu verlangen*, als nach dieser letzten ewigen Bestätigung und Besiegelung? — (KSA 3, 570)

presents a potentially eternal, continual affirmation and endorsement [*Bestätigung*] of life and meanings that are also implied by the word “seal” [*Besiegelung*].

The actual phrase, “the greatest weight,” presents a number of interesting issues as well. Nietzsche chooses his word very carefully. *Das Schwergewicht* does not simply refer to deadweight. According to *Grimm’s*, Nietzsche’s usage of the word *Schwergewicht* implies fighting against *gravity*, specifically *die Schwere*, a Germanic word that Nietzsche uses frequently in his latter works, particularly in *Zarathustra*, to refer to the force of gravity. *Grimm’s* explains that “the greatest weight” refers to a “weight with respect to the laws of gravity” [“Gewicht hinsichtlich seiner Wirkung nach dem Gesetz der Schwere”].⁴⁹ *Die Schwere* is not merely a scientific word, but as implied by its homophony with *schwer*, an adjective that in modern German refers to “heaviness” in a broad sense of the word, and refers to the force of gravity, affliction, grief, difficulty, and pain. When considered in conjunction with the suffix “weight,” the word takes on a broader range of meanings; the “greatest weight” becomes the greatest burden in both a physical and affective sense of the word.

As with other burdens in Nietzsche’s writings—such as the “abyss” in *The Birth of Tragedy* and “the death of God” in *The Gay Science*—the “greatest weight” can be a cause for laughter, dance, and celebration. Throughout *Zarathustra*, the Nietzsche’s prophet struggles to free himself from gravity; he wants to be able to soar above existing systems of valuation, as well as his own, personal, confrontation with the question of the “greatest weight.” He strives to become a “gay” scientist.

“*Incipit Zarathustra*” does not only introduce the protagonist Zarathustra, but a variety of highly significant imagery. It is in this passage that Zarathustra declares his desire to “go under” and return to the human civilization he left only ten years ago, choosing solitude in the mountains with only the company of his animal friends. Ultimately, it is the sun that provides him with the impetus to return to civilization. Similar

⁴⁹ <http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemma=schwergewicht>.

to the philosopher portrayed in Plato's "Parable of the Cave," Zarathustra derives his impetus to "go under" from the sun. As in Plato's "Parable of the Cave," Nietzsche describes a thinker who has ventured forth from the world of human affairs, and attained enlightenment and perspective—in large part from contemplating the nature of the sun. However, unlike Plato's would-be philosopher king, who believes the sun represents a transcendent truth, Zarathustra believes that the sun represents a "truth" that is entirely compatible with the reality of "this world." Thus, there is in fact there is no conflict at all.

The Gay Science does not only portray a radically new method of scientific investigation. The text depicts a perilous landscape that symbolizes the type of world in which a practitioner of the *gai saber* will have to live. It is a dangerous world filled with slippery stones, violent seas, and jagged cliffs that an artistically oriented scientist or philosopher will have to navigate. While traveling through this epic world, the philosopher will have to confront some difficult decisions, the most important of which is probably deciding *what the point of the voyage might be*. If the purpose of science is not to find some comforting, otherworldly "meaning" in life, as King Midas attempts to do by interrogating Silenus, and if it is not to find metaphysical solace in the notion that there is a sea of infinity from which we can escape the repetitious cycle of suffering of this wordly existence as depicted in "The Greatest Weight," then what can it be? The answer seems to be clearly stated in "Vita Femina": to *love* life in every conceivable way possible—in "body" and "soul." To live it is to dance with it, sing with it, and cultivate the inherent musical dissonance that exists within everything. "INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA" indicates that the world depicted in *The Gay Science* needs an epic hero who is ready to face this challenge. That hero is Zarathustra, whom I will discuss in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

MUSICAL DISSONANCE AND THE REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES:

THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA

Nothing like this has ever been written, felt, or *suffered*: thus suffers a god, a Dionysus. The answer to such a dithyramb of solitude in the light would be Ariadne. — Who besides me knows what Ariadne is! — For all such riddles nobody so far had any solution; I doubt that anybody even saw any riddles here.

Zarathustra once defines, quite strictly, his task—it is mine, too—and there is no mistaking his meaning: he says Yes to the point of justifying, or redeeming even all of the past. (*BWN, Ecce Homo* 765)¹

Redemption through Metaphor

Nietzsche portrays redemption as one of the most powerful concepts in Western metaphysics. In ancient times, the redemption of this-worldly values to vindicate humanity to a metaphysical authority of truth was the catalyst for powerful reconfigurations of values in Platonism, Judaism, and Christianity. There is no reason to believe that Nietzsche would omit such a powerful and transformative concept from his great project, “the revaluation of all values.” Just like “truth,” “science,” “system,” and “history,” Nietzsche rehabilitates the concept of redemption to conform to a musical, dissonant way of thinking in this epic text. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche demonstrates his fidelity to his philosopher’s code of ethics: the revaluation of all values must rehabilitate powerful and tenacious values that have resounded throughout human history—even the metaphysical ones. Weak values can be allowed to perish, but strong ones need to be rehabilitated. Redemption is indeed a powerful and tenacious value, but unfortunately, it has developed in accordance with a metaphysical epistemology. Through his fictional hero, Zarathustra, Nietzsche portrays a

¹ Dergleichen ist nie gedichtet, nie gefühlt, nie *gelitten* worden: so leidet ein Gott, ein Dionysos. Die Antwort auf einen solchen Dithyrambus der Sonnen-Vereinsamung im Lichte wäre Ariadne. . . Wer weiss ausser mir, was Ariadne ist! . . . Von allen solchen Räthseln hatte Niemand bisher die Lösung, ich zweifle, dass je Jemand auch hier nur Räthsel sah. — Zarathustra bestimmt einmal, mit Strenge, seine Aufgabe — es ist auch die meine —, daß man sich über den *Sinn* nicht vergreifen kann: er ist *jasagend* bis zur Rechtfertigung, bis zur Erlösung auch alles Vergangenen. (*KSA* 6, 348)

rehabilitated form of redemption that presages humanity's gradual abandonment of metaphysical thinking and its adoption of this-worldly, musical, dissonant thinking. It represents the vindication of man in a universe that is dissonant and in continual flux.

Kathleen Higgins argues that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* offers the reader an opportunity to redeem him or herself to the *present moment*. By facing the realities and demands of the present moment, human beings can undo the damage inflicted by metaphysical philosophies, which have encouraged humanity to dwell on the past and seek solace in the promise of a metaphysical world that exists beyond the world of the here and now. Higgins argues that the present moment represents a *process* in which reality is in a state of continual transformation. By emphasizing the present moment as a vantage point for understanding fundamental questions about existence—such as time, being, and identity—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* emphasizes “this-worldly” aspects of life and the imminence of change and transformation.

According to Higgins, Christianity promotes a “low sense of self-worth” by encouraging its believers to “desire for the absolute reassurance that one is saved from the consequences of one’s sin” and “the desire to avenge oneself for one’s being unable to overcome a sinful nature” (167-168). Christianity motivates human beings to denigrate themselves—their bodies, their world, and their societies—because they are fundamentally unable to provide themselves with the means to achieve salvation without appealing to a metaphysical authority such as God. They need an all-powerful God to facilitate this for them: “One can be absolutely saved if God grants his forgiveness, so one’s ultimate status in the world depends exclusively on one’s status in God’s eyes” (168). God demands that his worshippers focus on anything but the present. If human beings take pleasure in the present moment, then they will abandon their quest to atone for their sinful nature, and no longer seek comfort and approval from a metaphysical world. The present moment represents a threat to metaphysical philosophies and religions. Christianity promotes a “doctrine of sin, as motivating a quest for revenge. Revenge is sought as a means of

assuaging self-contempt and fear of the future” (169). Human beings must think about their past sins and how these sins can be absolved in order to grant access to a metaphysical realm, such as heaven, after death. They fear that otherwise, they will not be able to do so. By sowing feelings of vengeful contempt for the present moment and the sensual world, Christianity ensures that humanity stays focused on otherworldly concerns. For Christians, the present and the future exist in order to vindicate the past and nothing more. The present is always a means to an end and never an end unto itself.

Higgins maintains that Zarathustra wants to teach humanity how to channel its “will” in accordance with the transformative, this-worldly, life-affirming power of the *present moment*. In the aphorism entitled “On Redemption” [“*Von der Erlösung*”] in the second part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra claims that “Will [...] is the name of the liberator and joy-bringer” [“*Wille — so heisst der Befreier und Freudebringer*”] (KSA 4, 179). Accordingly, Higgins claims that the will to power is a force that represents the power of the “present” moment. It seeks to ground us in the present moment:

This potential of the will allows the will to “redeem” its past—and the historical past that influences it. Redemption, understood in this way, involves converting materials of the past into constructions that the presently active individual views as valuable. The materials of the past are redeemed, on Nietzsche’s model, by actually being reconstructed along lines suggested by our aspirations. The Christian “redemption,” by contrast, reinforces guilt-ridden fixations on the facts of our past actions. In so doing, it reinforces a denigration of the present and denies our power to constitute ourselves continually. Nietzsche repudiates both these aspects of the Christian model of redemption, and he uses the doctrine of eternal recurrence in developing his own alternative model. (187-188)

This analysis of Nietzsche’s philosophy suggests that embracing the present moment can actually inspire the manner in which humanity can structure its system of valuation. Higgins uses redemption as an example. Instead of thinking of redemption as a way to absolve us of worldly sin, we can use the present moment as a criterion for valuation that actually encourages us to alter aspects of our life to heighten the experience of living in the present moment. Although this process implies a certain level of spontaneity and light-heartedness, it also represents a strict level of rigorous self-discipline. Living in

accordance with the concept of the will to power and eternal recurrence, which Higgins associates with the present moment, makes it difficult to dwell on the sins of the past or the promise of metaphysical comfort. We must focus on the continual and dynamic transformations that occur around us at every moment in the sensual world. The universe is a “monster of energy” whose centre of power is diffusely distributed everywhere. It is constantly transforming and reconfiguring itself. If human beings would only open their eyes and *embrace* the dynamic processes that shape the universe at any given moment, they would hardly have the time to dwell on redeeming the past and gaining entrance into metaphysical worlds.

According to Bruce Benson, we can attribute the preponderance of ascetic imagery in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* to Nietzsche’s “refigured pietism” (46-52). Benson also focuses on the significance of Nietzsche’s use of the word “redemption” and redemptive imagery, which he argues represents an inversion of their “usual” meanings in the lexicon of Judeo-Christianity. He actually claims that *amor fati*—Nietzsche’s belief that humanity should embrace its fate, however uncomfortable it might be—constitutes the logic of his *rehabilitated* notion of “redemption”:

His use of the phrase “that alone do I call redemption” [in the third aphorism of “Old and New Tablets”] clearly calls attention to the fact that he employs the term in a very different way. For the underlying assumption of “redemption” as normally defined is that something is *wrong* and needs to be *fixed*. [...] Conversely, redemption for Nietzsche means not thinking there is something wrong in the first place: if we can call it “redemption,” then it is in effect a redemption *from* redemption. The logic of *amor fati*, then, is the antithesis of the logic of redemption. On the one hand, making this change from the usual concept of redemption to *amor fati* would seem to be a gargantuan task. [...] On the other hand, *amor fati* is remarkably close to the sentiments of the Pietistic prayer of young Fritz: “All He gives I will joyfully accept: happiness and unhappiness, poverty and wealth, and boldly look even death in the face” (KGW I:1, 4[77]). It would be hard to think of a better expression of *amor fati* than this prayer. Yet now Nietzsche’s trust is not in God but in life. (51)²

² Benson quotes a short passage from an essay entitled “From My Life” [“*Aus meinem Leben*”] (KGW I.1, 77) that Nietzsche wrote when he was fourteen years old just before leaving home to attend the boarding school (see Hollingdale *Nietzsche* 7).

Benson contends that the multifarious forces of “life” that inspire Nietzsche’s quest for “redemption” and demonstrations of pietism and asceticism in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, represent his desire to extricate metaphysical thinking from pietistic principles. Nietzsche wants to dismantle the pietism promoted by religions such as Christianity, and encourage people to embrace a reconfigured form of pietism that inspires them to direct their self-discipline toward the preservation of life-affirming, this-worldly values. However, humanity must first overcome its feelings of vengeance and disdain for this world. We cannot apotheosize metaphysical abstractions any longer. This world is “perfect” exactly the way it is at the *present moment*. Benson asserts that this process amounts to a “redemption from redemption.” Human beings should give as much attention to *this world* and *this moment* as Christianity demands that its adherents give to the past and a metaphysical world, as outlined by Higgins. This guards against the resurgence of a type of asceticism that affirms abstraction, idealism, and metaphysical thinking.

Benson describes Nietzsche’s take on redemption as having been inspired by his own encounter with metaphysical thinking. He quotes a short essay from Nietzsche’s adolescence entitled “From My Life” [“*Aus Meinem Leben*”] (1858) that evidences the early development of his concept of *amor fati*. Nietzsche’s youthful studies of Christianity, Judaism, and Platonism inspired a lifetime’s worth of anger toward the life-denying asceticism that has pervaded the history of Western thought and impeded humanity’s ability to fulfill its potential by denigrating the worth of this-worldly experience and this-worldly values. Benson believes that the mature Nietzsche attempts to channel the piety he learned as a child into shattering the foundation of metaphysics in order to gradually rehabilitate philosophy. While I agree with Benson’s basic argument, I think it important to add that it is not only Nietzsche’s fury toward metaphysics and a passionate love for “fate” (*amor fati*) and life that inspire him, but his *love* for musical dissonance as well. This is because life *is* musical dissonance.

In her 1994 book entitled *Nietzsche, God, and the Jews*, Weaver Santaniello claims that as a whole, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* represents a very carefully constructed, multilayered text that literally replaces “God” with the will to power as the source of creation. She discusses general religious concepts, such as redemption, but also cornerstones of Judaism and Christianity, such as the concept of the Messiah, which Santaniello contends appears as the *Übermensch* in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

The book is pivotal to Nietzsche's critique of Judeo-Christianity, for his overarching goal is to replace traditional Christian concepts with new ones. The text is multilayered and inexhaustible in meaning. But broadly speaking, the will to power replaces God as the ground of creation; the *Übermensch* signifies the historical Messiah who has yet to appear; and the eternal return dislodges the doctrine of personal immortality. In large measure, the work can be viewed as a polemic against the idea of the Creator understood as a metaphysical principle. Nietzsche favors an anthropological view that posits humans, not god(s), as the creators, sustainers, and redeemers of the earth. He especially polemicizes against redemption, understood as life beyond death. Nietzsche believes that redemption, understood as individual immortality demeans the body, the earth, and is essentially triumphalist. (70)

Santaniello suggests that the will to power underpins Nietzsche's enormous reconstruction of the Western spiritual and philosophical ethos. From this source of inspiration, Nietzsche refashions many of the metanarratives that underpin Western epistemology and gave birth to its many myths, religious and cultural practices, and icons—most notably the messiah. According to Santaniello, the motivation to “redeem” oneself does not derive from an overarching, metaphysical god or creator, but from the will to power, a force that underpins human life and all existence. However, I contend that Nietzsche does much more than “replace traditional Christian concepts”: he *rehabilitates* them. To say that Nietzsche “replaces” one concept with another does not convey the dynamic process of reinfusing language with dissonant metaphors that we see throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Benson's, Higgins', and Santaniello's investigations indicate that Nietzsche wanted to “rehabilitate” and “revalue” redemption through a reconfigured form of pietism that defers to the will to power as a criterion and authority of meaning. Instead of using the present moment to vindicate the past and secure one's future in a metaphysical world,

humanity can now use *the past* as a tool to secure its place in the present moment.

Accordingly, the future represents a nearly infinite series of new “present moments” that are yet to come.

David Allison offers a more concise description of the will to power’s function in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Allison contends that the book is an enormous engine that is powered by eternal recurrence. In accordance with the analyses of the will to power that I offer in the Introduction, Allison explains that the will to power manifests itself as “eternal recurrence” that “postulates an endless flux and metamorphosis of energy or matter, constantly transfiguring itself well into an endlessly creative apocalypse” (121-122). Ultimately, however, this apocalypse represents a fundamentally *semiotic* phenomenon. Allison bases his semiotic hypothesis on the proliferation of semen metaphors throughout the text, which allude to the etymology of the word semiotics (165-166). He maintains that Nietzsche supplants “traditional ‘rationality’” with a “[...] broader notion of ‘semiotics,’ that is, by the functional sign-system of language itself and its perspective interpretation.” By dispensing with rationality in favour of semiotics, “the traditional Christian moral teachings would be unbound, freed from the constraints of *ressentiment* [...]” Allison maintains that the freedom offered by semiotics is “More than a reversal or inversion of metaphysics, but an “‘overcoming’ of the tradition” (166).

Thus, for Allison, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* suggests a very specific *modus operandi* for Nietzsche’s massive “overcoming” of Western metaphysical traditions. Allison employs the word “overcoming” in much the same way that I utilize the words “revaluate” and “rehabilitate” to describe Nietzsche’s critique of values. As I describe later in this chapter, the process of “revaluation” goes hand in hand with “overcoming,” as Nietzsche describes the revaluation of all values as a process of bridging, dancing, and laughing *over* traditional values. The revaluation of all values represents a shift in the manner in which we construct our signs and symbols. Based on our knowledge of Nietzsche’s emphasis on the primacy of metaphor in the understanding of language, truth, and meaning, it is tenable to hypothesize

that the revaluation of all values represents the constant reconfiguration of the “armies” of metaphors which constitute the lexicon of human truths and values.

This hypothesis accords with Nietzsche’s own opinion about the book, as expressed in the chapter entitled “*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*” in *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche declares:

The involuntariness of image and metaphor is strangest of all; one no longer has any notion of what is an image or a metaphor: everything offers itself as the nearest, most obvious, simplest expression. It actually seems, to allude to something Zarathustra says, as if the things themselves approached and offered themselves as metaphors (“Here all things come caressingly to your discourse and flatter you; for they want to ride on your back. On every metaphor you ride to every truth... Here the words and wordshrines of all being open up before you; here all being wishes to become word, all becoming wishes to learn from you how to speak”) (BWN 757)³

There can be no doubt: Nietzsche apotheosizes the power of metaphor in his descriptions of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He claims that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* wields metaphors in a way that he could have only dreamed about when he wrote “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” in 1873. In this early essay, Nietzsche *describes* the dynamic and powerful nature of metaphor, but in *Zarathustra* he actually *deploys* the power. He deploys the power of metaphor to create complex and dissonant armies of truths. Zarathustra hurls metaphors like explosive lightning bolts to convey fully his passionate and ardent beliefs that man is something that must be overcome by harnessing the dissonant powers that constitute the universe.

Nietzsche cites a few lines from the aphorism entitled “The Return Home” [“*Die Heimkehr*”] from the third book of *Zarathustra*, in which Zarathustra declares: “On every metaphor you ride to every truth” [“*Auf jedem Gleichniss reitest du hier zu jeder Wahrheit*”]

³ Die Unfreiwilligkeit des Bildes, des Gleichnisses ist das Merkwürdigste; man hat keinen Begriff mehr, was Bild, was Gleichniss ist, Alles bietet sich als der nächste, der richtigste, der einfachste Ausdruck. Es scheint wirklich, um an ein Wort Zarathustra’s zu erinnern, als ob die Dinge selber herankämen und sich zum Gleichnisse anböten (— „hier kommen alle Dinge liebkosend zu deiner Rede und schmeicheln dir: denn sie wollen auf deinem Rücken reiten. Auf jedem Gleichniss reitest du hier zu jeder Wahrheit. Hier springen dir alles Seins Worte und Wort-Scheine auf; alles Sein will hier Wort werden, alles Werden will von dir reden lernen —“). (KSA 6, 340)

(KSA 4, 231). In these passages, Nietzsche employs the term *Gleichniss* to denote “metaphor,” which as I previously discuss, connotes the concepts “parable,” “allegory,” and “simile.” The word *Gleichniss* emphasizes the full range of a metaphor’s versatile power. Thus, it represents a *variety of processes*. It is clear that Nietzsche believes that the will to power directly manifests itself through the use of metaphors, which literally act as a medium that transports and transforms the reader and writer from one place and condition to another, true to the etymology of the Greek and German words for metaphor (see discussion in Chapter Two, especially pages 176-177).

In “The Return Home,” the narrator of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* describes the protagonist’s journey back to his cave in the mountains. Here, Zarathustra addresses his “Solitude.”⁴ He personifies his Solitude and describes it as his homeland [*Heimat*]. While reflecting upon the nature of his homeland, Solitude speaks to him and utters the lines that Nietzsche quotes in the section from *Ecce Homo* that I began discussing in the previous paragraphs. This section suggests that a healthy relationship with Solitude is necessary to develop a powerful sense of self-identity. This does not imply that self-identity is a static and immutable sense of self; on the contrary, it implies an acceptance and consciousness of the self as a *mutable* and permeable being. In the lines leading up to the above-quoted passage, Solitude tells Nietzsche that it *knows everything*: “O Zarathustra, I know everything. Also that you were more forsaken among the many, being one, than ever with me. To be forsaken is one thing, to be lonely another: that you have learned now” (TPN 295).⁵

We can interpret the nature of Solitude by examining the German word—*Einsamkeit* (“solitude”). *Einsamkeit* simply means “the state of being by oneself.” If we think of

⁴ In this chapter, I discuss Zarathustra’s personification of solitude, chance, the sun, and heaven. When I specifically refer to Zarathustra’s personifications, I capitalize the relevant word like a proper name, i.e. “Solitude.”

⁵ „Oh Zarathustra, Alles weiss ich: und dass du unter den Vielen *verlassener* warst, du Einer, als je bei mir! / „Ein Anderes ist Verlassenheit, ein Anderes Einsamkeit: *Das* — lerntest du nun! [...]“ (KSA 4, 231)

solitude as a state of being rather than as an “emotion” or “feeling,” then the nature of the protagonist’s relationship to Solitude becomes clear. Grimm’s dictionary gives the following German and Latin words as the primary gloss for *Einsamkeit*: “früher unitas, Concordia, communion.”⁶ These words imply that the word suggests a state of mind that is reflective upon a “former unity.” In the context of Nietzsche’s works, the “former unity” from which all things originate is dissonance and the “will to power.” However, the will to power represents “unity” only insofar as unity is a measure of something’s inherent plurality.

The personification of Solitude emphasizes that maintaining one’s connection with one’s “former unity” facilitates a human being’s transformation into a conduit for metaphors. Nietzsche describes the relationship between Zarathustra and Solitude as *liebkosend*, a word that Kaufmann translates as “caressingly,” and connotes a sensual and emotional connection. However, things can only be “known” as metaphors. Human beings can only understand phenomena—tangible objects, images, words, or sounds—as complex networks of metaphors. The “word” and “wordshrines” that Solitude refers to are “words” only insofar as they represent complex, dynamic, networks of metaphors that reflect the speaker’s will to power. The relationship between speaker and word in this section of *The Spoke Zarathustra*, and the chapter in *Ecce Homo* in which Nietzsche cites it, is akin to the relationship between speaker and word as described in Goethe’s *Faust*, in which Faust suggests that words equate to the speaker’s ability to produce “action” and “deeds” [*die Tat*] (see Chapter One). That is, Zarathustra is not simply a man who creates new metaphors, but a man who develops new ways of *acting* and *doing*.

In another passage from the chapter on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche proudly declares that Zarathustra’s metaphor-charged poetry represents a new form of music. It is a form of music that confidently reaches toward the future. Yet, this

⁶ Grimm, <http://www.woerterbuchnetz.de/DWB?lemma=einsamkeit>.

journey toward the future is made possible by Zarathustra's *return* back to the primal nature of language:

There is no wisdom, no investigation of the soul, no art of speech before Zarathustra; what is nearest and most everyday, here speaks unheard-of things. Epigrams trembling with passion, eloquence become music, lightning bolts hurled forward into hitherto unfathomed futures. The most powerful capacity for metaphors that has existed so far is poor and mere child's play compared with this return of language to the nature of imagery. (BWN 761)⁷

This remarkable passage emphasizes the fresh, original, and vital nature of Zarathustra's metaphors. However, it also carefully underscores that Zarathustra's metaphors derive their strength from Zarathustra's *return* to the "nature of imagery." Nietzsche's claim that Zarathustra's epigrams represent music *and* the "return of language to the nature of imagery [*Bildlichkeit*]" might seem to present a contradiction, as we know that Nietzsche adamantly maintains—throughout his career—that music should never be subjugated to the plastic power of words.

In an unpublished fragment composed in 1871, Nietzsche claims that all human expression—in including language and "gestural symbolism" [*Geberdensymbolik*]"—is based on humanity's ability to draw upon its "tonal foundation" [*Tonfundamente*"], or as he also describes, its "tonal subsoil" [*Tonuntergrund*"] (trans. mine, KSA 7, 361-362[12:1]): "In the same way our entire physicality relates to the primal form of appearance—the will—the word, made of consonants and vowels, relates to its tonal foundation" (trans. mine, cf. *Early Notebooks* 85).⁸ Accordingly, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche mocks modern opera, which he believes generally subjugates music to words—ruling over it "like master over servant"

⁷ Es giebt keine Weisheit, keine Seelen-Erforschung, keine Kunst zu reden vor Zarathustra; das Nächste, das Alltäglichsste redet hier von unerhörten Dingen. Die Sentenz von Leidenschaft zitternd; die Beredsamkeit Musik geworden; Blitze vorausgeschleudert nach bisher unerrathenen Zukünften. Die mächtigste Kraft zum Gleichniss, die bisher da war, ist arm und Spielerei gegen diese Rückkehr der Sprache zur Natur der Bildlichkeit.— (KSA 6, 343-344)

⁸ Wie sich unsre ganze Leiblichkeit zu jener ursprünglichsten Erscheinungsform, dem Willen verhält, so verhält sich das consonantisch-vokalische Wort zu seinem Tonfundamente. (KSA 7, 362[12:1])

[*“wie der Herr über den Diener”*]. He charges that opera prevents people from comprehending the “true nature of the artist” [*“wahre Wesen des Künstlers nicht zu erfassen weiss”*] in which Dionysian music and passion reign supreme (BWN 116–118; KSA 1, 123). Nietzsche echoes these sentiments in his late work *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in which he rails against Wagner and his followers, who continue to perpetuate the error of “mimomania” [*“Mimomane”*]. He claims that composers like Wagner *use* music as a “means to clarify, strengthen, and lend inward dimension to the dramatic gesture” [*“die Musik als Mittel zur Verdeutlichung, Verstärkung, Verinnerlichung der dramatischen Gebärde”*] (TPN 665; KSA 6, 419). That is, he accuses Wagner and others of subordinating music to the service of *other* modes of expression, such as gesture and the plastic arts. For them, music serves *other* arts—but the opposite should be the case. Thus, it seems clear that the return of language to the “nature of imagery” represents a return to the “tonal foundation,” which Nietzsche consistently portrays as the “nature” of all aesthetic representation throughout his career (albeit using a variety of different metaphors). In this context, “imagery” is a metaphor for music, and not the plastic arts.

Solitude’s main message to Zarathustra is that he is not a poet, a lecturer, or a philosopher. The message is that Zarathustra is a musician—specifically a composer. Solitude’s main function in the text is to help guide Zarathustra into his “return to the nature of imagery” through music. If we interpret Solitude as a representation of Zarathustra’s former unity with a primal state of being, this certainly seems plausible. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and his many comments about the nature of music support this hypothesis. Zarathustra is a man who is learning how to organize complex and dynamic “metaphors” that essentially consist of thematic *musical* material. While in theory, all people are composers—as all words are “armies of metaphors,” as Nietzsche puts it in “On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense, and therefore expressions of musical dissonance—

Zarathustra is far more aware of the musical nature of words and metaphors than most.⁹ He is able to summon forth the music that is locked and frozen within words. Zarathustra's will to power results in the creation of vibrant expressions of musical dissonance, whose power and vitality inspire not only himself, but also those around him.

Zarathustra is not only a composer, but also a performer of his own music. The music that he composes and performs inspires those around him to reevaluate their own discourse and become more musical. Therefore, the relationship between the philosopher-musician and other members of humanity is one that consists of a concerted collaboration between a dynamic and pluralistic self, the dissonant will to power that constitutes the fabric of the entire universe, and a manifold of other human beings. It represents the relationship between one being who recognizes his or her *Menschwerdung der Dissonanz* ("becoming-human of dissonance") and other beings.

The redemptive processes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* represent the manipulation, deployment, and *orchestration*, of a variety of metaphors. The power that drives this process is the will to power, which as Nietzsche explains, represents a force that is decentred, discordant, and disruptive. Benson asserts that the dynamic force of the will to power constitutes the basis for Nietzsche's piety and musical *askêsis*. That is, it constitutes a model by which Nietzsche structures his approach to science and philosophy. It represents an ascetic practice that helps Nietzsche—and Zarathustra—to continually engage in the revaluation of all values and the process of overcoming. It ensures that metaphysical, otherworldly ways of thinking are kept at bay, and that this-worldly, dissonant ways of thinking reign supreme.

⁹ See pages 38-39 in the Introduction for a discussion of Nietzsche's portrayal of "truth" as an "army of metaphors" in his essay "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense."

Zarathustra's Musical Askêsis

According to Graham Parkes, who translated the Cambridge University Press edition (2000) of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, “Zarathustra must still qualify as the most musical work of philosophy in the western tradition” (xxxi). Parkes describes how many of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*’s literary features bear a striking similarity to the defining characteristics of great musical compositions. He cites Nietzsche’s description of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as reflective of the style of Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, while it was still a work in progress, and the composer Gustav Mahler’s praise of the completed text’s symphonic style, to evidence the work’s emotive musical qualities (xxix).

Perhaps the most beautiful description of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*’s musical qualities is in *Ecce Homo*. In the first aphorism of the chapter on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche claims that “the whole of *Zarathustra* may be reckoned as music; certainly a rebirth of the art of *hearing* was among its preconditions” (BWN 751).¹⁰ Above all, this passage inspires me to regard Zarathustra as a composer, singer, and performer. While the role of the narrator should not be discounted, Nietzsche explicitly states that it is the character Zarathustra that sings the dithyrambs and hurls “unheard-of things,” and powerful metaphors at the listener. As I discuss in the previous section, Zarathustra learns how to sing metaphors in an unprecedented way. He learns how to sing in a way that gestures toward the future by rediscovering the “nature of language in imagery,” that is, the Dionysian, musical “tonal foundation” that underlies human expression. This passage implies that Zarathustra’s “return to the nature of language in imagery” is inspired by his ability to *hear it*; after all, for Nietzsche, the nature of language and all art is ultimately *music*, and is therefore something that needs to be *heard*. Thus, as a teacher and prophet, Zarathustra’s job is to inspire others to *hear* “unheard-of things.” This is not easy, as most people will probably not hear these

¹⁰ Man darf vielleicht den ganzen Zarathustra unter die Musik rechnen; — sicherlich war eine Wiedergeburt in der Kunst zu *hören*, eine Vorausbedingung dazu. (KSA 6, 335)

things without being inspired to do so. As Nietzsche points out time after time, nineteenth century man is trained to think of music as a “mere means.”

Clearly, Nietzsche wanted his readers to *feel* the emotive power of music. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche adamantly maintains that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* should reflect a “great health,” the perspective gained from roaming “great heights,” and to say “Yes,” “rhythm” and “dance.” The music of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is liberating and filled with vitality. It should be noted that Nietzsche describes *his* “symphony” as the exact *opposite* of Wagner’s music. In *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, he claims that Wagner’s music “negate[s] life” [“*verneinen das Leben*”] (TPN 670; KSA 6, 425) is the “complete degeneration of rhythmic feeling” [“*vollkommene Entartung des rhythmischen Gefühls*”] (TPN 666; KSA 6, 422), and is a “music without a future” (TPN 667; KSA 6, 423).¹¹ As I discuss in the Introduction and in Chapter One, Nietzsche wanted to experience music that affirms “life” and “nature.” Nietzsche believed that Wagner’s music was “without a future” because it places music in the “service” [“*Dienste*”] and “slavery” of “attitudes” [“*Sklaverei der Attitüde*”] (or as Kaufmann translates, “poses” [TPN 667]) in order to create “effect” [“*Wirkung*”] (KSA 6, 423). We know that for Nietzsche, music must never be subjugated to *anything* other than itself. Music must follow musical principles. According to Nietzsche, Wagner’s music “swims” [“*Schwimmen*”] and “floats” [“*Schweben*”] but does not “walk” [“*Gehn*”] or “dance” [“*Tanzen*”] any more (TPN 666; KSA 6, 422). The reason for this being that Wagner subjugates music to less “natural” and vibrant forms of human expression. Instead of using music to invigorate human life and culture, Nietzsche claims that Wagner ultimately used it as a mere form of embellishment in many of his works. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* achieves the opposite effect. Referring to the text as a piece of music, Benson suggests that “Perhaps the most important piece of that music is the doctrine of eternal recurrence, at the heart of which is the idea that living life requires that we fall into her rhythm rather than devise ways to fight against that

¹¹ In the section entitled “We Antipodes,” Nietzsche claims that both Wagner and Schopenhauer’s accomplishments “negate life” [“*verneinen das Leben*”] (KSA 6, 425).

rhythm" ("Nietzsche's Musical *Askesis*" 38). To truly live, and work toward a vibrant and forward-looking future, requires that humanity continually and eternally *dance* with the dissonant *music* that underpins life. Music is a masterly, guiding force of life and existence.

However, Nietzsche wanted to do more than simply create a text that reflects its deference to music and musical dissonance, and a text that portrays a music "with a future": Nietzsche wanted to compose texts that could actually create a future. Although Wagner was certainly the most influential musical figure in his life, he was not the only one. As I discuss in Chapter Two (158), Bizet figured as a prominent influence in Nietzsche's writings of the 1880s. However, it was Beethoven, who preceded both Wagner and Bizet, and signaled to Nietzsche—as well as Schoenberg, Mann, and Adorno—that a period of decadence had come to Europe. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes Beethoven's music as "the final chord of transition in style, a style break, and not, like Mozart, the last chord of a centuries-old great European taste" (BWN 370).¹² Beethoven represents a transition, a modulation, away from a grand, classical period of music, which provided composers with a rich and vast library of forms, styles, and techniques. In the German text, the word Nietzsche uses to describe "transition" is *Übergang*, which can also mean bridge or passageway that leads *over* something—an image that pervades *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, a book that attempts to describe a type of man who lives to constantly "overcome" himself and his system of valuation by creating ever more bridges to new valuations. Nietzsche further claims that "Beethoven is the interlude of a mellow old soul that constantly breaks and an over-young future soul that constantly *comes*; on his music lies that twilight of eternal losing and eternal extravagant hoping" (BWN 370).¹³ Again, Nietzsche describes

¹² [...] der Ausklang eines Stil-Übergangs und Stil-Bruchs war und *nicht*, wie Mozart, der Ausklang eines grossen Jahrhunderte langen europäischen Geschmacks. (KSA 5, 187)

¹³ Beethoven ist das Zwischen-Begebniss einer alten mürben Seele, die beständig zerbricht, und einer zukünftigen überjungen Seele, welche beständig *kommt*; auf seine Musik liegt jenes Zwielficht von ewigen Verlieren und ewigen ausschweifendem Hoffen [...]. (KSA 5, 187)

Beethoven as representative of a state of transition. The word that Kaufmann translates as “interlude”—*Zwischen-Begebniss*—has a much more dynamic sense in the original German, and can be literally translated as an “in between–occurrence.” Clearly, Beethoven represents a bridge to something—but to what?

Unfortunately, Nietzsche describes music *after* Beethoven—specifically *German* music—as a decent into “fatherlandishness” [*“Vaterländerei”*] a phenomenon that blossomed through Schumann and peaked in Wagner (KSA 5, 188). If it can be said that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* represents a symphony, then it is definitely one that attempts to overcome the fatherlandishness that Nietzsche perceived in German music. Doing so would involve more than simply infusing it with the delightful Southern moods that he relished in Bizet’s music; it would involve moving beyond the “twilight of eternal losing and eternal extravagant hoping” that Nietzsche identifies in Beethoven’s works—that is, portraying a type of music that can *create a future*—one that is beyond fatherlandishness. Fatherlandishness and the subjugation of music to “poses” and “effect” represents the recycling of old values and forms, and therefore the inability to venture past the twilight into which Beethoven’s music ventured and remained. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* attempts to achieve this by describing, but also portraying, the “revaluation of all values.”

There is nothing in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that is as totalistic and coercive as the system described in Schoenberg’s essays. Zarathustra’s redemption and musical *askêsis* is not a system of coercion. It derives entirely from one’s ability and *impetus* to cultivate one’s will to power. Zarathustra *wants* to engage in the revaluation of all values, and he hopes that others will *want* to do it as well. Thus, when I say that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is more “musical” than Schoenberg’s essays on the twelve-tone method, I underscore Nietzsche’s hopes that his readers will “hear” the musical dissonance that constitutes the “foundations of all existence,” and feel inspired to participate in a philosophical revolution because of what they *heard* and not because they feel coerced to do so.

In the Introduction, I describe Arnold Schoenberg's conviction that it is necessary to establish a dictatorship of musical dissonance among composers who are interested in atonality. I maintain that this represents a stark contrast to Nietzsche's approach. Schoenberg's discussion implies that it is the responsibility of modern composers to *redeem* musical composition from generations and generations of damage caused by tonally based systems of composition. Although Schoenberg believes that one-day such totalistic measures will not be necessary—as humanity will gradually become accustomed to music without a tonal centre—at the present time, it is necessary to impose strict measures on composers and the ears of the listening public to effect a paradigmatic change on how we compose and appreciate music. The imposition of these restrictions must take place immediately, before things get any worse. Neither Schoenberg nor Nietzsche considers the act of *grafting* dissonance onto consonant structures to be a sufficiently radical option. To merely masquerade consonance as dissonance will not stave off the gradual decay and atrophy of modern civilization. Nietzsche and Schoenberg maintain that is necessary to rebuild our methods of *composition*—musical, philosophical, and otherwise—from the ground up, upon a foundation of musical dissonance.

While Schoenberg's emancipation of dissonance has an autocratic framework, Nietzsche's emancipation of dissonance works through the transfiguring power of metaphor. It is a gradual process and works by *inspiring* the reader. By inspiration, I merely refer to the act of instilling a powerful sense of motivation in the reader that appeals to his or her own inner belief that thinking musically, dissonantly, and unmetaphysically is doing the "right" and "just" thing. In Nietzsche's thinking, "just" and "right" refer to his description of these concepts as dependent upon the dissonance, discord, and dynamism represented in a valuation or metaphor. Adopting a musical, dissonant way of thinking is an arduous and ascetic process, as well as a fundamentally pedagogical process. The reader gradually learns to see the limitations and disadvantages of metaphysical ways of thinking,

and considers alternative methods of valuation that do not rely on otherworldly authorities for constructing meaning.

The beautiful aspect of this process is that pedagogy does not equate to pedantry and didacticism. Nietzsche and his fictional hero, Zarathustra, learn alongside their readers, listeners, and students. Although the tone of Nietzsche's works varies, as do the speeches and lectures of Zarathustra, it is clear that both "prophets" are looking for companions and colleagues—fellow practitioners of the *gai saber*—and not obedient pupils or acolytes. Nietzsche and Zarathustra might have clearer visions of what they seek than their companions, and greater insight on how to attain it, as they are clearly charismatic and powerful leaders. However, they are still students themselves, and subject to making errors, blunders, and becoming despondent. Zarathustra not only wants to teach and challenge; he wants to be challenged and learn from his interaction with other people. He wants to inspire all of his companions to learn to *hear* "unheard-of things," and learn to speak them in new and different ways.

In the aphorism entitled "The Convalescent" [*"Das Genesende"*] in Book Three, Zarathustra bemoans what he perceives to be his failure to teach the philosophy of the "*Übermensch*"—that is, a metaphor-infused, anti-metaphysical philosophy. Zarathustra keeps running into the "small man" [*"der kleine Mensch"*] everywhere he goes. These small men are similar to the people in the marketplace that the "madman" describes in *The Gay Science*. Their inability to move beyond the limits of their metaphysically oriented ways of thinking makes Zarathustra's words seem obscure.

In his travels—through the marketplace, the blessed isles, and on the road—Zarathustra meets many people to whom he lectures, preaches, and discusses his ideas. Zarathustra's attempts to disseminate his philosophy meet with mixed success. He gathers disciples. Although some seem inspired by his speeches, they never rise above the status of disciples; they constitute an entourage that follows him around as if he were a sage or leader of a religious cult. Zarathustra fears that his attempts to teach his companions a new

philosophy will merely reinforce old, metaphysical ideas. Many of his followers will perceive Zarathustra to be yet another prophet who possesses a secret knowledge of a metaphysical universe that transcends the world of the here and now. Zarathustra explains his anxieties to his animal companions. The following passage expresses Zarathustra's sentiments very concisely:

“The great disgust with man—*this* choked me and had crawled into my throat; and what the soothsayer [*Wahrsager*] said: ‘All is the same, nothing is worth while, knowledge chokes.’ A long twilight limped before me, a sadness, weary to death, drunken with death, speaking with a yawning mouth. ‘Eternally recurs the man of whom you are weary, the small man’—thus yawned my sadness and dragged its feet and could not go to sleep. [...] ‘Alas, man recurs eternally! The small man recurs eternally!’ [...]”
(TPN 331)¹⁴

Zarathustra alludes to the Soothsayer [*“Der Wahrsager”*], a character he encounters in Book Two, who maintains a life-denying outlook on the world. The Soothsayer bemoans life as a burden, because it has no intrinsic or transcendental meaning. He declares that humanity has “become too weary even to die” [*“zum Sterben wurden wir schon zu müde”*] (TPN 245; KSA 4, 172). Throughout Book Three, Zarathustra fears that the Soothsayer's words might have some validity. It is not that Zarathustra laments the futility of life because of the lack of a metaphysical truth, but that his desire to inspire humanity to *overcome metaphysics* might be futile, and that his attempts to incite a complete rehabilitation of philosophical thought will merely inspire the “small man” to recur in an infinite number of variations. Certainly, this is a truly terrifying vision of “eternal recurrence,” as it implies that mediocrity will occur eternally; it will always present a potential danger to nobler thinkers, such as Zarathustra.

¹⁴ Der grosse Überdruß am Menschen — *der* würgte mich und war mir in den Schlund gekrochen: und was der Wahrsager wahrsagte: „Alles ist gleich, es lohnt sich Nichts, Wissen würgt.“ / Eine lange Dämmerung hinkte vor mir her, eine todesmüde, todestrunkene Traurigkeit, welche mit gähnendem Munde redete. / „Ewig kehrt er wieder, der Mensch, dess du müde bist, der kleine Mensch“ — so gähnte meine Traurigkeit und schleppte den Fuss und konnte nicht einschlafen. (KSA 4, 274)

Zarathustra's animals, however, refuse to accept his despondency and decide to sing him a song:

"O Zarathustra," the animals said, "to those who think as we do, all things themselves are dancing: they come and offer their hands and laugh and flee—and come back. Everything goes, everything comes back; eternally rolls the wheel of being. Everything dies, everything blossoms again; eternally runs the year of being. Everything breaks, everything is joined anew; eternally the same house of being is built. Everything parts, everything greets every other thing again; eternally the ring of being remains faithful to itself. In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. *The centre is everywhere.* [emphasis mine] Being is the path of eternity. (BWN 329-330)¹⁵

At first glance, this passage might seem to be a cruel joke. Are the animals trying to suggest that Zarathustra merely accept the "eternal recurrence" of the mediocre? Should Zarathustra *embrace* and claim *stewardship* over this continual process, as Camus' Sisyphus learns to find joy in his eternal punishment of pushing a rock up a hill, only to watch it roll back down and repeat the process eternally? The answer to these questions is a definitive "no."

The key to understanding the animals' song is found in the first lines, in which they suggest that all things are dancing and laughing *in their own right*, and the last lines, in which they resolutely claim that the "centre" or middle [*die Mitte*] is "everywhere." The lines that appear in between these two phrases describe a dreadful, unbearable, and monotonous process that one could only hope to escape at best, or at the very least resign oneself to accept. However, the animals make it quite clear that the "house of being"—that is, the sensual universe in which we live—is anything but monotonous and predictable. On the contrary, the "house of being" is an *unpredictable*, dynamic, and irregular *process*, in

¹⁵ — „Oh Zarathustra, sagten darauf die Thiere, Solchen, die denken wie wir, tanzen alle Dinge selber: das kommt und reicht sich die Hand und lacht und flieht — und kommt zurück./ Alles geht, Alles kommt zurück; ewig rollt das Rad des Seins. Alles stirbt, Alles blüht wieder auf, ewig läuft das Jahr des Seins./ Alles bricht, Alles wird neu gefügt; ewig baut sich das gleiche Haus des Seins. Alles scheidet, Alles grüßt sich wieder; ewig bleibt sich treu der Ring des Seins./ In jedem Nu beginnt das Sein; um jedes Hier rollt sich die Kugel Dort. Die Mitte ist überall. Krumm ist der Pfad der Ewigkeit.“ — (KSA 4, 272-273)

which the central authority for deriving meaning—literally *the* centre or middle [*Mitte*—exists *everywhere*.

A universe in which the “centre is everywhere” is not merely a “decentred” universe, as this would imply a worldview that merely *subverts* the concept of a centre. This does not represent an appropriate or contextual interpretation of the phrase “the centre is everywhere.” The song of the animals suggests that everything simultaneously shares the *responsibility of being* the centre. The animals’ declaration that “the centre is everywhere” suggests a provocative and dissonant “ontology” (a theory of how we understand “being”) as well as a dissonant “epistemology.” As the animals point out, “everything” is dancing and vibrating on its own. As everything *shares the responsibility* of being the “centre,” everything shares the responsibility of maintaining the emancipatory power of musical dissonance. This accords with Nietzsche’s claim that the universe represents a plurality, but also a distinctly *unitary* complex of force in which *the centre is everywhere*. The universe represents a monstrous quantum of life that is constantly dancing, transforming, and overcoming itself.

Dialogism in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

The dynamics of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*’s internal dialogism function in a way that parallels the dialectical relationship between Apollonian and Dionysian forces in Attic tragedy. In the same way that the “Apollonian” is forced to speak the language of the Dionysian at the end of a great Hellenic tragedy—“the Apollonian drama itself [...] begins to speak with Dionysian wisdom”—it is the dynamic and transfiguring force of dialogism inherent to any great text, that shatters its superficially monologic. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* provokes dissonance by offering the reader what superficially appears to be a conventional, poetic, and monologic text. However, the internal dissonances of the text’s familiar metaphors eventually “break through” and reveal their truly dialogic natures.

Bakhtin valorizes the genre of the novel because it draws attention to the transformative power of centrifugal forces at work within the discursive structure of the text. Novelistic discourse draws attention to the disharmony and dissonance between the many discourses portrayed in a text. Likewise, Bakhtin associates dialogic texts with “heteroglossia,” a term he uses to depict the many, disharmonious forms of discourse that constitute a literary text. Bakhtin harshly criticizes poetry for promoting the use of unified, “monologic” language: “The language of the poetic genre is a unitary and singular Ptolemaic world” (“Discourse” 287). Similar to Nietzsche’s contention that the Apollonian inevitably yields to the Dionysian effect, Bakhtin maintains that a careful analysis of even the most monologic text—such as a highly structured poem—will reveal internal dialogism: “Even the poetic word (in the narrow sense) must break through to its object [...]; it also encounters heteroglot language” (331).

According to Bakhtin, skilled novelists have the ability to use the disharmony between the centripetal and centrifugal forces of language to their advantage. Bakhtin cites the work of Leo Tolstoy, whom he claims attempts to “*stun and destroy* the apperceptive background of the reader’s understanding [emphasis mine]” by juxtaposing familiar centripetal literary structures with unfamiliar and radical centrifugal structures (283). That is, Bakhtin contends that Tolstoy juxtaposes monologic structures with dialogic structures, exposing the internal contradictions of established and timeworn conventions, discourses, and modalities of thought. This description also accurately represents the internal processes of Nietzsche’s *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Unlike *The Gay Science*, whose narrative and stylistic structures outwardly display dissonance and centrifugality, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* outwardly displays many centripetal qualities. Zarathustra presents what at first might seem to be a conventional, familiar, and stable structure. The text contains a clear, overarching narrative. *Zarathustra* is about a hermit philosopher who leaves his solitude to travel throughout the world and teach the philosophy of the *Übermensch*. Although the *plot* contains many compelling ideas, beautiful

passages, and engaging narratives, it presents a wide variety of tropes, themes, and literary devices that will undoubtedly be familiar to readers in many cultures. While many readers find the text to be inspiring and engaging, at first sight, others find it to be deeply disappointing, as the obvious parody and resemblance of it to familiar and often anachronistic texts and can serve to irritate rather than to inspire and to provoke. Unlike *The Gay Science*, which confronts the reader with unfamiliar styles and discontinuities on the first page, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* starts by presenting the reader with many all-too-familiar literary structures, formulas, and tropes.

Zarathustra coaxes and tempts its readers to fall back upon their knowledge of conventional forms, symbols, and tropes. To draw upon the language of Bakhtin, the narrative structure of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* depicts “the unfolding of social heteroglossia surrounding the object; the Tower-of-Babel mixing of languages that goes around any object” (278). In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the edifice of imagery derived from canonical religious, philosophical, and epic texts constitute the Tower-of-Babel in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The many parodies and ironies contained within its highly complex, musical layers constitute the “unfolding of social heteroglossia.” Underneath the veil of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*’s conventional literary structures are unfamiliar, new, and radical concepts such as the *Übermensch*, eternal recurrence, self-overcoming, the will to power, and of course, “redemption.”

Thus Spoke Zarathustra presents vibrant and dissonant centrifugal structures within superficially centripetal structures. That is, the unfamiliar, radical, and transformative discursive structures rehabilitate and transform the anachronistic ones from within. We recognize familiar concepts juxtaposed with unfamiliar concepts. The irreconcilable nature of the contradictions provokes us to think about familiar concepts in new ways. The process is violent, diremptive, and transfiguring. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is defined by the conflict and dissonance between centripetal and centrifugal forces in many aspects of the text, including structure, imagery, and metaphors. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* reveals how

burdensome, metaphysically laden concepts such as redemption can be revalued into life-affirming and powerful concepts that are dissonant and dynamic.

Higgins' critique of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* relies upon a similar premise. Although Higgins does not cite Bakhtin or describe the interplay of centrifugal and centripetal forces, she maintains that the text's literary structures serve Nietzsche's philosophical program through *parody* and *irony*. She actually describes the text's parodic and ironic qualities as indicative of its internal dissonance. Referring to Nietzsche's portrayal of biblical tropes, Higgins claims that the

[...] dissonance between Nietzsche's antitraditional, individualistic message and the style of its harbinger seems ironic—and perhaps the irony is at Nietzsche's expense, at least in *Zarathustra*, Part I. He does seem to present Zarathustra as a serious preacher who has the answers in hand. But although Nietzsche may at this stage be somewhat taken in by his prophet [...] he himself is aware of the irony of his prophet's stance. He concludes Part I with the section already cited as the first major clue that Zarathustra has a second thought about what he is doing. In a farewell speech [...] Zarathustra repudiates his stance as an authority figure. [...] Nietzsche *intended* his reader to recognize that Zarathustra is not to be heard as an authority figure on the model of a traditional religious leader. (132-133)

Higgins argues that the text anticipates and depends upon the reader's confused response to reevaluate the concept of "prophet" or "preacher." The text assumes that the reader will approach the book with presumptions about the text and its tropes. It employs a process of *estrangement* to provoke the reader's ability to think critically and creatively about them. Here I refer to the "alienation effect" [*die Verfremdungseffekt*] of Brecht's Epic Theater, in which dramatic literature and performances are designed to present the familiar in unfamiliar contexts—to literally "estrangle" the readers and viewers from the familiar—and provoke them to think critically. In the case of Nietzsche's texts, we might say the text's alienating qualities provoke readers to think "revaluatively."¹⁶

Thus Spoke Zarathustra features an omniscient narrator who provides blow-by-blow commentary of Zarathustra's actions. In a style that seems to invoke nearly every major

¹⁶ See Brecht's "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting" in *Brecht on Theater: The Development of an Aesthetic* for the dramatist's own description of the "alienation effect" (91-99).

monotheistic text, the narrator maintains a commanding, often overwhelming presence throughout. The narrative evokes a wide variety of important epic texts such as Homer's *Odyssey*. While the reader of *The Gay Science* might find herself grappling for stable ground from which to make sense of the text's meaning and narrative, the reader of *Zarathustra* is stuck with a consistent and ever-present narrator. This narrator refuses to allow the reader's thoughts to drift.

The effect of the rock-steady tone of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s narrator is compounded by the sermonizing tone of the protagonist. Zarathustra's constant lecturing to himself and his companions endows the text with a constant ostinato—that is, a repetitive, regular rhythm. It is best reflected in the opening lines of the text, which bring to mind the opening lines of many epic and religious texts that introduce a prophet-like figure: “When Zarathustra was thirty years old he left his home and the lake of this home and went into the mountains. Here he enjoyed his spirit and solitude, and for ten years did not tire of it” (TPN 121).¹⁷ The voice of the narrator frames the vast majority of the text's aphorisms. This tempo sharply contrasts with the constantly fluctuating rhythm of *The Gay Science*. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* projects the image of a monologic text (albeit only superficially), while *The Gay Science* projects a blatantly dialogic structure.

Whereas *The Gay Science*'s centripetal structure resists and discourages the reader's attempts to generate meaning and closure, *Zarathustra* presents a very *tempting* opportunity to do so. Although *Zarathustra* is far from a hermetically sealed, monologic text, it presents a wide variety of familiar tropes that might seduce even the most educated reader into making associations with well-known, arcane and even anachronistic texts.

The narrative of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* might have one or two effects on the reader. The reader who is motivated and intelligent enough to perceive the text's internal

¹⁷ Als Zarathustra dreissig Jahr alt war, verliess er seine Heimat und den See seiner Heimat und gieng in das Gebirge. Hier genoss er seines Geistes und seiner Einsamkeit und wurde dessen zehn Jahre müde. (KSA 4, 11)

dialogism—its ironies, parodies, and dissonances—will be able to join Nietzsche’s privileged readership and perhaps act upon the text’s provocative message. Alternatively, other readers might never get beyond the text’s superficial monologism. This is entirely consistent with Nietzsche’s attitude toward his reader. As Nietzsche states in the 1886 introduction to *The Birth of Tragedy*, he seeks to “exclude right from the beginning the *profanum vulgus* of the ‘educated’ even more than ‘the mass’ or ‘folk’” [“*das profanum vulgus der ‘gebildeten’ von vornherein noch mehr als gegen das ‘Volk’ abschliesst*”] and wants to “attract ‘fellow-rhapsodizers’ to travel to ‘new secret paths and dancing places’” [“*sich seine Mitschwärmer zu suchen und sie auf neue Schleichwege und Tanzplätze zu locken*”] (BWN 3, 19; KSA 1, 14). Although Nietzsche refers to *The Birth of Tragedy* in this passage, no passage better encapsulates Nietzsche’s attitude toward his readers in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo*. That is, Nietzsche assumes that his reader might very well have the intelligence to understand it. He hopes to *tempt* them to consider the philosophical message of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He does not want followers; he wants fellow *musical* philosophers.

Higgins’ analysis acknowledges that readers of different eras will receive and interpret the text differently. She claims that “the high biblical prose-style of Zarathustra’s sermons can be grating” to modern readers, but might have been far more solemn to nineteenth century readers (131-132). However, these nuances do not alter the text’s thought-provoking, and essentially radical nature; a dissonance of one sort or another will always be present in it. Even though this dissonance might seem grating—if not humorous—to some modern readers, it is important that the reader meditate upon the irony inherent in Zarathustra’s preacher-like personality. The reader needs to see the dissonance between the preacher of a metaphysical philosophy and a preacher of this-worldly philosophy. In this way, the reader will reevaluate and rehabilitate the concept of a preacher. Instead of thinking of a preacher as someone who encourages pietism and redemption with respect to a metaphysical philosophy, the reader will see that it is possible for someone to sermonize about a sensual, musical philosophy. This strategy exemplifies

how the internal dialogism of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* functions. It juxtaposes contradictory and sometimes even irreconcilable imagery in order to provoke the reader to reevaluate a key concept. Examples include the text's depiction of Zarathustra as a prophet, and the concepts of "redemption," "value," and "human being." The depiction of these concepts sharply contrasts with conventional understandings of them.

However insightful and original, Higgins does not demonstrate the significance of musical dissonance as the "tonal foundation" of the text. However, Bakhtin's polyphonic and dynamic theory of centripetal and centrifugal forces in discourse provides us with the means to make this connection. Bakhtin's discourse analysis provides us with a tool to understand the manner in which Nietzsche's "parody" and "irony"—as Higgins puts it—functions to "revaluate all values." Each concept represents an "object of social heteroglossia," as Bakhtin describes it. The concepts of "redemption," "messiah," "truth," and the many others that are "parodied" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, represent signifiers whose semiotic content, that is the many layers of constantly shifting and transposing metaphors, are constantly being challenged, eroded, mutated, and augmented by the centripetal and centrifugal discursive forces surrounding the concept.

Unfortunately, however, there is another side to the reception history of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*: a great deal of the text's readers have not engaged its dialogism in the revolutionary or parodic way that I have described. This is true for both the amateur and scholarly readership of the book. As I discuss above, the text offers the reader many tempting moments to find closure in the book and see past the text's dialogism, parody and irony. The reader might not feel "estranged" from the deceptively familiar tropes of the text. They might merely perceive the text as an elaborated rehash of all-too-familiar ideas.

The fact that many people might not understand the dialogism in Nietzsche's texts is something that Nietzsche probably took into careful consideration. Nietzsche introduces many powerful and potentially dangerous concepts in his books in ways that many commentators might consider wildly irresponsible. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Nietzsche

appears to believe that this is a necessary part of his revolutionary project. In *Ecce Homo*, he claims that he is “dynamite” and that his legacy will be the catalyst of “upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes” and a “moving of mountains and valleys, the like of which has never been dreamed” (BWN 783).¹⁸ These effects represent the extraordinarily unstable dissonance that his texts produce. For example, Nietzsche’s provocative portrayal of “redemption” as a completely this-worldly concept stands in sharp contrast with conventional understandings of redemption that defer to an otherworldly authority of meaning. The relationship between them is extraordinarily dissonant, and has the potential to destabilize the reader’s worldview.

These dissonant relationships do not merely portray the dissonance between two or three contradictory perspectives; they portray a complex plurality of contradictions. Additionally, the wide range of responses that Nietzsche’s texts elicit imposes an order and rank among his readers. Some readers might either agree or disagree with Nietzsche’s ideas, but not feel challenged to enter into an active debate with them, others might find them worthy of academic research, while some might actually step forward and enthusiastically engage with them.

There is abundant evidence to demonstrate that the majority of Nietzsche’s readers—both inside and outside of academia—have not seen the irony in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Steven Aschheim’s canonical study of Nietzsche reception in Germany draws attention to many examples of readers from religious groups and individuals who believed that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* should be taken at face value. Among the more ironic examples of this is the reception of Nietzsche’s ideas by some Zionists in Germany. According to Aschheim, a rabbinical scholar named Isaac Heinemann (1876–1957) “presented the Nietzschean model of the *Übermensch* as normative to Judaism and central to the philosophical-religious systems of Philo, Jehuda Halevi, and Maimonides” (100). Likewise, many Christians have

¹⁸ [Wir werden] Erschütterungen haben, einen Krampf von Erdbeben, eine Versetzung von Berg und Thal, wie dergleichen nie geträumt worden ist. (KSA 6, 366)

never bothered to read between the lines of Zarathustra, and have considered the book to be an affirmation of progressive Christian ideas:

Those who sought a religious Nietzsche could find allusions throughout his work. The very language and style of *Also Sprach Zarathustra* (by consensus one of the great lyrical achievements in the German tongue) breathed the biblical spirit. The religious dimension, of course, far transcended matters of language and style. It informed Nietzsche's entire project. His insistence on the creation of new tablets, his elevation of Dionysian divinity in direct juxtaposition to (and at the end, in combination with) the crucified, his doctrine of eternal recurrence, and his vision of the Übermensch as an earthly inheritor of the old God, all encouraged Nietzschean religious constructions. (203)

Aschheim's commentary accurately describes how many readers have read—and continue to read—*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, namely, as a “modern” presentation of established and conventional ideas that can easily be molded to fit one of any number of religions.

Unfortunately, those who have misinterpreted Nietzsche's works have included fascist ideologues, who have appropriated Nietzsche's ideas to support totalitarian regimes.

Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche—Nietzsche's sister—inspired the belligerent, fascist ideologies of Adolf Hitler, Mussolini and their followers (see Aschheim, especially pages 232-270).

The translation history of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is riddled with just as many ironies. The first complete translation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* into English in 1909, by Thomas Common, renders Nietzsche's poetry into the language of the King James Bible, and peppers the text with archaisms and clichés at every opportunity, even when the original German is written in clear, lucid, modern German. The influence of Thomas Common's translation extended as far as Japan. Ikuta Chôkô, the translator of the first Japanese edition of Nietzsche of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* published in 1911, frequently referred to Common's translation when he found Nietzsche's German too difficult, and produced a Japanese text that is far more Buddhist than it is Nietzschean.¹⁹ In this remarkable translation, Ikuta

¹⁹ See Sano Haruo's article “Ikuta Chôkô to ‘Tsaratousutoa’ tekisuto” [“生田長江と‘ツアラトウストア’ テキスト”; “Ikuta Chôkô and the Text of *Zarathustra*”] for a discussion of Ikuta Chôkô's struggle with Nietzsche's German.

Chôkô actually employs Buddhist terminology to render some of Nietzsche's concepts into Japanese.

"Tablet-Smashing" and the Rehabilitation of Writing

The most concrete example of how Nietzsche attempts to "*stun and destroy* the apperceptive background" of the reader's familiar world in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is in a section entitled "On the Old and New Tablets" [*"Von alten und neuen Tafeln"*] in Book Three. The scene begins with a description of Zarathustra sitting amidst a sea of smashed "tablets":

Here I sit and wait, surrounded by broken tablets and new tablets half covered with writing. When will my hour come? The hour of my going down and going under; for I want to go among men once more. For that I am waiting now, for first the signs must come to me that *my* hour has come: the laughing lion with the flock of doves. Meanwhile I talk to myself as one who has time. Nobody tells me anything new: so I tell myself. (TPN 308)²⁰

These "tablets" are symbolic representations of all the values that constitute human civilization, as well as the institutions, narratives, and physical objects that derive from them. The most powerful literary image that comes to mind is the tablets of Moses in the Old Testament. God inscribes the Ten Commandments on tablets that contain the basic laws and "values" by which God wants the Jewish people to live. God gives them to Moses who presents them to the Jews. The tablets that surround Zarathustra, however, consist of both "broken," non-functioning tablets that represent anachronistic values, as well as "half-written" tablets that are in the process of being inscribed. At first, Zarathustra is not sure what to make of all the tablets. He seems to be in one of his despondent moods, as depicted earlier in the text, in the section entitled "On Redemption."

If the reader assumes that the half-written tablets are destined to eventual completion, then the text does not truly depict the "revaluation" of all values as a continual

²⁰ Hier sitze ich und warte, alte zerbrochene Tafeln um mich und auch neue halb beschriebene Tafeln. Wann kommt meine Stunde? / — die Stunde meines Niederganges, Unterganges: denn noch Ein Mal will ich zu den Menschen gehn. / Dess warte ich nun: denn erst müssen mir die Zeichen kommen, dass es *meine* Stunde sei, — nämlich der lachende Löwe mit dem Taubenschwärme. / Inzwischen rede ich als Einer, der Zeit hat, zu mir selber. Niemand erzählt mir Neues: so erzähle ich mir mich selber. — (KSA 4, 246)

process; on the contrary, the text would merely depict a single revaluation, or perhaps a *finite* amount of revaluations. However, if the “half-written” state of the tablets represents the greatest possible level of completion in a truly revaluative system of valuation, then the metaphysical underpinning of the concept of “value” has been supplanted with a foundation of musical dissonance. The source of the musical dissonance is the vibrant metaphors that Nietzsche employs to reinfuse language with its primal nature, as I discuss above. In a musical, dissonant philosophy, “values” represent something that can never be congealed into something rigid like Moses’ tablets. Their strength derives from their level of internal dialogism, dissonance and dynamism. They are *always* being written and rewritten.

In a musical, dissonant philosophy, values still function as foundational building blocks of philosophy and govern how people live their day-to-day lives. Although dissonant values are constantly subject to fluctuation, transformation, and augmentation, they continue to serve as the conceptual framework by which human society is organized. Thus, half-written values have the properties that Nietzsche ascribes to *truth* in his 1873 essay “On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense” in which he describes truth as a “mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms.” However, half-written tablets are never subject to the process of stratification that can happen in metaphysical philosophies. They never appear “to be firm, canonical, and obligatory” and are always in a state of constant “transposition” and transformation (translations mine, KSA 1, 880). Each value represents a dynamic complex of force that interacts with a potentially unlimited number of other complexes of force. Therefore, laws, ethics, and institutions will be dissonant as well, because they will be based upon a foundation of musical, dissonant values. The half-written tablets are hard, but they are not unbreakable. In fact, they *should be broken*, and violently so.

Throughout “On Old and New Tablets,” Zarathustra describes the creation of “new tablets.” He claims that some of these “new tablets” are positioned *over* humanity. For example, in the twelfth aphorism, Zarathustra declares: “In your children you shall make up

for being the children of your fathers: thus shall you redeem all that is part. This new tablet I place over you" (TPN 316).²¹ Zarathustra suggests that placing this tablet over humanity will help foster the development of a "new nobility," by encouraging readers and writers to imagine a new land. Their children will inhabit this land after humanity has begun to *redeem* itself with respect to a this-worldly philosophy. They are noble, because they respect and cherish life-affirming, *this-worldly* values instead of decadent, *otherworldly* values. The act of suspending something *hard*, powerful, and influential over humanity is a striking image in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. While the description of seemingly rigid and authoritative "tablets" being held above the heads of human beings conjures Hollywood imagery of Moses holding stone tablets of values over the heads of the Israeli people, the effect is quite different. The "hardness" and rigidity of the Mosaic tablets represents the immutability of the values that they represent, but the jagged, disruptive hardness of Zarathustra's tablets emphasizes that all values are subject to the creative, yet destructive processes that define the universe. Thus, the hardness of tablets represents their sharp edges and capacity to cause destruction when they collide and interact with each other.

Bridges of Dissonance

In the eighth aphorism of "On Old and New Tablets," Zarathustra uses the metaphor of the "bridge" to elucidate his discussion of tablets. He compares bridges to values, as both words conjure the image of something strong and hard that is suspended *over* other objects. Additionally, both concepts imply connections. Bridges connect things and go over things. However, the same is true for values, which we know represent a form of metaphor for Nietzsche—just like any form of "truth." In Nietzsche's writings, the word metaphor implies constant movement and transformation. Yet, many scholars note that for Nietzsche, metaphor specifically conveys a sense of bridging and "carrying over," as

²¹ An euren Kindern sollt ihr *gut machen*, dass ihr eurer Väter Kinder seid: alles Vergangene sollt ihr *so* erlösen! Diese neue Tafel stelle ich über euch! (KSA 4, 255)

indicating by Nietzsche's use of the word *Übertragung* to describe metaphor. *Übertragung* means "transference" and "conveyance" in English. In a chapter entitled "Nietzsche's Metaphor for Metaphor" in his book *Nietzsche, Metaphor, Religion* (2001), Tim Murphy asserts: "Nietzsche radicalizes the notion of metaphor to encompass nearly all human culture and cognition" (22). Referring to the scholarship of Daniel Breazeale, Murphy further claims "metaphor designates the process of moving something from one sphere to another, though often in a highly figurative sense" (22). Thus, for Nietzsche, metaphors represent dynamic *media* that constantly transform meaning. This hypothesis is evidenced by Nietzsche's description of metaphors as vessels upon which readers can ride to new truths (see above, pages 213-214).

In the following passage, Nietzsche provokes his reader to reevaluate the concept of "bridge" in conjunction with the concept of "value." He asserts that bridges actually represent objects that are in motion and that they do not *connect* objects; rather, they represent conduits for transference. In actuality, there is no difference between a bridge and a river. Yet, Zarathustra's listeners have a hard time accepting this notion:

When the water is spanned by planks, when bridges and railings leap over the river, verily, those are not believed who say, "Everything is in flux." Even the blockheads contradict them. "How now?" say the blockheads. "Everything should be in flux? After all, planks and railings are *over* [über] the river. Whatever is *over* the river is firm; all the values of things, the bridges, the concepts, all "good" and "evil"—all that is *firm*? (TPN 313)²²

Zarathustra insists that bridges *leap* [*springen*], which describes them more like dancers than solid, rigid tools. Whereas Zarathustra suggests that *everything* is in flux, including the bridges that span turbulent bodies of water, the "blockheads" believe that bridges represent the exact opposite of something that is in flux: a solid and dependable medium for moving people and things over a body of water. For the blockheads, the river represents everything

²² Wenn das Wasser Balken hat, wenn Stege und Geländer über den Fluss springen: wahrlich, da findet Keiner Glauben, der da spricht: „Alles ist im Fluss.“/Sondern selber die Tölpel widersprechen ihm. „Wie? sagen die Tölpel, Alles wäre im Flusse? Balken und Geländer sind doch *über* dem Flusse!“/ „Über dem Flusse ist Alles fest, alle die Werthe der Dinge, die Brücken, Begriffe, alles „Gut“ und „Böse“: das ist Alles *fest*!“ — (KSA 4, 252)

in the sensual world that is imperfect, transient, and in motion, while the bridges serve as a symbol of intransigent, immutable, and *metaphysical* values. They believe that bridges are good because they help people to overcome that which is disruptive and in motion.

However, Zarathustra mocks those that believe that a bridge is a metaphor for the table of values that indicates what is “good” and “bad” from a metaphysical or scientific standpoint.

The word that Nietzsche uses to express the concept “flux” in German is homophonous and orthographically identical to the word river. The word is *Fluss*. The statement that “everything is in flux”—“*Alles wäre im Flusse*”—also means “everything is in the river.” There is nothing that is not part of the river. Not only is the water in “flux”—the bridges are in flux as well. From a conventional perspective, however, the water in a river represents a state of matter that appears more Protean, mercurial, and dissonant, than the objects that surround it, such as the riverbed, the bridges, and riverbanks. By contrast, bridges appear to be constructed from durable and impervious materials. The liquid water, and the buoyant sediment that flows within it, is composed of invisible and free-floating atoms, and fragmentary and inchoate sediment that observers would consider to be in constant “flux” and transformation. The identity of each individual piece of debris or free-floating atom is overshadowed by its identity as part of the “river” (or “flux,” depending on how you interpret the word) [*Fluss*]. However, to those who derive value from a metaphysical authority of meaning, bridges only represent matter in a solid and rigid state.

From a metaphysical perspective, the perceived hardness and durability of the bridges form a metaphor to illustrate the relationship between a metaphysical world and the sensual world. According to Zarathustra, humanity’s tendency to interpret the structures that transcend things as fixed and permanent, has encouraged it to believe that the world of life and motion rests upon a foundation of something that is solid and immutable:

But when the hard winter comes, the river-animal tamer, then even the most quick-witted learn mistrust; and verily, not only the blockheads then say,
“Does not everything *stand still*?” [*Sollte nicht Alles—stille stehn?*]
“At bottom everything stands still” [*Im Grunde steht Alles stille*!—that

is truly a winter doctrine, a very good thing for sterile times, a fine comfort for hibernators and hearth-squatters. (TPN 313)²³

The “hibernators” and “hearth-squatters” [*“Winterschläfer und Ofenhocker”*]*—those who believe that the universe is literally encased by “hardness”— consider winter to be a more natural state than the warmer seasons; warmer seasons are merely a departure from the natural state of winter. That is, for the “blockheads,” dynamism and motion represent aberrations and imperfections, while stability and immutability represent the “true” state of the universe.*

In “On Old and New Tablets,” Zarathustra effects a reversal of this critical error in Western epistemology. Zarathustra depicts the immutable, solid, and static edifice that supports Western metaphysics—represented in this passage by the metaphor of the bridges—as a fiction that has long since outlived its usefulness and is ready to collapse through a process of dissonance and diremption. From this collapse, an even more powerful system of bridges emerges. When Zarathustra proclaims “Woe to us! Hail to us! The thawing wind blows! —thus preach in every street, my brothers” [*“Wehe uns! Heil uns! Der Thauwind weht!” — Also predigt mir, oh meine Brüder, durch alle Gassen!”*], he urges his listeners to reimagine all bridges as dynamic structures that are constantly in a state of motion and transformation (TPN 313; KSA 4, 252).

The most important bridge that Zarathustra describes is without doubt “man” himself. In “Zarathustra’s Prologue,” the protagonist descends into a town called “The Motley Cow” and makes speeches to the citizens of the town in which he attempts to explain the concept of the *Übermensch*. In a key passage, Zarathustra describes “man” [*der Mensch*] as a “rope,” which in this particular context serves as a metaphor for a bridge:

²³ „Kommt gar der harte Winter, der Fluss-Thierbändiger: dann lernen auch die Witzigsten Misstrauen; und, wahrlich, nicht nur die Tölpel sprechen dann: „Sollte nicht Alles — *stille stehen?*“ / “Im Grunde steht Alles stille” —, das ist eine rechte Winter-Lehre, ein gut Ding für unfruchtbare Zeit, ein guter Trost für Winterschläfer und Ofenhocker. (KSA 4, 252)

Man is a rope, tied between beast and overman—a rope over an abyss. A dangerous across, a dangerous on-the-way, a dangerous looking-back, a dangerous shuddering and stopping. (TPN 126)²⁴

If man is truly defined by his existence as a tension and a dissonance—a complex of constantly transforming force—then he cannot have a definable and tangible end or beginning. That is, he exists with respect to the same rules that Nietzsche ascribes to the “monster of energy” at the end of *The Will to Power*. Man cannot grow bigger or smaller, yet he has no definable beginning or end, contains no empty spaces, and consists of a “flood” of “contradictory forces” (WP 550; KSA 11, 610-611[38:12]; see Introduction pages 24-30). Therefore, the bridge that is “man” constantly interacts with those things and phenomena that connect to it. According to Benjamin Bennett, the *Übermensch* exists somewhere beyond a dynamic and constantly transforming bridge. Therefore, there is no specific road to the *Übermensch*, as the *Übermensch* does not exist in a definable location:

The *Übermensch* is located Elsewhere, at the far end of a bridge; but it is a bridge that, for our purposes, has no end, no beginning, no approach, a bridge that takes shape not in our knowledge or belief or desire but in our mere existence, a bridge (or tightrope) that we *are*. (295)

Bennett claims that the *Übermensch* takes shape “in our mere existence.” This statement implies that the *Übermensch*’s existence is entirely contingent upon “man’s” existence as specific type of being. Human existence, as defined by its tension and dissonance—like a rope, or one of Nietzsche’s dancing bridges—supports Bennett’s statement that there is no clearly defined boundary between “man” and *Übermensch*, as the boundary is comprised of discordant relationships, not an arbitrary line. The *Übermensch* represents yet another “bridge” of tension and dissonance that blossoms forth from the tension that is “man.” When humanity dissonates to such an extraordinary degree that it no longer bridges the “beast” and the *Übermensch* but something entirely different and even unknown, then it is no longer a race of “men, but *Übermenschen*. However, exactly where

²⁴ Der Mensch ist ein Seil, geknüpft zwischen Thier und Übermensch, — ein Seil über sein Abgrunde./ Ein gefährliches Hinüber, ein gefährliches Auf-dem-Wege, ein gefährliches Zurückblicken, ein gefährliches Schaudern und Stehenbleiben. (KSA 4, 16)

the bridge of dissonance represented by the *Übermensch* leads, is difficult to ascertain. If the *Übermensch* represents a tension that is conscious of its existence as tension—as a “becoming-human of dissonance”—then it is possible that it leads back to a reconfiguration of itself as even more dissonance; that is, dissonance that exists for the sake of creating more dissonance.

In Chapter One, I argue that what makes humanity special—different from other animals and living beings—is its *ability* to recognize that it is a manifestation of musical dissonance. However, we know that Nietzsche not only wants humanity to *recognize* this process, but to use this knowledge as the basis for an epistemology. That is, humanity must not only recognize that it represents a “becoming-human of dissonance,” but actually live in accordance with the broad implications of this phrase (see Chapter One, page 74). This phrase represents the basis for a rehabilitated form of *humanism*. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the “rope” represents man as a dissonant being, but one that has not yet “overcome itself.” It has not lived up to its full potential. It represents a being that is more powerful than a “beast” [*Tier*] because it has the ability to contemplate the nature of its own existence. However, it has not yet had the courage, or the willingness, to structure its entire existence in accordance with the musical dissonance that constitutes the “foundations for all existence.” The *Übermensch*, however, is no longer deterred by its self-imposed hesitation. It lives for only one goal, to *be dissonant* and exist dissonantly. Thus, the *Übermensch* exists as *another bridge* of tension that begins with its tension with “man.”

A remarkable characteristic of this powerful image is that the *Übermensch*’s existence will always be contingent with “man’s” existence. The *Übermensch* represents a bridge whose beginning originates with its tension with “man,” in the same way that “man” represents a bridge that originates with its tension with “beast.” “Man” constantly defines himself with respect to the beast from which he sprang, and the *Übermensch* will constantly define himself with respect to man. It is for this reason that the *Übermensch* must continue to overcome himself, redeem himself, and draw upon his reconfigured pietism to ensure that

he remain a representation of “dissonance become man” and not return to the less powerful condition of simply being a “man.”

According to Bennett, the process of becoming an *Übermensch* cannot constitute a goal-oriented project, as it is impossible to construe an end to the process of the dissonance that defines it. The *Übermensch* does not represent a teleological project, but merely the realization of *what one is*: musical dissonance. Once man has reached that state of being, he will have supplanted the metaphysical, otherworldly foundation of philosophy with musical dissonance. Those who have become *Übermenschen* will be fully engaged in a process of constant transformation that has no end or goal except to continue the process itself. This accords with the manner in which Nietzsche describes the “joy” that one feels when one experiences life as the will to power: “this is my *Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying [...] world of the twofold voluptuous delight, my ‘beyond good and evil,’ without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal” (WP 550, see introduction, page 27). Bennett claims that Nietzsche’s thought is “free revolutionary thought” because it is entirely free of goals and purpose. He asserts that we cannot find this anywhere else in the project of modernism, except perhaps in the theater of Antonin Artaud, whose theater Bennett believes represents a “radical rejection of the literary” in favour of performance whose only goal is performance itself (*Revolutionary Theater* 58).

Therefore, “overcoming man”—or modernity for that matter—represents an act that is characterized by *excess*. Cultivating the tension and dissonance that constitutes an inherent part of being human and existing requires the production of an excess and superabundance of energy. The process of overcoming oneself implies fostering one’s tension and internal discord in such a way that more tension is produced and discharged onto itself, as well as into the environment. Benson asserts that cultivating one’s superabundance is an integral part of what he calls “musical *askêsis*”: “Clearly, one must have one’s soul in proper order to be able to control superabundance. The right instincts must be at the helm to keep one from falling into disarray” (187). Thus, the process of

overcoming requires a sense of self-discipline and devotion to *musical dissonance*. This is another example of Nietzsche's "anti-systematic" thinking, which demands that thinkers structure their ideas and philosophical thoughts in a way that avoids falling prey to metaphysical and otherworldly authorities for deriving truth and meaning. In the Prologue, Zarathustra provides his listeners with some remarkable descriptions of how they can achieve this state of superabundance.

In the fourth aphorism of "Zarathustra's Prologue," Zarathustra declares to the people of "The Motley Cow" that he "loves" the person "who works and invents to build a house for the overman and to prepare earth, animal, and plant for him: for thus he wants to go under" (127).²⁵ Zarathustra describes many other types of people he loves. They are courageous people who are willing to allow themselves to "overflow," so much so, that they risk losing their sense of individuality and security, distinguishing characteristics, or even their lives. These people include those who engage in a variety of apparently—or at least potentially—*destructive* behaviours in order to experience the "joy" of "going under" and "crossing bridges" (127-128). Addiction, gambling, sensuous living, and indulging in an excess of "virtue" are all examples of this type of behaviour (127-128). While some of these behaviours hardly represent the "musical *askêsis*" described by Benson, they do not earn Zarathustra's scorn. They represent the type of human being who exhausts the full range of earthly experiences available to them, even if it means their own destruction. All things, whether they are human beings or stars, will eventually exhaust their reserve of energy or be eclipsed by a greater source of power. What matters is not the long-term existence of a human being, but the willingness of a human being to live as musically, dissonantly and powerfully as he or she possibly can.

The man who "builds a house for the overman" and prepares the "earth" for his arrival is no less destructive, as this act of construction requires the same risky and

²⁵ Ich liebe Den, welcher arbeitet und erfindet, dass sei dem Übermenschen das Haus baue und ihm Erde, Thier und Pflanze vorbereite: denn so will er seinen Untergang. (KSA 4, 17)

potentially self-destructive acts of the many impulsive, sensuous individuals that Zarathustra describes in his previous speech. The house of the *Übermensch* is a house constructed using an architecture of musical dissonance. That is, the architecture of the house is constructed like the dancing, fluid, musical bridges that Nietzsche describes in “On Old and New Tablets.” The “house” represents an environment in which every section is dynamic and in motion. However, by nature, musical dissonance is a dangerous process that represents the dynamic and unpredictable nature of the will to power. Thus, the house of the overman is not only musical, but also dangerous and sensual. A man who builds such a house, builds a very powerful and life-affirming house, but also a very dangerous and potentially self-destructive house as well.

Preparing the earth for the *Übermensch* equates to reinfusing the world with musical dissonance and metaphor. By revaluating all values—all things—using an epistemology of musical dissonance, humanity will be immersed in musical dissonance. It will live in a “house” of living metaphors that represents everything around it as vibrant, dancing, and dissonant truths. Therefore, those who live and come of age in such a world will be born into musical dissonance. The world will literally be an inspiration to think dissonantly and to constantly redeem oneself to the fate of the present moment and the sensual world. However, this does not equate to something comforting and joyful in the metaphysical sense of the word. From a metaphysical perspective, such a world is entirely dystopic.

An Epistemology of Superabundance

The aphorism that directly precedes “On Old and New Tablets” is entitled “On the Spirit of Gravity,” and consists of two very important aphorisms that emphasize the burden of centripetal forces in both the physical and conceptual world. The text portrays many representations of “gravity” and “weightlessness.” The most powerful image of a truly weightless entity is the depiction of the sun, which effortlessly orbits the earth throughout the text. It defies the centripetal force of gravity and has great symbolic significance to

Zarathustra. He admires the sun so much that he personifies it, not unlike the manner in which he personifies Solitude, as I describe earlier in this chapter.

The sun is connected to the earth. It is engaged in a constant exchange of force with the earth and its inhabitants. Its motion is contingent upon its relationship to the earth, while the earth and its inhabitants depend upon the sun for energy and light. Although the sun has a permanent and enduring relationship with the earth, its inertial motion across the sky is sufficiently independent that it remains autonomous of its activities and inhabitants. In addition, the sun possesses a superabundance of power, whose source is ostensibly limitless and entirely separate from the earth. Its power actually overflows onto the earth and provides it, and its inhabitants, with energy.

In the Prologue, Zarathustra addresses the Sun as a companion, role model, and teacher (I capitalize the word “sun” in the following passages to emphasize Zarathustra’s personification of it):

[...] and one morning he rose with the dawn, stepped before the sun, and spoke to it thus:

“You great star, what would your happiness be had you not those for whom you shine?

“For ten years you have climbed to my cave: you would have tired of your light and of the journey had it not been for me and my eagle and my serpent.

“But we waited for you every morning, took your overflow from you, and blessed you for it.” (TPN 121)²⁶

In this passage, Zarathustra addresses the Sun as a role model; he wants to be like the Sun. Like the *Übermensch*, whose life and mode of valuation will be defined by his ability to distribute energy and move free of the restrictions of gravity, Zarathustra admires the Sun for its ability to discharge energy and move free from the restrictions of gravity both over and under the world. The adjectives and verbs associated with the movements of the Sun

²⁶ [...] und eines Morgens stand er mit der Morgenröthe auf, trat vor die Sonne hin und sprach zu ihr also: / „Du grosses Gestirn! Was wäre dein Glück, wenn du nicht Die hättest, welchen du leuchtest! / Zehn Jahre kamst du hier herauf zu meiner Höhle: du würdest deines Lichtes und dieses Weges satt geworden sein, ohne mich, meinen Adler und meine Schlange. / Aber wir warteten deiner an jedem Morgen, nahmen dir deinen Überfluss ab und segneten dich dafür. (KSA 4, 11)

are usually suffixed by *über*, a preposition that is traditionally translated as “over.” The Sun’s motions are defined by the constant production and discharge—that is, the *overflow*—of superabundant energy. Zarathustra gains energy and inspiration by receiving and recycling the “over-flow” [*Überfluss*] of its excess power. The Sun not only represents great power, but great confidence as well. It confidently soars to great heights and openly flouts its power and radiance to the surface of the world during the daytime. However, it is also able *go under* [*untergehen*], to the underworld, where it continues to discharge its energy without any loss of power while it is in a realm that is deprived of light, life, and power. Thus, the Sun symbolizes a mode of education to Zarathustra that is characterized by a process of constant motion *über*—that is, above, over, and at a distance—from the world and even itself. Zarathustra models both his philosophy and his pedagogical philosophy on the motion and physical properties of the Sun.

One might object and counter that the actual sun could not represent a model for overcoming because the motions of overcoming are irregular and crooked, while the sun represents a regular, predictable motion. The *Übermensch* is guided by its constant “overcoming,” or perhaps more accurately translated, “overwinding” [*Überwindung*]. In a section entitled “On Self-Overcoming” in the second part of the text, Zarathustra describes the process of “self-overcoming” by erratic, irregular, and dissonant movements [*krummen Wegen*] of self-critique, revaluation, and discharges of power. However, Sun moves in an entirely regular and constant trajectory:

And life itself confided this secret to me: “Behold,” it said, “I am *that which must always overcome itself*. Indeed, you call it a will to procreate or a drive to an end, to something higher, farther, more manifold: all this is one, and one secret.

“Rather would I perish than forswear this; and verily, where there is perishing and a falling of leaves, behold, there life sacrifices itself—for power. That I must be a struggle and a becoming and an end and an opposition to ends—alas, whoever guesses what is my will should also guess on what *crooked* paths it must proceed.” (227)²⁷

²⁷ Und diess Geheimniss redete das Leben selber zu mir. „Siehe, sprach es, ich bin das, *was sich immer selber überwinden muss.* / „Freilich, ihr heisst es Wille zur Zeugung oder Trieb zum

Throughout his works, Nietzsche describes the significance and merits of polytheism and *created* gods. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes how the Hellenic pantheon consists of gods whose personalities and attributes are based on a fundamentally this-worldly epistemology (see Chapter One, pages 92-94). Naturally, the gods have powers that exceed that of human beings; they are able to perform feats that are beyond the scope of human capabilities. Yet, the gods reflect humanity's struggles with the sensual world. Despite their increased strength and abilities, they are bound by human limitations. They even have bodies—albeit seemingly immortal bodies—that allow them to experience the pleasures and suffering of “this world.”

Dionysus represents an unusual exception. As I discuss in Chapter One, Dionysus has a personal relationship with the fundamental, dissonant, and dynamic power of the universe, which Nietzsche calls the “primal unity” [*Ureine*] in his early writings (see especially pages 67-68). Dionysus can directly tap into the power of the most fundamental force in the universe. He models his actions upon it. The primal unity is his teacher. He imitates the fundamental force of the universe—which is inherently indifferent to humanity—as much as his physical and mental abilities allow. Human beings are able to recognize their heritage in the flux and dissonance that constitutes the universe, and guide their actions and development upon them.

Instead of Schopenhauer-inspired descriptions of the primal unity that we see in *The Birth of Tragedy*, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche provides us with the Sun, which fulfills a similar function, and is literally consistent with the structure, narrative, and metaphorical landscape of this fictional text. Like the primal unity, the Sun represents a dissonant force that is constantly overflowing with energy. Although Zarathustra anthropomorphizes it, he

zwecke, zum Höheren, Ferneren, Vielfacheren: aber all diess ist Eins und Ein Geheimniss./ „Lieber noch gehe ich unter, als dass ich diesem Einen absagte; und wahrlich, wo es Untergang giebt und Blätterfallen, siehe, da opfert sich Leben — um Macht! / “Dass ich Kampf sein muss und Werden und Zweck und der Zwecke Widerspruch: ach, wer meinen Willen erräth, erräth wohl auch, auf welchen *krummen* Wegen er gehen muss! (KSA 4, 148)

recognizes that it represents a force that *overflows* indifferently to what absorbs its energy. He admires the Sun and learns from it; but he can certainly not attain the stature of it. Zarathustra desires to become as much like the Sun as possible. Yet, as the Sun is not constrained by the limitations of a human being's physical body or affects, Zarathustra and his fellow human beings *are*. A human being cannot be "perfect" like the sun. This goes for the *Übermensch* as well. Although the *Übermensch* would like to effortlessly "dance over morality, as Nietzsche describes the goal of the *gai saber*, the dance can never be as smooth as the movement of the Sun around the earth, or the dissonant, dynamic process of the primal unity. For the *Übermensch*, the process of constant self-overcoming will involve crooked paths, "twists and turns" and a great deal of effort. *The Übermensch* must constantly engage in the crooked, erratic, yet continual process of self-overcoming, as described in "On Self-Overcoming" in Book Two of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. This also accords with the "crooked" paths described throughout *The Gay Science* (see Chapter Two, especially page 162). Thus, the sun represents an apotheosis of a being that has overcome the symbolic forces of gravity to such a degree that it never has to worry about them.

The Revaluation of the Heavens

In the aphorism entitled "Before Sunrise" ["*Vor Sonnen-Aufgang*"] Nietzsche converses with Heaven [*der Himmel*]. "Heaven" represents yet another deity-like figure in Zarathustra. Yet, unlike the Sun or Solitude, Heaven represents something far more abstract. While the Sun has volume, weight, shape, and moves throughout physical space according to a specific trajectory, Zarathustra describes Heaven as sublime, indescribable, limitless, and virtually transcendent. Yet, despite Heaven's apparent lack of humanity, Zarathustra forges a distinctly personal relationship with it—this relationship is forged through Heaven's respective relationship with the Sun:

That you came to me, beautiful, shrouded in your beauty, that you speak to me silently, revealing your wisdom—oh, how should I not guess all that is shy in your soul! *Before* the sun you came to me, the loneliest of all.

We are friends from the beginning: we share grief and ground and gray dread; we even share the sun. We do not speak to each other because we know too much; we are silent to each other, we smile our knowledge at each other. Are you not the light for my fire? Have you not the sister soul to my insight? (TPN 276)²⁸

The preceding passage provides some important information about the nature of “heaven,” but also on how to interpret the title, “Before Sunrise.” The phrase refers to both the trajectory of the sun and a condition that existed before its ascension through the heavens. At the end of the first paragraph quoted above, Zarathustra describes the feeling of loneliness that he shares with Heaven before the appearance of the sun. However, the text does not necessarily refer to the daily rising and setting of the sun; the text merely states that this condition existed *before* the sun: “*vor der Sonne*” (207). Does this phrase refer to Zarathustra’s state of mind every day before sunrise, or a condition that existed before the sun *ever* rose? Accordingly, does Zarathustra’s ode represent his thoughts as an individual human being or a larger collectivity of voices—perhaps that of humanity itself? I argue that it represents both of these things.

In “Before Sunrise,” Heaven does not represent a metaphysical force. It is true that it exists beyond the actual world—that is, the planet—occupied by human beings, but it does not exist beyond “this world” (that is, the world of the here and now). Despite Zarathustra’s mystical descriptions of it, Heaven represents the unknowable part of the universe that exists entirely outside the ken of human knowledge. We cannot measure it; we can only sense and contemplate it. Just like conventional depictions of heaven that describe it as a void that surround the known universe, Heaven surrounds the known

²⁸ Dass du schön zu mir kamst, verhüllt in deine Schönheit, dass du stumm zu mir sprichst, offenbar in deiner Weisheit:/ Oh wie erriethe ich nicht alles Schamhafte deine Seele! Vor der Sonne kamst du zu mir, dem Einsamsten./ Wir sind Freunde von Anbeginn: uns ist Gram und Grauen und Grund gemeinsam; noch die Sonne ist uns gemeinsam./ Wir reden nicht zu einander, weil wir zu Vieles wissen —: wir schweigen uns an, wir lächeln uns unser Wissen zu./ Bist du nicht das Licht zu meinem Feuer? Hast du nicht die Schwester-Seele zu meiner Einsicht? (KSA 4, 207)

universe in Zarathustra's world. However, it does not represent anything metaphysical. In fact, it symbolizes the very discordant, this-worldly forces that govern this world. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's Heaven serves a function that is analogous to the primal unity in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It represents a powerful complex of force that is both a unity and a plurality, and serves as a *point of indifference* with respect to all matter in the universe. Here I refer to Nietzsche's descriptions of dissonance as representing points of indifference between all things (see pages 98-99)—that is, the manifold, often “ugly” relationships that exist in a universe where ultimately, nothing can harmonize with anything else.²⁹ It reveals the dissonant relationships that exist between all things.

On the surface, Heaven represents the force of “Chance” [*Ohngefähr*]. For Zarathustra, Heaven represents a realm that is determined by its lack of “Purpose” [*Zwecke*] and “rationality” [*Vernünftigkeit*], as well as a characteristic that Zarathustra believes can only be described as *childishness* and capriciousness. Unlike the Judeo-Christian image of heaven, Nietzsche's does not represent eternal comforts, immutable values and moralities. Additionally, there is no rational consciousness that controls it:

“By Chance”—that is the most ancient nobility of the world, and this I restored to all things: I delivered them from their bondage under Purpose. This freedom and heavenly cheer I have placed over all things like an azure bell when I taught that over them and through them no “eternal will” wills. This prankish folly I have put in the place of that will when I taught: “In everything one thing is impossible: rationality.”

A little reason, to be sure, a seed of wisdom scattered from star to star—this leaven is mixed in with all things: for folly's sake, wisdom is mixed in with all things. A little wisdom is possible indeed; but this blessed certainty I found in all things: that they would rather *dance* on the feet of Chance. (TPN 278)³⁰

²⁹ Please refer to my discussion in Chapter One, page 90, of a passage from *The Case of Wagner* in which Nietzsche invites his reader to “dare to be ugly.”

³⁰ „Von Ohngefähr“ — das ist der älteste Adel der Welt, den gab ich allen Dingen zurück, ich erlöste sie von der Knechtschaft unter dem Zwecke. / Diese Freiheit und Himmels-Heiterkeit stellte ich gleich azurner Glocke über alle Dinge, als ich lehrte, dass über ihnen und durch die kein „ewige Wille“ — will. / Diesen Übermuth und diese Narrheit stellte ich an die Stelle jenes Willens, als ich lehrte: „bei Allem ist Eins unmöglich Vernünftigkeit!“ / Ein Wenig Vernunft zwar, eine Same der Weisheit zerstreut von Stern zu Stern, — diese

Heaven has taught Zarathustra that the most ancient of all noble qualities is Chance. Zarathustra posits this quality as something diametrically opposed to “purpose.” Whereas Chance represents the most pluralistic of all processes, purpose indicates a singularity of intent, worldview, and force. By claiming to have restored the primacy of *chance* as the criterion of the ordering and ranking of values, Zarathustra has undermined the metaphysical foundations of epistemology. That which looms behind all creation, including human existence, is not rational, singular, or eternal. It merely represents a “folly,” or to draw upon the language of *The Gay Science* and *Twilight of the Idols*, a metaphysical understanding for the foundation of existence that is an “error.” It is an error that needs to be corrected. In the context of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the protagonist has identified the source of the error and taken the first steps to correct it.

Zarathustra concedes that “a little wisdom”—that is, a bit of rationality and “purpose”—poses no threat to human existence, as long as humanity defers to the greater power of Chance. This reflects Nietzsche’s attitude toward “reason” throughout his works; there is nothing wrong with it, as long as we remember that it represents one of many ways to understand the world. As Nietzsche describes in *The Birth of Tragedy*, humanity’s tendency to fulfill its dreams through the power of its Apollonian drive is entirely life-affirming and productive, as long as the Apollonian ultimately defers to the regenerative, primal power represented by the Dionysian drive. Analogously, this tendency bears remarkable similarity to Nietzsche’s insistence that the “truth” drive can and should coexist with the “metaphor” drive. Even in other works from Nietzsche’s middle and late periods, he emphasizes that humanity’s tendency to interject “reason” and the illusion of “purpose” and immutability has led to some of humanity’s greatest accomplishments, including Christianity and Platonism. Despite the long-term deleterious effects that these

Sauerteig ist allen Dingen eingemischt: um der Narrheit willen ist Weisheit allen Dingen eingemischt! / Ein Wenig Weisheit ist schon möglich; aber diese selige Sicherheit fand ich an allen Dingen: dass sie lieber noch auf den Füßen des Zufalls — *tanzen*. (KSA 4, 209)

philosophies have had on humanity, they began as formidable displays of strength and power. After all, Platonism and Judaism were the catalysts of the two greatest revaluations of all values that had ever taken place—at least until Zarathustra’s and Nietzsche’s.

Rather than describing two competing drives, Nietzsche merely suggests that humanity’s wisest course of action would be to *renegotiate its relationship* to Chance. By “dancing on its feet,” the philosopher will not be tempted to return to metaphysical and otherworldly ways of thinking—he will be too busy dancing with the musical, dissonant forces of chance! The rhythm will provide a consistently musical, dissonant foundation for philosophers to reevaluate values, create new metaphors and new ways of living and thinking. Although a musical, dissonant philosophy will always be unstable, capricious, and unpredictable, it will prevent sentimentality and decadence.

Nietzsche’s description of heaven as a playfield that provides humanity with the raw materials necessary to exploit its creative energies is analogous to his metaphor of the universe as a beach of sand or stones where children fulfill their desire to create and destroy forms, as he describes in *The Birth of Tragedy* (see Chapter One, especially pages 109-111). In the final stanzas of “Before Sunrise,” Nietzsche concludes his address to Heaven by describing it as a playing field for games of chance: “that you are to me a dance floor for divine accidents/ that you are to me a divine table for divine dice and dice players” (278).³¹ Heaven provides humanity with the equivalent of a sandy beach in which it may continually engage in the risky, dangerous, yet invigorating activity of the creation and destruction of concepts, forms, perspectives, and systems of knowledge. That is, Heaven represents the musical dissonance that comprises the fabric of the universe. It radiates from everything. If humanity would only recognize that fact, it would always find inspiration to dance and live vibrantly.

³¹ — dass du mir ein Tanzboden bist für göttliche Zufälle, dass du mir ein Göttertisch bist für göttliche Würfel und Würfelspieler! — (KSA 4, 209-10)

Despite Zarathustra's description of Heaven as a game board, it is not inanimate. It represents an entity that differs remarkably from humanity. It pulses with a life and rhythm of its own and has distinct relationships with other objects and entities in the universe. As indicated in the passage that I quote at the beginning of my discussion of "Before Sunrise," Zarathustra believes that he shares something in common with Heaven. Zarathustra believes that this shared experience is their respective relationships with the Sun.

Zarathustra describes the fabric of the heavens as an "abyss of light" [*"Licht-Abgrund"*]; the image of the abyss resounds powerfully throughout the aphorism. The Sun represents the most powerful source of superabundant energy in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It never stops overflowing with energy. Although the Sun is engaged in a complex interplay of forces with the earth it orbits, it represents a far more stable metaphor than the "abyss of light." Whereas the earth and its inhabitants continue to change, the Sun remains relatively unchanged. Yet, above and beyond the Sun lies Heaven, which is able to absorb all of the sun's radiation with ease and indifference. Despite the fact that Zarathustra describes heaven as an "abyss," it is not defined by its lack of energy.

On the contrary, Heaven represents both the absence and presence of light: "O heaven over me, pure and light! You abyss of light!" [*"Oh Himmel über mir, du Reiner! Tiefer! Du Licht-Abgrund!"*] (TPN 276; KSA 4, 207). This passage represents Zarathustra's confusion over the nature of Heaven, but only insofar as it signifies his inability to adequately describe it in language. In contrast to the Sun, Heaven exerts its power through its abyssal nature. The abyss surrounds everything. It is the playfield from which everything emerges, thrives, and returns. Heaven affects both physical objects and the psychological state of human observers. Its energy and force derive from the infinite fields of indifference that it generates when it interacts with the material world. Heaven is the source of all matter. Yet, whereas matter is subject to creation, destruction, and transformation, Heaven consistently maintains the appearance of being formless, indefinable, and perhaps even abstract.

This apparently indifferent and limitless realm is characterized by three distinct qualities: guiltlessness [*Unschuld*], chance, and a childlike prankishness [*Übermuth*]. It seems contradictory to ascribe these human qualities to a deity or realm that is as abstract and impersonal as Zarathustra's Heaven. These qualities represent Zarathustra's subjective interpretation of Heaven. To understand Zarathustra's interpretation of Heaven, it is necessary to closely examine his emotional response to it. Zarathustra claims that he does not maintain a direct line of communication with Heaven; they "do not speak to each other." Yet, Zarathustra maintains that Heaven provides him with "love" [*Liebe*] and "shyness" [*Scham*], which together have instigated a major epiphany and revelation [*Offenbarung*] to his "burning soul" [*brausenden Seele*] (TPN 276; KSA 4, 207). In addition, Zarathustra goes so far as to claim that he and Heaven learn together through their respective relationships to the Sun, and share a sense of "grief, "dread" and "ground." These emotions appear to further obstruct an adequate interpretation of this passage. How is it conceivably possible that something that is so abstract, indifferent, and disordered, also "love" and experience loneliness? How can Heaven and Zarathustra share a common "Grund"? In this particular case, *Grund* appears to mean much more than "ground" in the geological sense, but a foundation of existence and being.

It is this shared "Grund" that provides the most informative clue toward an interpretation of these passages. A shared foundation does not necessarily imply shared culture and values. As I discuss in my analysis of the role of dissonance in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche states that humanity represents the "coming to be" of "dissonance," or a "becoming-human of dissonance" [*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*] (see pages 59-60). Accordingly, Nietzsche describes dissonance as representative of the foundational processes of existence. Thus, in *The Birth of Tragedy* and other early works, humanity maintains a very close and essential bond with a seemingly abstract, indifferent, and erratic force. However, this force also serves as the background of existence, from which all things emerge, transform, and return, as well as something that can actually serve as the criterion for a

system of valuation and understanding. Musical dissonance represents something human beings share with each other, and with every other object in the universe.

On the surface, both Heaven and the primal unity appear to represent metaphysical concepts in that they are apparently “eternal” and cannot be located within time and space. Yet, Nietzsche depicts them as representative of *processes* that are intimately tied to the working of the sensual world. Their “unity” exists by virtue of their universal applicability in all situations and all times. Neither force represents a singular process or singular intent, but an infinite plurality of dissonant forces that function identically throughout the universe, regardless of time, space, and the presence of sentient beings.

Musical dissonance provides humanity with the raw material and energy to create form. Yet, musical dissonance also represents a power that causes the destruction of all form. It is entirely up to the “artist” to decide whether or not to capitalize upon the creative potential of this ambivalent source of power. I describe these powers as diremptive and centrifugal, as each of them is antithetical to permanence in any sense of the word. As a foundational set of processes, Heaven constantly destabilizes and decentres forms by its tendency to cause “accident,” “guiltlessness,” “chance,” and “prankishness.” It is important to bear in mind that for Nietzsche, strong “foundations” are built upon *dissonance, tension, and music*, as indicated throughout his works.

Conclusion

Thus Spoke Zarathustra achieves the goals set out for it in the final aphorisms of Book Four of *The Gay Science*: it depicts a hero who learns how to navigate the world that awaits a dancing, musical, and sensual philosopher or scientist. Throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the protagonist gradually *redeems* himself with respect to the epic world in which he has chosen to live. He does this by *revaluating* key concepts and stripping them of their metaphysical underpinnings and replaces them with a foundation of vibrant musical dissonance. He reevaluates his relationship to the world around him—to Heaven, Solitude,

and the Sun. Additionally, he reevaluates the basic concepts of language, tablets, writing, truth, piety, bridge, justice, and friendship, all of which have been polluted by metaphysical, otherworldly philosophies. In short, he learns to embrace the world of “twists and turns” that gradually appears as he develops a philosophical outlook which rests upon a foundation of musical dissonance. He has the necessary tools to embark upon the voyage that Nietzsche describes throughout *The Gay Science*. Simply put, he is *ready* to “dance over morality.” However, Zarathustra fails to initiate a large-scale “revaluation of all values” (at least not to the extent that he had hoped). As indicated in his laments to his animals, he often feels deeply disappointed with his achievements. In Chapter Four, I argue that it is not until the last pages of the book that Zarathustra finally realizes the true nature of his accomplishments: Zarathustra has *prepared himself* for the coming of the *Übermensch*. At the end of the final aphorism, “The Sign” [“*Das Zeichen*”] he declares that *his* time has come “[...] this is *my* morning, *my* day is breaking: *rise now, rise, thou great noon!*”/Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave glowing and strong as a morning sun that comes out of dark mountains” (TPN 439).³² Zarathustra has redeemed himself to the this-worldly, musical, dissonant philosophy that he has chosen to embrace. He has come of age in a musical, dissonant world, and is truly ready to teach the philosophy of the *Übermensch* to those around him, inspire a revaluation of all values, and “prepare the earth for the *Übermensch*.” The revaluation of all values is ready to begin.

In Chapter Four, I discuss another epic hero—the narrator of *Ecce Homo*, a fictionalized depiction of Nietzsche—who picks up where Zarathustra leaves off. The narrator of *Ecce Homo* has already redeemed himself. He has done so through Zarathustra. *Ecce Homo* portrays a hero who has overcome many of the obstacles that hinder Zarathustra from achieving his goals. The narrator of *Ecce Homo* is not only ready to dance: he *is dancing*.

³² Dies ist *mein* Morgen, *mein* Tag hebt an: *herauf nun, herauf, du grosser Mittag!*“ – – / Also sprach Zarathustra und verliess seine Höhle, glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunklen Bergen kommt. (KSA 4, 408)

He is entirely ready and willing to begin the disruptive and transformative process by infusing philosophy and science with musical dissonance. He presents “Nietzsche the narrator,” as a protagonist, who is prepared and eager to “emancipate the dissonance” in the world around him by beginning the disruptive, dynamic process of promulgating a “revaluation of all values.” That is, the narrator depicts himself as both an *Übermensch* and an anti-Christ.

CHAPTER FOUR

SELF-FORMATION AS MUSICAL DISSONANCE: *ECCE HOMO*

I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up *against* everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man, I am dynamite. (*Ecce Homo*, BWN 782)¹

Ecce Homo: Dissonance Become Man

Nietzsche composed *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is* [*Wie man wird, was man ist*] in 1888, in the final months before his mental breakdown. Many critics point out that the *title* of the book contains the key to its interpretation (see pages 306-307 below). The first part of the title—“*ecce homo*”—consists of the words uttered by Pontius Pilate from the praetorium as he presents Jesus Christ—in the flesh—to the crowds lining the streets of Jerusalem just before his crucifixion, as related in the Vulgate translation of the Gospel of John (John 19:5). In English translations of the New Testament, this phrase generally reads: “Behold the Man!” Nietzsche would have undoubtedly had the Luther Bible in mind, which renders the phrase: “*Sehet, welch ein Mensch!*” (“Behold, *such* a man!”) (133). Luther’s translation glorifies the figure of Jesus Christ by using the emphatic adjective “*welch*”—a dramatic touch that clearly influenced Nietzsche’s portrayal of *himself* in *Ecce Homo*. The New Testament and *Ecce Homo* portray messianic figures that represent two disparate models for self-formation, each of which corresponds to *divergent* authorities for deriving truth and meaning about the self, humanity, and existence.

In the Gospel of John, the significance of the phrase “*ecce homo*” extends far beyond the act of brandishing the man Jesus Christ to the crowds on the streets of Jerusalem. The

¹ Ich kenne mein Loos. Es wird sich einmal an meinen Namen die Erinnerung an etwas Ungeheures anknüpfen, — an eine Krisis, wie es keine auf Erden gab, an die tiefste Gewissens-Collision, an eine Entscheidung heraufbeschworen *gegen* Alles, was bis dahin geglaubt, gefordert, geheiligt worden war. Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit. — (KSA 6, 365)

phrase draws attention to the many contradictions that this complex and dynamic literary-historical figure represents. Instead of saying “*ecce homo*,” Pontius Pilate might have very well declared: “Behold the living contradiction that is Jesus Christ!” In accordance with Nietzsche’s manifold accounts of Christ and Christianity, the mystery of Jesus Christ’s complex identity in this passage relates to his claim that he is the representative of *another world* and a way of life that privileges it. This other world serves as a central authority of meaning that supersedes *this-worldly* criteria for deriving truth and meaning. Therefore, the Gospel of John presents a narrative of self-formation that describes how a man becomes *who* he is, with respect to his relationship to a superior, metaphysical world that represents truth. In short, the New Testament presents an entirely metaphysical model for self-formation for Jesus Christ’s believers and followers.

Ecce Homo delineates a process of self-formation based on musical dissonance. Instead of relying upon a metaphysical criterion for understanding the self, Nietzsche describes an alternative process of self-development with respect to the dynamic, explosive, and decentred language of dissonance. Nietzsche claims that he is *not a man*, but rather an explosive device: “I am no man, I am dynamite” [“*Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit*”] (BWN 782; KSA 6, 365). Nietzsche consistently reiterates that the source of his inspiration is the symbolic power of the god Dionysus, whom he always associates with musical dissonance, fire, and destructive—but also creative—forces throughout his writings. This stands in sharp contrast with the passage from the Gospel of John, which defines the development of an individual with respect to a metaphysical, unknowable, other world.

Nietzsche employs the act of revealing and brandishing a world-historical figure—that is, the act of “showing” a man—to promulgate a radical revolution in philosophy. In this case, the powerful figure is Nietzsche himself. In *Ecce Homo*, “Nietzsche” is a powerful and complex signifier that binds together a variety of intricately woven philosophical and literary themes. *Ecce Homo* represents “Nietzsche” as a messiah, saviour, and redeemer, for a world that is ready to begin “the revaluation of all values” based on an epistemology that

derives meaning from a foundation of musical dissonance. Dynamite—which I argue is a metaphor for musical dissonance in Nietzsche’s later works—is the stuff that “Nietzsche” is made of. Nietzsche intends to use this dynamite as the catalyst for a revaluation of all values. Nietzsche literally throws a philosophical bomb into the laps of his readers. It is a bomb that continually explodes.

Nietzsche is emphatic about his personal connection to the revaluation of all values. He claims that the revaluation of all values is *his* “formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity [...] become flesh and genius in him” [*“Umwertung aller Werthe: das ist meine Formel für einen Akt höchster Selbstbesinnung der Menschheit, der in mir Fleisch und Genie geworden ist”*] (BWN 782; KSA 6, 365). Additionally, Nietzsche claims that he is the source of the truths contained in the text: “the truth speaks out of me. — But my truth is *terrible*; for so far one has called *lies* truth” [*“redet aus mir die Wahrheit. — Aber meine Wahrheit ist furchtbar: denn man hiess bisher die Lüge Wahrheit”*] (BWN 782; KSA 6, 365). These statements indicate that the revaluation of all values is a highly personal, subjective process. It is intimately connected with Nietzsche’s *own sensual existence*. Nietzsche, the narrator, literally represents truth. His statement that his truth stands in direct and “terrifying” opposition to the truths of “holy” men that have prevailed for “millennia” indicates that the foundation of his truths is antipodal to metaphysics. Thus, Nietzsche presents himself as an *anti-Christ* in the literal sense of the word. Whereas the New Testament presents Jesus Christ—the “man”—as the bearer of the truth about human beings and their existence that defers to an otherworldly, central authority of meaning, Nietzsche presents *himself* as the exact opposite. The narrator represents a truth about human beings and their existence that emphasizes a this-worldly, dissonant authority of meaning. It follows the axiom that Nietzsche outlines in *The Birth of Tragedy*: that dissonance constitutes the “foundations of all existence” [*“Fundamente aller Existenz”*] (BWN 155; KSA 1, 143).

In Chapter Two, I suggest that *The Gay Science* is a medium that inspires the reader to think dissonantly by presenting knowledge in a dialogic, fragmented and

incommensurable fashion. However, *Ecce Homo* goes one step further by inspiring the reader to *think dynamically* and *explosively*. That is, *Ecce Homo* encourages the reader to think in a way that not only destabilizes conventional categories and modalities of critical thinking, but actually transfigures them through a continual process of creation and destruction. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* accomplishes some of these goals, but the gap between the reader and the hero of the epic is far too wide to inspire the level of active and personal engagement with philosophy that *Ecce Homo* can. In *Ecce Homo*, a narrator does not interpose himself between reader and epic, and there is no pseudo-mythical landscape to estrange the reader from the text. Here, the philosopher speaks directly to his audience in a highly provocative manner. It is a philosophical call to arms.

This chapter examines the significance of *Ecce Homo* as a testament to how “man” becomes what he is by cultivating and harnessing the power of dissonance. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche considers the possibility of conceiving the becoming of man as dissonance, but in *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, Nietzsche provides us with a specific example: Nietzsche. He does not merely “imagine” a becoming of man as dissonance, he actually *presents* himself as an actual example. In the following sections, I examine the full implications of Nietzsche’s claim that he personally represents a physical incarnation of the “revaluation of all values,” how this claim affects our understanding of Nietzsche’s dissonant philosophy, and *Ecce Homo*’s function as a dissonant and dynamic text.

Ecce Homo is by far the boldest and most provocative of all Nietzsche’s works. It is a call to arms to actively engage and participate in a “revaluation of all values”—that is, to actually implement dissonance through the most dynamic and explosive means possible. *Ecce Homo* does not merely provoke the reader to listen to Nietzsche’s truths or ideas about the revaluation of all values—it actually inspires the reader to continually offer his or her own “truths” and rethink his or her “identity.” In this way, *Ecce Homo* functions similarly to the message offered in the New Testament. Both texts promote the reader to think critically and introspectively. *Ecce Homo* and the New Testament contain many contradictions and

parables. They challenge the reader to think about the world in new and unfamiliar ways. Both texts inspire the reader to rethink his or her identity and the meaning of life. Yet, in *Ecce Homo*, there is no God, only a messiah.

Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of the unique and deeply personal nature of his truths is not unique to *Ecce Homo*—it is a major theme in his later works, especially *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Alan Schrift maintains that Nietzsche's constant emphasis on the personal nature of his truths *challenges* the reader to offer up his or her own truths as well:

There is no such thing as a "truth of Nietzsche" or a "truth of Nietzsche's text," any more than there is a truth of woman. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche prefaces the statement of a "few truths about 'woman as such'" with the following warning: "assuming that it is now known from the outset how very much these are only—*my truths*" (231). That Nietzsche emphasizes "*meine Wahrheiten*" as he does indicates that what follows are not "truths" at all, at least not in the sense that tradition has understood: single, decidable, univocal, eternal, immutable, universal. In effect, Nietzsche is always saying "These are *my truths*; where are yours? These are *my women*; where are yours? This is *my way*; where is yours? For *the truth, the woman, the way*—that does not exist." (108-109)

As Schrift maintains, in Nietzsche's writings, there is always a plurality of truths. Schrift's comments provoke the following question: why should we care about Nietzsche's "truths," and Nietzsche's "women"? If they are entirely personal, what possible use can they have to the study of literary interpretation or philosophy? Schrift supplies an important clue to finding the answer to that question: we all need to learn how to articulate our *own* ways, and the truth about our own "women," "truths," or any other value. Nietzsche's text inspires the reader to follow suit and create his or her own values.

Whereas the New Testament frames its examination of the world by appealing to an idealistic and metaphysical authority for deriving truth and meaning, the philosophical orientation of *Ecce Homo* is musical dissonance. The New Testament inspires the reader to seek meaning and purpose in a metaphysical world of stable and absolute truths. By contrast, *Ecce Homo* inspires the reader to derive meaning from a decentred and dissonant authority for truth that is personal, this-worldly, and dynamic in nature. A project in which

categories and meanings are constantly shifting and redefining themselves does not allow the possibility of achieving a penultimate state of being or identity. A person cannot develop into a stable, complete human being. That is because an otherworldly authority for deriving truth and meaning does not serve as a criterion for defining human beings or an individual's identity. Human beings define themselves only with respect to themselves and their own existence as manifestations of dissonance. Therefore, the "what" in the title of the book refers to Nietzsche's extraordinarily dynamic and incendiary understanding of the concept of dissonance. That is, dissonance can and should be a disruptive, destructive, and violent force. Dissonance constitutes the explosive material of Nietzsche's incendiary text.

Ecce Homo is at bottom a textual and philosophical representation of the will to power as I outline it in the Introduction. That is, Nietzsche portrays Nietzsche the narrator as a decentred, and dynamic character who is inherently contradictory, unstable, and challenges the stability of his readers. The text depicts the self-formation of Nietzsche *as dissonance*, but also provokes the reader to consider his or her own identity as emancipated dissonance. "Nietzsche" the narrator draws attention to his self-development through his understanding of dissonance and provides a model by which others may follow suit. Therefore, in all respects, *Ecce Homo* is a book that depicts "dissonance become man," or to put it more accurately: a "becoming-human of dissonance" [*"Menschwerdung der Dissonanz"*] (see pages 59-58). The signifier "Nietzsche" represents the "man" and the book *Ecce Homo* represents the *Bildung* of man in an explosive, incendiary, testimonial.

Dissonance and *Bildung*

According to Kontje, the German word *Bildung*, meaning "self-formation," originally "referred to both the external form or appearance of an individual and to the process of giving form (*Gestalt, forma; Gestaltun, formatio*)" (1). Kontje explains that during the Middle Ages, this concept acquired a variety of Christian connotations:

Medieval mystics and eighteenth-century Pietists conceived of *Bildung* as God's active transformation of the passive Christian. Through Original Sin

humans have fallen out of their unity with God; they have become deformed, *entbildet*. The penitent believer must therefore prepare to receive God's grace. The Catholic believes in the ability to work toward this state of receptivity, whereas the Protestant must rely on faith alone. In the final analysis, however, the believer remains passive in both cases: God impresses His image onto the fallen individual, effecting a redemptive transformation of the disfigured sinner back into the image of God. (1)

Eventually, however, with the advent of secular humanism and the Enlightenment, thinkers began to associate *Bildung* with humanity's ability to cultivate itself with respect to the principles of reason, rationalism, and empirical science. For example, Kontje emphasizes that for Herder (1744-1803), "*Bildung* involves the development of innate genetic potential under the influence of a particular geographical and cultural setting" (4). Herder maintains that a people can use the knowledge of their climate, geography, and natural environment to develop a sense of self-identity and capitalize upon their innate abilities. As I discuss in Chapter One, thinkers such as Schiller, Kant, and Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835), implored intellectuals to use Reason to shape their destinies and achieve social harmony. Hegel, on the other hand, mixed the rational and Christian elements of *Bildung*. In the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel portrays *Bildung* as a dialectical and teleological process, in which humanity's cultivation of Reason represents its approach toward the consciousness of Absolute Spirit. Although these approaches to *Bildung* portray different processes, they are teleological and respect the authority of metaphysical criteria for deriving meaning. By metaphysical, I refer to the broad definition of the word that Nietzsche outlines in *The Gay Science* (see the section entitled "Nietzsche and Metaphysics" in the Introduction), in which he refers to philosophies that defer to otherworldly authorities of meaning.

Goethe portrays more dynamic versions of *Bildung*. Although Goethe emphasizes the significance of organic development like Schiller and Herder, he throws an unstable and dynamic element into the philosophy of self-development with *Faust*, in which he suggests that the process that underpins the protagonist's self-development is his decision to strive for the sake of striving. *Faust* challenges the notion that *Bildung* is teleological, religious, or even compatible with conventional morality and valuations of "good" and "evil"

(Kaufmann, *Goethe's Faust* 55). As I discuss in Chapter Two, Nietzsche was dissatisfied with Goethe's *Faust*, in part, because he believed that Goethe simply did not go far enough with the work. For example, Nietzsche identified the remnants of metaphysical thinking in Goethe's portrayal of "the eternal feminine," which he believes has inspired most readers to think reductively and look right past the radical implications of the text (see the section entitled "Nietzsche and Metaphor" in Chapter Two, pages 179-180).

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche depicts a narrator—a fictional depiction of himself—whom we can mistake as a representative of a metaphysical philosophy. Instead of using "striving" as the foundation for a theory of self-formation, he uses "the revaluation of all values." I argue that the revaluation of all values represents a process that is unapologetically "beyond good and evil" and does not seek to destabilize or disrupt comfortable and familiar philosophies, but to *explode them*. Yet, for all of the book's dynamism, Nietzsche pays homage to traditional conceptions of *Bildung*. The religious element is clearly present in the narrative framework, which literally represents an inversion of the New Testament's account of Jesus Christ's *Bildung*, particularly as depicted in the Gospel of John. *Ecce Homo* is "anti-Christian" in the most literal sense of the word. However, *Ecce Homo* also subverts the discourse of the Enlightenment by reexamining the significance of human psychology, biology, nutrition, and the natural environment from a deeply subjective perspective. Thus, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche supplants the metaphysical foundation of the concept of self-formation and *Bildung* with a foundation of musical dissonance. Instead of cultivating abstract notions of "destiny," truth, and identity that smack of metaphysical ways of thinking, Nietzsche urges his readers to cultivate their dissonant counterparts. He offers his own story as an example to follow.

"Nietzsche" the *Übermensch*

The incendiary nature of *Ecce Homo* represents a profound shift in the tone of Nietzsche's writings. By positing the narrator as the locus of one of the largest and most

radical philosophical revolutions in history, Nietzsche transforms himself into a messianic figure—albeit a messiah of an entirely new sort.

Before delving into a comprehensive analysis of “Nietzsche the messiah,” it is important to interpret Nietzsche’s depiction of the textual relationship between *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo*. This is an important task because the literary figure of Zarathustra and many of *his* accomplishments influence the manner in which Nietzsche depicts his role as the living representation of the revaluation of all values in *Ecce Homo*. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* forms an integral subtext of *Ecce Homo*, and it is impossible to arrive at a viable interpretation of the latter without broaching the subject of the relationship between the two texts. In addition, it is important to emphasize that the narrator of the book is just that—a “narrator.” More than in any of Nietzsche’s other books, Nietzsche is uses *himself* as a powerful and complex literary signifier.

Walter Kaufmann distances himself from *Ecce Homo*. He wants to distract Nietzsche’s readers from the philosopher’s ubiquitous discussion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*. This tendency reflects Kaufmann’s explicit desire to rescue Nietzsche from accusations of extremism, fascism, or quite simply, that he is insane. His tone is reminiscent of his dismissal of Nietzsche’s discussion of women in *The Gay Science* (see GS 21–25):

Yet *Ecce Homo* has its faults. It contains all too many references to *Zarathustra*—most of them *embarrassing* [emphasis mine]—and the numerous long quotations from that book are almost rendered pointless by *Zarathustra*’s great posthumous success: the quotations were intended for readers who did not know that book. And although Nietzsche has often been linked with German nationalism, his remarks about the Germans are open to criticism for being too extreme in stressing what he finds abominable. (Nietzsche 205)

I do not agree with Walter Kaufmann’s evaluation of Nietzsche’s repeated citation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche’s discussion of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is indispensable. The quotes in the book are *not* there for the convenience of the reader. Nietzsche strategically positions his quotes from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* in a way that provides the reader with valuable clues regarding his or her role as a dynamic subtext for *Ecce Homo*. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche recontextualizes the quotations from *Thus Spoke*

Zarathustra. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the quotes represent the utterances of an overtly fictional character whose words are conveyed to the reader through a fictional narrator. However, in *Ecce Homo*, the quotations appear in the guise of an autobiographical testament. Nietzsche appropriates Zarathustra's language and endows it with the immediacy and urgency of the present moment and the "real world" (despite the fact that the text is, stylistically speaking, a work of literature). He literally gives Zarathustra's words life. Contrary to Kaufmann's claim, the efficacy of these quotations in *Ecce Homo* do indeed rely upon the reader's existing knowledge of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

In the chapter entitled "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche praises Zarathustra's unprecedented "capacity for metaphors" and ability to "speak unheard-of-things" that hurl the reader into unknown futures. Above all, Zarathustra is a master of metaphor creation. This talent forms the locus of his philosophical approach. He creates vibrant, dynamic, and jarring metaphors that are not only rife with meaning, but also infused with rhythm, tempo, and melody. Nietzsche claims that Zarathustra transforms the familiar and "everyday" ["*Alltäglichs*"] into "unheard-of-things" ["*unerhörten Dingen*"] (BWN 761; KSA 6, 343-344). He utters "epigrams trembling with passion, eloquence become music" and "lightning bolts hurled forward into hitherto unfathomed futures" which make all of humanity's previous attempts at creating language and metaphor seem like "mere child's play compared" with Zarathustra's "return to the nature of imagery" (BWN 761) (see Chapter Three, pages 216-217 for additional discussion of this passage).²

The reader travels on epigrams that function like lightning bolts. However, they also function like music. From the destructive and destabilizing imagery that prevails throughout the text, it is clear that the reader should take the metaphor of lightning bolts at face value. Nietzsche describes a kind of language that accords with his early descriptions

² Die Sentenz von Leidenschaft zitternd; die Beredsamkeit Musik geworden; Blitze vorausgeschleudert nach bisher unerrathenen Zukünften. Die mächtigste Kraft zum Gleichniss, die bisher da war, ist arm und Spielerei gegen diese Rückkehr der Sprache zur Natur der Bildlichkeit. — (KSA 6, 343-344)

of music as testing the limits of the human being's capacity for linguistic and sensual understanding ("to go beyond all hearing" and "go beyond all seeing") (see Chapter One, especially pages 95-96). It is a mercilessly destructive and incendiary form of language, despite the fact that it is also playful, ironic, and creative. However, this passage portrays the spirit of *Ecce Homo*'s narrator far more effectively than it describes Zarathustra, who does not use these words with nearly as much conviction and power as the narrator of *Ecce Homo*.

Zarathustra never brandishes himself to the world in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with the level of boldness and audacity that Nietzsche portrays him in *Ecce Homo*. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the prophet declares that the *Übermensch* is incendiary, but only describes himself as a "herald" ["*Verkündiger*"]: "Behold, I teach you the overman: he is the lightning, he is this frenzy!— ["*Seht, ich lehre euch den Übermenschen: der ist dieser Blitz, der ist dieser Wahnsinn! —*"]" (TPN 126; KSA 4, 16), "Behold, I am a herald of the lightning and a heavy drop from the cloud; but this lightning is called *overman*" ["*Seht, ich bin ein Verkündiger des Blitzes und ein schwerer Tropfen aus der Wolke: dieser Blitz aber heisst Übermensch. —*"] (TPN 128; KSA 4, 18). Zarathustra does not consider himself an *Übermensch*. He is neither lightning nor dynamite. Zarathustra is a *herald*. Like the drops that fall from the clouds before a storm, he only prefigures the destructive forces of the actual storm. He is a *prelude*.

It is not until the concluding aphorisms of the epic that Zarathustra finally declares that his "great noon" has finally arrived. He finally begins to speak in a manner, which displays a level of self-confidence about his abilities that broaches the intensity portrayed by the narrator of *Ecce Homo*. In the final lines of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'s last aphorism, entitled "The Sign" ["*Das Zeichen*"], the narrator affirms that Zarathustra has reached a dynamic state of being that corresponds to the superabundant, incendiary power of the Sun. He declares to the world: "'[...] this is *my morning*, *my day* is breaking: *rise now, rise, thou great noon!*"/Thus spoke Zarathustra, and he left his cave glowing and strong as a morning

sun that comes out of dark mountains'" (TPN 439).³ This represents the point at which *Ecce Homo* continues the project of the revaluation of all values, and the reason why Nietzsche so frequently conflates himself with Zarathustra.

Zarathustra is not merely Nietzsche's "mouthpiece," as so many critics claim. He represents a specific stage of development in Nietzsche's philosophy in which Nietzsche was still formulating his notion of how a truly "dissonant" human being might appear, and how he might go about depicting such a person. "Zarathustra" and "Nietzsche" may certainly share many similar attributes, but they are far from representations of the same person.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche the narrator does not "herald" lightning. Instead, he literally describes himself as an actual *portrayal* of lightning. He *is dynamite*. Thus, it is possible to interpret the literary signifier "Nietzsche" as the portrayal of an actual *Übermensch*. The final aphorisms of Nietzsche's chapter on Zarathustra clearly conflate the signifier "Nietzsche" with that of Zarathustra. However, the purpose of this conflation is not to indicate that they are "one in the same," but that one supersedes the other. That is, Nietzsche the narrator, represents a level of strength and self-overcoming that Zarathustra *wants* to attain throughout the majority of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. To put it another way, Nietzsche the narrator has more *Übermensch*-like qualities.

At the beginning of the chapter on *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche refers to Zarathustra as a literary figure—an important one, but a literary figure nonetheless. However, there is a clear conflation of identity. The narrator begins to cite *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* without providing any commentary, as if *he*—Nietzsche the narrator—were speaking the words originally uttered by Zarathustra for the first time. At the beginning of aphorism seven, there is a case of identity conflation and ambiguity that is reflected in the

³ Dies ist *mein* Morgen, *mein* Tag hebt an: *herauf nun, herauf, du grosser Mittag!*" – – / Also sprach Zarathustra und verliess seine Höhle, glühend und stark, wie eine Morgensonne, die aus dunklen Bergen kommt. (KSA 4, 408)

narrator's use of pronouns: "What language will such a spirit speak when he speaks to himself? The language of the *dithyramb*. I am the inventor of the dithyramb. Listen to how Zarathustra speaks to himself before sunrise [...]" (BWN 762).⁴ After describing Zarathustra's accomplishments in the third person, the ownership of these accomplishments is suddenly transferred to the narrator of *Ecce Homo*. This ambiguity becomes more explicit in due course. At the beginning of the eighth aphorism, the narrator literally begins to sound confused: "Zarathustra once defines, quite strictly, his task—it is *mine*, too—and there is no mistaking his meaning: he says Yes to the point of justifying, of redeeming even all of the past [emphasis mine]" (BWN 764).⁵ This confusion clearly indicates that the narrator is appropriating Zarathustra's project, but not as represented at the beginning of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. "Nietzsche" is picking up where Zarathustra left off at the end of the epic, by positing himself as a lightening bolt and dynamite. He combines his identity with that of his epic hero.

This is not to say that Friedrich Nietzsche, the actual man, is an *Übermensch*, but the dynamic literary-historical figure that he portrays in *Ecce Homo*, is indeed an *Übermensch*. *Ecce Homo* is a literary depiction of a "Nietzsche" who has overcome not only himself, but also his works, and the last vestiges of his attachment to metaphysical forms of thought. "Nietzsche" is not only *ready* to explode—he *actually is* exploding on the pages of the text. These explosions will generate more explosions in the hands of its readers. In the chapter entitled "Why I am a Destiny," Nietzsche describes himself as a "man of calamity" whose ideas will instigate "upheavals, a convulsion of earthquakes" and a "moving of mountains

⁴ — Welche Sprache wird ein solcher Geist reden, wenn er mit sich allein redet? Die Sprache des *Dithyrambus*. Ich bin der Erfinder des Dithyrambus. Man höre, wie Zarathustra *vor Sonnenaufgang* [...]. (KSA 6, 345)

⁵ Zarathustra bestimmt einmal, mit Strenge, seine Aufgabe — es ist auch die meine —, dass man sich über den *Sinn* nicht vergreifen kann: er ist *jasagend* bis zur Rechtfertigung, bis zur Erlösung auch alles Vergangenen. (KSA 6, 348)

and valleys, the like of which has never been dreamed" (BWN 783).⁶ The narrator "Nietzsche" posits himself as a transformative concatenation of power that will permanently alter the notion of what it means to be human, to live in a society of humans, and to exist in the natural, sensual world forever.

"Nietzsche" the Messiah

One of the main differences between the Gospel of John and the "gospel" contained in Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* is the depiction of "how one becomes what one is." In the Gospel of John, the narrator "presents" Christ to his public (to both the fictional public on the streets and the listeners and readers of the Gospel of John in the real world). Contrastingly, Nietzsche composes *Ecce Homo* in the first person. Nietzsche introduces *himself* to his readers; in the Gospel of John, however, we have a semi-omniscient narrator who describes the unveiling of the "man" to the motley people on the streets of Jerusalem, which includes commoners, priests, and representatives of all the "Jews." The Biblical narrative is further complicated by the fact that the narrator claims to be relying upon the information transmitted by an individual named John the Baptist. The Gospel of John consists of information transmitted through a chain of hearsay. Jesus Christ himself represents a passive figure in the stanzas that describe his final moments before Pontius Pilate and his death. He refuses to speak on his own behalf. The following passage from John 18:30 exemplifies Jesus' acquiescence during the moments before Pontius Pilate presents him to the Jerusalem public:

So Pilate went back into the Praetorium and called Jesus to him and asked him, "Are you king of the Jews?" Jesus replied, "Do you ask this of your own accord, or have others said it to you about me?" Pilate answered, "Am I a Jew? It is your own people and the chief priests who have handed you over to me: what have you done?" Jesus replied, "Mine is not a kingdom of this world; if my kingdom were of this world, my men would have fought to prevent my being surrendered to the Jews. As it is, my kingdom does not belong here." Pilate said, "So, then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "It is

⁶ [Wir werden] Erschütterungen haben, einen Krampf von Erdbeben, eine Versetzung von Berg und Thal, wie dergleichen nie geträumt worden ist. (KSA 6, 366)

you who say that I am a king. I was born for this, I came into the world for this, to bear witness to the truth: and all who are on the side of truth listen to my voice." "Truth?" said Pilate. "What is that?" And so saying he went out again to the Jews and said, "I find no case against him." (1234)

When Pilate asks Jesus if he is king of the Jews, Jesus refuses to answer the question directly. Although his response certainly challenges the validity of the accusations that others have laid against him, it does not account for who he is. In their next exchange, Pilate asks Jesus to respond to the various charges laid against him. Pilate asks: "what have you done?" Jesus responds by eschewing the question (1234). He actually challenges its relevancy. It is not appropriate or even *relevant* to ask him whether or not he is king of Jews or even if his existence is relevant to this world, as his kingdom is *not of this world*. Jesus claims that his reason for coming into "this world"—over which he claims no sovereignty—is to "bear witness to the truth." Once again, Jesus refuses to answer Pilate's question. However, this time, he does not reply with an evasive or mysterious question: he merely remains silent. How else could Jesus respond after having already responded so many times to similar queries of the Pharisees throughout the Gospel? Every time the Pharisees—or even his diverse listeners and followers—ask him about his "truths," Jesus generally responds by describing them as representative of another world. There is no reason for him to respond again: everyone knows that he defers to a metaphysical authority for truth—a truth that cannot be directly known through our human, this-worldly faculties. That other world holds greater currency than anything in "this world." It is this "truth"—the reliance upon "another world" as an authority for deriving truth and meaning—that forms the foundation for the Gospels. It inspires Nietzsche to create his own "*Ecce Homo*" style testament, which functions as a powerful counter-narrative to the Bible in *Ecce Homo*.

Nietzsche frames his counternarrative with a response to Pontius Pilate's question: "Truth [...]. What is that?" Instead of alluding to an abstract, ill-defined "other world," Nietzsche provides a detailed description of *his* "truth." This truth is entirely rooted in "this world"—specifically Nietzsche's world. Nietzsche claims sovereignty over "his" world. He

“bears witness” to himself. Despite its personal and individual nature, his truth is one that is accessible to all people. Everyone has their own truth, which if they so chose, they may express in a variety of different ways. In this way, Nietzsche the narrator differs substantially from Jesus Christ, in that he claims to offer his own personal truths. While it is true that “Nietzsche’s truth” might derive authority from the will to power, which Nietzsche describes as a universal truth (albeit not a metaphysical truth), Nietzsche describes the will to power as a force that we must interpret with respect to a personal, this-worldly perspective. Therefore, Nietzsche’s truth is inextricably connected to his body, emotions, and mind. For example, in the section entitled “Why I am So Clever,” Nietzsche describes the significance that climate, nutrition and geography have had on his development as an individual and philosopher (see esp. *BWN* 692-698; *KSA* 6, 278-286). Nietzsche’s gospel demonstrates that it is not necessary to appeal to an intermediate being, such as Christ, who bridges the gap between this world and a metaphysical world. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche the narrator demonstrates that we only need ourselves to negotiate a relationship with “truth.” Nietzsche, the messiah of the will to power, merely sets an example of how to do this. He “delivers” humanity from the thralldom of metaphysics to “this world” and unto itself. This represents a radical shift from the New Testament.

The Anti-Christ

In the Gospel of John, Pontius Pilate finds “no case against” Jesus. In spite of that, however, Jesus is crucified, martyred, and forms the locus of a new system of belief that Nietzsche repeatedly contends is “anti-nature” [*Widernatur*]. Nietzsche apparently begins using the word *Widernatur* with the publication of *The Genealogy of Morals* in 1887 (*eKGWB*). Nietzsche probably uses the word *Widernatur* for the first time in the first essay “‘Good and Evil,’ ‘Good and Bad’” [“‘*Gut und Böse.*’ ‘*Gut und Schlecht*’”] where he suggests that Roman anti-Semitism was fuelled by its disgust with Jewish values, which the Romans perceived to be inimical to life:

The symbol of this struggle, inscribed in letters legible across all human history, is “Rome against Judea, Judea against Rome”:—there has hitherto been no greater event than *this* struggle, *this* question, *this* deadly contradiction. Rome felt the Jew to be something like anti-nature itself, its antipodal monstrosity as it were: in Rome the Jew stood “*convicted* of hatred for the whole human race”; and rightly, provided one has a right to link the salvation and future of the human race with the unconditional dominance of aristocratic values, Roman values. (BWN 488)⁷

Nietzsche describes a scenario in which Jews are not guilty of a particular crime or infraction. They are guilty of appealing to a metaphysical authority of truth and meaning that runs contrary to the Roman’s this-worldly concept of life and vitality. In short, Nietzsche contends that the Jews represent something *monstrous and decadent* to the Romans. It runs contrary to their conception of life, vitality, and “nature.”

We can extrapolate how Nietzsche would understand the willingness of both the Romans and the Jews to see Jesus crucified. From the Roman point of view, Jesus Christ represents the spread of “anti-nature” beyond the confines of an otherwise insular Jewish people. However, from the Jewish point of view, Jesus Christ represents something equally horrifying: the denigration of the Jewish anti-natural, “slave morality” by sharing it with *everyone*. Jesus Christ is a threat to the exclusivity of the Jewish religion. Even though Nietzsche contends that Judaism represents a religion that covets “slave morality,” Nietzsche believed that in its original form, the slave morality was a *powerful concept*. This is because only the Jews had conceived of a religion based on anti-natural, common, slave values. Naturally, the world contained many civilizations that relied upon a slave class, but the foundation of an entire system of valuation that apotheosizes a slave’s perspective and way of life was an entirely new and threatening occurrence. Thus, despite its foundation in

⁷ Das Symbol dieses Kampfes, in einer Schrift geschrieben, die über alle Menschengeschichte hinweg bisher lesbar blieb, heißt „Rom gegen Judäa, Judäa gegen Rom“: — es gab bisher kein grösseres Ereigniss als *diesen* Kampf, *diese* Fragestellung, *diesen* todfeindlichen Widerspruch. Rom empfand im Juden etwas wie die Widernatur selbst, gleichsam sein antipodisches Monstrum; in Rom galt der Jude „des Hasses gegen das ganze Menschengeschlecht *überführt*“: mit Recht, sofern man ein Recht hat, das Heil und die Zukunft des Menschengeschlechts an die unbedingte Herrschaft der aristokratischen Werthe, der römischen Werthe anzuknüpfen. (KSA 5, 286)

a plebian system of valuation, the religion itself retained a level of nobility due to its exclusive nature.

Nietzsche expresses his admiration for the ancient Jews and the Old Testament throughout his late works. In aphorism 52 of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche declares that the Old Testament is a “book of divine justice” [“*Buche von der göttlichen Gerechtigkeit*”] that contains “speeches in so grand a style that Greek and Indian literature have nothing to compare with it” [“*Reden in einem so grossen Stile, dass das griechische und indische Schriftenthum ihm nichts zur Seite zu stellen hat*”] (BWN 255; KSA 5, 72). He goes so far as to claim that we must “stand before these tremendous remnants of what man once was, and will have sad thoughts about ancient Asia and its protruding little peninsula Europe, which wants by all means to signify as against Asia the ‘progress of man’” (BWN 255; KSA 5, 72).⁸ These are no small words for Nietzsche. Although he accuses the Jews for promulgating an “inversion of all values” [“*Umkehrung der Werthe*”] (BWN 298; KSA 5, 116) in which noble values are subjugated to slave morality, he praises them for their audacity to claim that they are the “chosen people”; their achievements surpass the modern belief in “progress.” Nietzsche describes the “inversion of all values” succinctly in *The Genealogy of Morals*: “All that has been done on earth against ‘the noble,’ ‘the powerful,’ ‘the masters,’ ‘the rules,’ fades into nothing compared with what the *Jews* have done against them. [...] It was the Jews who, with awe-inspiring consistency, dared to invert the aristocratic value-equation [...] and to hang on to this inversion with their teeth, the teeth of the most abysmal hatred [...]” (BWN 469-470).⁹ The advent of Christianity lowered the level of civilization’s vitality

⁸ Man steht mit Schrecken und Ehrfurcht vor diesen ungeheuren Überbleibseln dessen, was der Mensch einstmals was, und wird dabei über das alte Asien und sein vorgeschobenes Halbinselchen Europa, das durchaus gegen Asien den „Fortschritt des Menschen“ [...]. (KSA 5, 72)

⁹ Alles, was auf Erden gegen „die Vornehmen“, „die Gewaltigen“, „die Herren“, „die Machthaber“ gethan worden ist, ist nicht der Rede werth im Vergleich mit dem, was *die Juden* gegen sie gethan haben [...] Die Juden sind es gewesen, die gegen die aristokratische Werthgleichung [...] mit einer furchteinflössenden Folgerichtigkeit die Umkehrung gewagt und mit den Zähnen des abgründlichsten Hasses [...] festgehalten haben [...]. (KSA 5, 267)

and nobility in a variety of ways. As Nietzsche explains, this happened primarily through the dissemination of slave values far beyond the confines of the Jewish people. The New Testament has been the medium for this dissemination of slave values: “To have glued this New Testament [...] to the Old Testament to make *one* book [...] is the greatest audacity and ‘sin against the spirit’ that literary Europe has on its conscience” [“*Diese neue Testament [...] mit dem alten Testament zu Einem Buche zusammengeleimt zu haben [...] ist vielleicht die grösste Verwegenheit und ‚Sünde wider den Geist,‘ welche das litterarische Europa auf dem Gewissen hat*”] (BWN 256; KSA 5, 72). The great inversion of all values that occurred with the founding of Judaism becomes a universal phenomenon.

Both Jesus Christ and Nietzsche appeal to the “source” of their respective truths, which for Jesus Christ is “another world,” and for Nietzsche, is “this world.” This is perhaps the most crucial difference, and one that lies behind Nietzsche’s desire to depict himself in such a performative and emphatic manner. Whereas Jesus Christ’s “*ecce homo* performance” appeals to the significance of a metaphysical and transcendental world, and denigrates the significance of the physical body and other “this worldly” concerns, Nietzsche’s does the exact opposite. Nietzsche embraces every aspect of his existence in “this world.” In addition, Nietzsche actively draws attention to the differences between his “this-worldly” philosophy and the metaphysical “otherworldly” philosophy of the biblical Jesus Christ. Thus, Nietzsche’s performance places his body, his ideas, and his concerns at the centre of his writing. It is *imperative* that he takes responsibility for them.

Nietzsche’s “evangel” is based on his own experiences in “this world.” Yet, Nietzsche’s evangel is not merely about the “real world” or the “material world”—it is about *his* world. “The world,” as depicted in Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*, may have shared characteristics with *my* world and the worlds of those who read this study, but it undoubtedly depicts a very personal and particular world. Thus, Nietzsche’s evangel—the “joyous tidings” that Nietzsche disseminates—refers to the redemptive and vindicating power of a *this-worldly* way of life. That is, it represents a way of life that involves the

constant revaluation of all values, a process that relies completely upon a person's full physical and spiritual engagement with the sensual realities of "this world." According to Nietzsche's writings, the hegemony of a metaphysical world in Western philosophy denigrates the importance of the material and immanent worlds, which include the many "personal" worlds created by every human being. However, Nietzsche's "joyous tidings" closely correspond to his definition of "joy," which throughout his texts, consistently involves embracing all aspects of life, including those that are conventionally considered "good" and "pleasing," and "bad" and "unpleasant."

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche repeatedly and adamantly asserts that *he*—as a writer and human being, in both the sensual and literary sense of the word—actually symbolizes the *revaluation of all values*. The revaluation of all values begins with Nietzsche, and is the product of his career as a writer and a philosopher, but also as his existence as a human being. Toward the end of *Ecce Homo*, he boldly and directly claims that the "revaluation of all values" is *his* "formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity" become "flesh and genius" in *him* (BWN 782). Clearly, Nietzsche intends to posit his book as the most significant and decisive step toward a "revaluation of all values." Nietzsche depicts himself as a terrifying and powerful signifier, which carries as much responsibility for the revaluation of values as a watershed event in the history and development of human civilization as the name Jesus Christ carries in Christianity and Western civilization. These claims might seem extreme, but they do indeed reflect the words in the text, and therefore evidence the urgency and danger of Nietzsche's message.

It would be inappropriate for Nietzsche to let anyone else tell his gospel. The revaluation of all values is *his* truth; it began with him, has been developed by him, and therefore, it must be told by him. In addition, he must answer the questions that are put to him. Nietzsche constantly responds to his critics—both real and imagined—and offers in-depth critiques of his written works and biography. The fact that Nietzsche juxtaposes the "revaluation of all values" onto his testament, however, portrays an intimate connection

between the deeply personal and the universal. There is no contradiction between the deeply personal and what appears to be the profoundly universal in *Ecce Homo*. The “revaluation of all values” represents a process of self-development as much as it represents an axiological transvaluation. In *Ecce Homo*, this multilayered process of “personal” and “universal” development is represented through the powerful, multivalent signifier that we refer to as “Nietzsche.” Nietzsche is unambiguous about the importance of these connections. Nietzsche begins *Ecce Homo* by affirming that “the most difficult demand *ever* made” [*der schwersten Forderung an die Menschheit herantreten muss*] [emphasis mine] on humanity—that is, the “revaluation of all values”—requires an autobiographical testament from its founder (BWN 673; KSA 6, 257). The world needs someone to account for the revaluation of all values, and Nietzsche is ready and willing to provide it. He implores his reader not to mistake him for someone else: “Above all, do not mistake me for someone else” [*Verwechselt mich vor Allem nicht!*] (BWN 673; KSA 6, 257).

Nietzsche emphasizes that he must compose a comprehensive, critical study of his own life and works before someone else does. This study must be a living, interactive text that engages a wide variety of readers, including his “supporters” and “foes,” and members of all classes and nationalities for generations to come. As indicated in the first aphorism of the final—and most dramatic—chapter of the book, “Why I Am a Destiny,” Nietzsche immodestly declares the epochal, prophetic significance of his life and works. He claims that his name will be “associated with [...] a crisis without equal on earth” as he is dynamite (see the epigraph to this chapter). Yet, he distances himself from the legacy that will inevitably arise from this “crisis”:

—Yet for all that, there is nothing in me of a founder of a religion—religions are affairs of the rabble; I find it necessary to wash my hands after I have come into contact with religious people. —I *want* no “believers”; I think I am too malicious to believe in myself; I never speak to masses. — I have a terrible

fear that one day I will be pronounced *holy*: you will guess why I publish this book *before*; it shall prevent people from doing mischief with me. (BWN 782)¹⁰

This passage contains some curious similarities and differences with Jesus Christ's words with Pilate in John 19. Both Nietzsche and Jesus answer "charges" from their audience. By the time *Ecce Homo* was published in 1908, a Nietzsche cult had already developed in Europe, and it would only be a few years before Nietzsche would indeed be declared the founder or inspiration of a wide variety of ideologies—some of which could easily be considered "religions" (see Chapter Three, pages 234-235). In many respects, Nietzsche had already attracted a "rabble" of his own—that is, readers and fans of various walks of life—who were poised to embrace or condemn his ideas. Nietzsche does not believe that it is appropriate to remain silent in his "*ecce homo* performance."

For Jesus Christ and Socrates, who appeal to their audience's belief in a transcendental set of truths, having someone speak "for them" is a viable option; for Nietzsche it is not. That is, it is possible to interpret the foundation of the philosophies that underpin the truths represented by Jesus and Socrates as existing entirely independent of their bodies and ideas. Their performances symbolize the relationship between the individual and a metaphysical, otherworldly truth. In Nietzsche's writings, however, there is a direct connection between the deeply personal and the broadly applicable. It would be impossible for Nietzsche *not* to write a book entitled *Ecce Homo*—that is, in order for Nietzsche to write a book about the revaluation of all values, he can and *must* write about himself, including the manifold aspects of his physical existence. He cannot appeal to the sublime authority of a metaphysical world. Nietzsche can only appeal to Nietzsche.

¹⁰ Und mit Alledem ist Nichts in mir von einem Religionsstifter — Religionen sind Pöbel-Affären, ich habe nöthig, mir die Hände nach der Berührung mit religiösen Menschen zu waschen... Ich *will* keine „Gläubigen“, ich denke, ich bin zu boshaft dazu, um an mich selbst zu glauben, ich rede niemals zu Massen... Ich habe eine erschreckliche Angst davor, dass man mich eines Tags *heilig* spricht: man wird errathen, weshalb ich dies Buch *vorher* herausgebe, es soll verhüten, dass man Unfug mit mir treibt... (KSA 6, 365)

Nietzsche the narrator brandishes himself to the “people” and defends himself against the many “charges” that have been laid against him. He demonstrates a keen awareness of his readership, critiques, and the significance of his ideas on all aspects of European life. Additionally, Nietzsche the narrator remains constantly aware and vigilant of the relationship of his ideas, body, and emotions, to the world around him. In short, the man that Nietzsche presents in *Ecce Homo* is firmly rooted in “this world” in the broadest and immediate sense of the word. He is entirely involved and engaged with the concerns of “this world,” unlike the Jesus of the Gospel of John who consistently distances himself from everything that is connected to it. Nietzsche commits himself to the concerns of “this world” in the first pages of the book:

The last thing *I* should promise would be to “improve” mankind. No new idols are erected by me; let the old ones learn what feet of clay mean. *Overthrowing idols* (my word for “ideals”)—that comes closer to being part of my craft. One has deprived reality of its value, its meaning, its truthfulness, to precisely the extent to which one has mendaciously invented an ideal world.

The “true world” and the “apparent world”—that means: the mendaciously invented world and reality.

The *lie* of the ideal has so far been the curse on reality; on account of it, mankind itself has become mendacious and false down to its most fundamental instincts—to the point of worshipping the *opposite* values of those which alone would guarantee its health, its future, the lofty *right* to its future. (BWN 673-674)¹¹

In this passage, Nietzsche posits himself as the antithesis of an idealist. Reality for an idealist constitutes a “true world” that lies behind the veil of the “apparent” world of sensual reality. This concurs with Nietzsche’s description of how Judeo-Christian and

¹¹ Das letzte, was *ich* versprechen würde, wäre, die Menschheit zu „verbessern“. Von mir werden keine neuen Götzen ausgerichtet; die alten mögen lernen, was es mit thönernen Beinen auf sich hat. Götzen (mein Wort für „Ideale“) *umwerfen* — das gehört schon eher zu meinem Handwerk. Man hat die Realität in dem Grade um ihren Werth, ihren Sinn, ihre Wahrhaftigkeit gebracht, als man eine ideale Welt *erlog*. . . Die „wahre Welt und die „scheinbare Welt“ — auf deutsch: die *erlogne* Welt und die Realität. . . Die *Lüge* des Ideals war bisher der Fluch über der Realität, die Menschheit selbst ist durch sie bis in ihre untersten Instinkte hinein verlogen und falsch geworden — bis zur Anbetung der *umgekehrten* Werthe, als die sind, mit denen ihr erst das Gedeihen, die Zukunft, das hohe *Recht* auf Zukunft verbürgt wäre. (KSA 6, 258)

Platonic metaphysics have inspired an inversion of all values in the aphorism entitled “How the True World Became a Fable,” in *Twilight of the Idols*, which I discuss in the Introduction. Nietzsche claims that his vocation and “craft”—literally his “handiwork” [*Handwerk*])—consists of overturning the idols erected by idealists over the last few millennia. Nietzsche intends to put a stop to this process and reverse it.

If we accept all of Nietzsche’s claims about the significance of his potentially earth-shattering revaluation of all values literally, then we must seriously consider the significance of *Ecce Homo* as a philosophical document. We must accept the book as a model for understanding the self and identity. Looking at *Ecce Homo* as a testament for a modern messiah is a terrifying thought—after all, who would want to consider “dynamite” as the foundation of humanity? It is a very discomfiting and destabilizing notion. Dissonance as the foundation for an epistemology is radical enough, but interpreting it as dynamite is terrifying. However, danger, uncertainty, and terrifying prospects are important parts of Nietzsche’s philosophy. His final books are filled with martial imagery, smashed tablets, lightening bolts, and metaphorical shrapnel of all kinds. Yet, this should come as no surprise to us, as Nietzsche maintains that pain and joy are inseparable throughout his works. We cannot experience this-worldly joy without embracing the possibility of pain and suffering.

Nietzsche’s glad tidings are not always very joyous—at least not in the conventional sense. They do not spread the message of universal brotherhood, the possibility of attaining metaphysical comforts, or even a philosophy that everyone shares. In this way, Nietzsche’s evangel is very different from the evangel of Jesus Christ as depicted in the New Testament. It does not threaten to spread a mediocritizing philosophy throughout the world. While many people might read it, believe in it, and even want to emulate it, the incendiary and dangerous philosophy portrayed in *Ecce Homo* is certainly not for everyone. In contrast to the message of Jesus Christ, which Nietzsche believes has exerted a decadent, mediocritizing and democratizing force throughout the world, the “revaluation of all

values” instills an order and rank in human society. Those that have the courage, audacity, and dynamism to embrace it may do so at their own peril. Everyone else can merely admire its strength, nobility, and power. In this way, Nietzsche the narrator functions very differently from Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John, based on Nietzsche’s analyses of the Bible and its legacy. The narrator of *Ecce Homo* is indeed an *anti-Christ*. However, he is *not* a new god by any stretch of the imagination.

“I Know My Fate”

The “truths” associated with Jesus Christ and Socrates will always be associated with their deaths. Jesus Christ’s message will always be associated with his crucifixion and the many controversies that it has generated, and Socrates’ philosophy will always be associated with the death sentence handed down to him by the Athenian jury: that he poison himself by drinking hemlock for corrupting the youth of Athens. Jesus Christ and Socrates are forced to undergo arduous and complex “trials,” in which they must answer to the charges put against them, be judged, and eventually accept their respective punishments—each of which involves a public death. Moreover, in each case, both men courageously and eagerly “embrace” their respective fates, as chronicled by a variety of texts.

The question of “fate” brings yet another factor into consideration in which Nietzsche departs from the pattern established by Jesus Christ and Socrates. According to Nietzsche, neither Jesus Christ nor Socrates seems to embrace fate joyfully, in a way that conveys the sense of Nietzsche’s famous phrase *amor fati*. It is true that both men accepted their fates, and perhaps even faced them courageously and boldly, but mainstream philosophy hardly paints either Socrates or Jesus Christ as men who meet their respective deaths affirming this-worldly values. The myths about how these men faced their respective deaths—whether true or not—have permanently added to the controversy of their lives, teachings, and their “truths.” Their bodies and attitudes toward death are

closely connected to their “truths.” Nietzsche’s main objection to Jesus Christ and Socrates as central figures in the metanarratives of Western civilization is that they die for truths whose central authority for deriving truth and meaning lies in another world. They have inspired humanity to associate otherworldly values with courage and joy, and to shun and hate the sensual realities of this-worldly existence. Nietzsche hopes to put a stop to this pattern with his “testament.”

Nietzsche provides us with conflicting accounts about how Jesus Christ faced his death. His most controversial comments appear in the *Antichrist*, where he rather unexpectedly asserts that the “real” Jesus was nothing like the Christ depicted in the New Testament. Nietzsche claims that the *real* Jesus was a relatively benign figure, and that the vast majority of his teachings should be attributed to his apostles: most notably Paul of Tarsus, whom Nietzsche demonizes even more than Plato. In aphorism 42 of *The Antichrist*, for example, Nietzsche describes Paul as a “dysangelist,” a word that Walter Kaufmann translates as “bringer of *ill* tidings.” Nietzsche claims that Paul brought a “vision of hatred” [*Vision des Hasses*] to the world (TPN 617; KSA 6, 215-216). At times, it seems as though Nietzsche believes that Paul should have known better than to promulgate such life-denying ideas. Indeed, Nietzsche claims that the *real* Jesus (as Nietzsche imagined him) never died for anyone’s sins, and had absolutely no contempt for this world at all; in fact, the teachings of Jesus Christ were *this-worldly*:

True life, eternal life, has been found—it is not promised, it is here, it is *in you*: as a living in love, in love without subtraction and exclusion, without regard for station. Everyone is the child of God—Jesus definitely presumes nothing for himself alone—and as a child of God everyone is equal to everyone. To make a *hero* of Jesus! And even more, what a misunderstanding is the word “genius”! Our whole concept, our cultural concept, of “spirit” has no meaning whatever in the world in which Jesus lives. Spoken with the precision of a physiologist, even an entirely different word would still be more nearly fitting here—the word *idiot*. (TPN 601)¹²

¹² Das wahre Leben, das ewige Leben ist gefunden — es wird nicht verheissen, es ist da, es ist *in euch*: als Leben in der Liebe, in der Liebe ohne Abzug und Ausschluss, ohne Distanz. Jeder ist das Kind Gottes — Jesus nimmt durchaus nichts für sich allein in Anspruch — als

According to Nietzsche, Jesus the man had virtually nothing to do with modern, conventional notions of Christianity. Nietzsche tells us that the life-denying, spiteful, ascetic religion that he has been lambasting throughout his entire career is largely the result of the meddling of the apostles—particularly Paul of Tarsus—whom, Nietzsche believes, had anything but Jesus’ authentic intentions in mind. The real Jesus was an “idiot” who did not distinguish a sensual world from a metaphysical world—that is the world of the here and now from a “kingdom of heaven”—simply because he was *incapable* of doing so. Jesus did not universalize the Jewish “inversion of all values.” Nietzsche contends that he created something entirely new: a philosophy of life in which all of humanity finds equality in its brotherhood as the progeny of a universal, compassionate, and loving God. According to Nietzsche, the “real Christ” did not believe that God resides in another world, but inside everyone—perhaps *everything*. Such a view precludes the need to vindicate oneself to another, metaphysical world through redemption from this-worldly sins. As Nietzsche points out in aphorism 33, Jesus does not preach an organized religion, but merely a “way of life” in the most literal sense of the word:

The life of the Redeemer was nothing other than *this practice*—nor was his death anything else. He no longer required any formulas, any rites for his intercourse with God—not even prayer. He broke with the whole Jewish doctrine of repentance and reconciliation; he knows that it is only in the *practice* of life that one feels divine,” “blessed,” “evangelical,” at all times a “child of God.” [...] What was disposed of with the evangel was the Judaism of “sin,” “forgiveness of sin,” “faith,” “redemption through faith”—the whole Jewish *ecclesiastical* doctrine was negated in the “glad tidings.” (TPN 607)¹³

Kind Gottes ist Jeder mit Jedem gleich . . . Aus Jesus einen *Helden* machen! — Und was für ein Missverständnis ist gar das Wort „Genie“! Unser ganzer Begriff, unser Cultur-Begriff „Geist“ hat in der Welt, in der Jesus lebt, gar keinen Sinn. Mit der Strenge des Physiologen gesprochen, wäre hier ein ganz andres Wort eher noch am Platz: das Wort Idiot. (KSA 6, 200)

¹³ Das Leben des Erlösers war nichts andres als *diese* Praktik, — sein Tod war auch nichts andres... Er hatte keine Formeln, keinen Ritus für den Verkehr mit Gott mehr nöthig — nicht einmal das Gebet. Er hat mit der ganzen jüdischen Buss- und Versöhnungs-Lehre abgerechnet; er Weiss, wie es allein die *Praktik* des Lebens ist, mit der man sich „göttlich“, „selig“, „evangelisch“, jeder Zeit ein „Kind Gottes“ fühlt. [...] Was mit dem Evangelium

Nietzsche's rather surprising account of the life and death of Jesus stands in stark contrast to the life-denying Christ figure that he depicts elsewhere in his other texts. Exactly how and why Nietzsche came up with this alternative account has been a hotly debated subject for years. It also contrasts sharply with the more canonical narratives of a "heroic" Jesus Christ that Nietzsche claims Paul and countless other Christian theologians created and promulgated after Christ's death. Walter Kaufmann argues that Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of Dostoevsky's novel, *The Idiot* (1869), provided Nietzsche with the inspiration for his "idiot" Christ (Nietzsche 341). The *disharmony* between these two figures is one of the most engaging aspects of *The Antichrist*, as it provokes the reader to consider the importance of Jesus Christ as a *literary figure*, and the product of a long and complex, literary genealogy. The reader encounters various depictions of familiar literary and historical themes, metaphors, and icons that diverge substantially from what he or she might initially expect. In the *Antichrist*, the various depictions of Christ produce a powerful literary dissonance that encourages the reader to rethink the concept of "Christ," messiah, and evangel.

Nietzsche's depiction of Socrates is just as complex and disorienting as his depiction of Jesus Christ. Most people who have read *The Birth of Tragedy* will have a difficult time forgetting Nietzsche's unforgiving tirades against Socrates—the "art destroyer"—whose theories of knowledge resulted in the destruction of the life-affirming dynamic between Apollo and Dionysus and the inception of a myopic, ascetic worldview that subjugates life to the service of knowledge. Alternatively, readers of Nietzsche's later works might recall the chapter from *Twilight of the Idols* entitled "The Problem of Socrates" ["*Das Problem des Sokrates*"] which begins by flatly stating that for Socrates, life was simply "no good" ["*das Leben (...) taugt nichts*"] (TPN 473; KSA 6, 67). However, throughout his works, Nietzsche shifts the focus of his critique to Plato, whom he clearly ascribes a role in the dissemination

abgethan war, das war das Judenthum der Begriffe „Sünde“, „Vergebung der Sünde“, „Glaube“, „Erlösung durch den Glauben“ — die ganze jüdische *Kirchen* - Lehre war in der „frohen Botschaft“ verneint. (KSA 6, 205-206)

of Socrates' thought that parallels Paul's role in the construction of "Christianity." As I discuss in Chapter One, Nietzsche takes great pain to clarify his opinion of the pre-Socratic philosophers: they include Socrates. The "real" Socrates made many mistakes, but it was Plato who *systematized* Socrates' ideas and disseminated them in widely read texts. Socrates, like Christ, allegedly wrote nothing. The "idiot" Christ that Nietzsche portrays in the *Antichrist* would probably never have even thought of preparing a testament to safeguard his ideas. Accordingly, Socrates was so filled with hatred for life and a sense of *ressentiment* toward humanity that he went *spitefully* toward his death without ever having written a thing. It was *other* people who spoke on behalf of these two men.

In many respects, Socrates portrays and symbolizes a philosophy that is potentially even more dangerous than Jesus Christ's. While Jesus Christ presents a metaphysical philosophy that is easily accessible to the masses, Socrates offers a philosophy for the elite—the "educated" masses. To use the language of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Socrates appeals to the foibles of the "higher man." According to Nietzsche, the legacy of Socrates has had a direct effect on the development of science. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche asserts that Socrates does not simply defer to the hegemony of a metaphysical "Kingdom of Heaven" to provide humanity with a yardstick for what is "good" and "evil"—Socrates' primary concern is to make the world "intelligible." He defers to "reason," which Nietzsche considers to be even more repugnant than an all-powerful God, because it is cold, mathematical, and entirely bereft of passion and nobility. By contrast, Nietzsche seems to believe that Christianity's goal is merely to make the world "comfortable" and "meaningful" for humanity—not necessarily logical or intelligible.

For something to be "good" and "beautiful" to Socrates, it must facilitate humanity's access to *reason*. Nietzsche depicts the "reason" of Socrates as something far colder and impersonal than the God of Christianity. While Christianity demands that its believers worship a metaphysical God and revere unattainable ideals and idols, Platonic philosophy's emphasis on "reason" makes a much simpler, yet far more unjust and totalistic demand on

humanity: that it simply worship “truth.” “Truth” is far more abstract than God. While God has a voice, is capable of becoming flesh, and demands “love” and “goodness,” *reason* demands that humanity enthrall itself to a highly abstract, and rather cold, notion of “truth.” For Nietzsche, it is a truly joyless philosophy. As Nietzsche emphasizes in “The Problem of Socrates” in *Twilight of the Idols*—perhaps his most vicious and carefully organized tirade against Socrates—reason promises nothing but itself. Reason promises no “afterworld” or reward for worshipping it. Reason does not merely *repress* or fight human instinct; it is “without instinct” [“ohne Instinkt”] and stands opposed to instinct [“im Widerstand”]:

Socrates was a misunderstanding; the whole improvement-morality, including the Christian, was a misunderstanding. The most blinding daylight; rationality at any price; life, bright, cold, cautious, conscious, without instinct, in opposition to the instincts—all this too was a mere disease, another disease, and by no means a return to “virtue,” to “health,” to happiness. To *have to* fight the instincts—that is the formula of decadence: as long as life is *ascending*, happiness equals instinct. (TPN 479)¹⁴

Nietzsche maintains that Socrates’ apparent optimism toward the supremacy of “truth” was a fallacy—one that Nietzsche believed made Socrates *want* to die more than anything else. For Nietzsche, “death”—the complete cessation of existence—is the only possible course of action for someone who worships reason above all other things. Socrates did not want to “transcend” the world or move to a better one, he simply desired to cease existing. Nietzsche offers an alternative to *opposing* or *denying* the significance of human instinct: to *have to battle* [Bekämpfen] instinct—to combat and controvert it out of necessity and exigency. Battle fills us with passion and invigorates us.

The last line of the above-quoted passage offers the reader an interesting riddle: what is the difference between the *instinct* to fight—in the most general sense of the word—

¹⁴ Sokrates war ein Missverständniss; die ganze Besserungs-Moral, auch die christliche, war ein Missverständniss... Das grellste Tageslicht, die Vernünftigkeit um jeden Preis, das Leben hell, kalt, vorsichtig, bewusst, ohne Instinkt, im Widerstand gegen Instinkte war selbst nur eine Krankheit, eine andre Krankheit — und durchaus kein Rückweg zur „Tugend“, zur „Gesundheit“, zum Glück... Die Instinkte bekämpfen *müssen* — das ist die Formel für *décadence*: so lange das Leben *aufsteigt*, ist Glück gleich Instinkt. — (KSA 6, 73)

and feeling the *imperative* to battle instinct? Why does Nietzsche underline the auxiliary verb “to have to” [*müssen*]? In aphorism twelve, Nietzsche suggests that Socrates “wanted to die” [*Sokrates wollte sterben*]: he “chose the beaker of poison” and that he “forced Athens to [sentence him to] the beaker of poison” [*er gab sich den Giftbecher, er zwang Athen zum Giftbecher*] (trans. mine, c.f. TPN 479; KSA 6, 73). Instead of feeling the compulsion to battle *with* instincts, he prefers to battle *against* them. Socrates chose something far more “unearthly” than God—he chose “reason,” which exists above and beyond all worlds—one in which “love,” “morality,” and “virtues” have little significance. It is beyond *asceticism*, as it does not involve adhering to a philosophy that demands the denial or repression of “instinct” to rise “above” this world. Reason requires that humanity turn its back on instinct; humanity must shut it out, and relegate it to irrelevance.

Does this final line of this passage imply a measure of ambiguity in “decadence”? Like most of the important keywords in Nietzsche’s lexicon, the French word *décadence* has a variety of meanings. One can actively promote or facilitate the “decay” of the body, a civilization, or the earth, without realizing—or admitting—that decadence can also lead to new states of vitality and renewed affirmations of life. However, one can just as easily use his or her decadence as a point of departure for self-critique. The *decay* of form, life, and power is an inherent part of Nietzsche’s understanding of the universe. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche describes the interdependency and life-affirming nature of the Apollonian and Dionysian forces as contingent upon the “decay” and disintegration of forms. Here Nietzsche applies a similar theory to the relationship of the “self.” Although decadence might initially appear to be a threat to the stability and form of the self, it also offers the opportunity to recreate and affirm the self as a truly dynamic complex of power.

In his introduction to *Ecce Homo* in *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann emphasizes that from a literary and philosophical perspective, “*Ecce Homo* is the *Apology* of this ‘artistic Socrates’” (659), which refers to the belief, held by Kaufmann and many other critics, that Nietzsche fancied himself to be an artistic reincarnation of Socrates. Instead of

representing a philosopher who glorifies knowledge over life, and one who denigrates art in favour of the supremacy of abstract, metaphysical truths, Kaufmann believes that Nietzsche has come to see himself as the incarnation of a dancing, musical Socrates, who embraces a “gay science,” rather than a metaphysical science (GS 13). This is indeed the case. However, the title of *Ecce Homo*, as well as the last line of the text, indicate that the figure of Jesus Christ is just as important, if not more important than that of Socrates: “Have I been understood?— *Dionysus versus the Crucified*.—“ [— *Hat man mich verstanden? — Dionysos gegen den Gekreuzigten...*”] (BWN 791; KSA 6, 374). If Nietzsche represents himself as a dancing Socrates, what kind of Jesus Christ does he represent? Indeed, Nietzsche portrays himself as a dancing Christ—a dancing, laughing, musical messiah who does not exit the world by denying it, but by exploding it.

In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche portrays Dionysian values as, above all, anti-Christian values. They still represent musical dissonance, *amor fati*, and a tragic worldview, as they did when Nietzsche penned *The Birth of Tragedy*. However, in *Ecce Homo*, Dionysus is no longer the opponent of Euripides or Socrates, as he was in his early works. Euripides and Socrates lived in ancient Greece and did not live to see the advent of Christianity. Nietzsche believed that Platonism—despite its apotheosis of otherworldly values—still retained a measure of strength and nobility. As Nietzsche states in *Beyond Good and Evil*, “the charm of the Platonic way of thinking, which was a noble way of thinking, consisted precisely in *resistance to obvious sense-evidence*” [“*genau im Widerstreben gegen die Sinnenfälligkeit bestand der Zauber der platonischen Denkweise, welche eine vornehme Denkweise war*”] (BWN 212; KSA 5, 28). This statement portrays Nietzsche’s respect for the stubborn, proud, arrogance of Plato and his ancient followers. Contrarily, Christianity not only represents the apotheosis of otherworldly values, but *slave* values, and herd morality. Nietzsche believes that Christianity represents the wholesale sellout of this-worldly values by luring humanity down the path of mediocrity. Throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*, the young Nietzsche declares his hope that the future will bring a new Dionysian age. At the end of the twenty-third

aphorism, he declares that the German people only need to listen to the “luring call of the Dionysian bird that hovers above” [“lockenden Rufe des dionysischen Vogels lauschen, der über ihm sich wiegt”] to find the way (BWN 139; KSA 1, 149). In *Ecce Homo*, the echoes of German nationalism have disappeared, but the luring call of Dionysus has not. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche posits Dionysus as the antipode of Christ. Whereas Christ represents the penultimate symbol of an otherworldly, metaphysical philosophy, Dionysus represents humanity’s connection to the most primal, dissonant, this-worldly forces of the universe. Although Nietzsche does not describe the clash of these two gods in detail, it is clear that the result is likely to be extraordinarily disruptive.

This conflation of figures not only represents a notably Nietzschean twist on the concepts of biography, autobiography, and textual criticism, but an example of dissonance in the text of *Ecce Homo*. From the outset of this book, Nietzsche puts the reader into a position in which he or she must question the signifying power of the names and historical references provided in the book (including those that refer to Nietzsche’s life). The text encourages the reader to begin “revaluating” their preconceived notions about the self, humanity, history, and “Nietzsche” from the very first page. *Ecce Homo* is not just a book about Nietzsche—it is a trenchant critique of how we understand the concept of “identity.” That is, by posing the unanswerable question of “who is Friedrich Nietzsche” at the same time as positing a “revaluation of all values,” *Ecce Homo* forces the reader to ask him or herself—*What am I?* To put it another way, *Ecce Homo* employs a self-consciously dissonant and dialogic style to provoke the reader to “revalue values” in a way that is starkly reminiscent of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. The main difference, however, is that the book’s dialogism does not revolve around an epic narrative, it revolves around the depiction of a specific person: Nietzsche the narrator. Nietzsche the narrator represents centres of force that generate dissonance in the text and the mind of the reader. Likewise, the depictions of Jesus Christ and Socrates represent centres of force as well. The interplay of the text’s

personified centres of force interact to provoke the reader to accept Nietzsche the narrator as a new messianic figure that is the natural successor to Socrates and Jesus Christ.

In the chapter of *Ecce Homo* entitled “Why I am So Clever” [“*Warum ich so klug bin*”], Nietzsche provides us with a key to understanding his interpretation of the revaluation of all values. It accords with the processes of Nietzsche’s dissonant epistemology as I have delineated it in this study, but unfortunately, it does little more than lead us into an interpretive quagmire. It is the most blatant example of an epistemological and ethical “bomb” in the book:

Considered in this way, my life is simply wonderful. For the task of a *revaluation of all values* more capacities may have been needed than have ever dwelt together in a single individual—above all, even contrary capacities that had to be kept from disturbing, destroying one another. An order of rank among these capacities; distance; the art of separating without setting against one another; to mix nothing, to “reconcile” nothing; a tremendous variety that is nevertheless the opposite of chaos—this was the precondition, the long, secret work and artistry of my instinct. (*BWN* 710)¹⁵

This passage demonstrates that Nietzsche does indeed represent himself as a messiah in the most literal sense of the word—that is, he is a redemptive figure, in much the way that I describe Zarathustra as a redemptive figure in Chapter Three. Yet, as I describe earlier in this chapter, “Nietzsche” the narrator is a far more sophisticated and confident prophet than Zarathustra. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche vindicates himself and his works from all of the metaphysical philosophies that he has so vehemently criticized for many years. However, the kind of messiah he represents stands in stark contradiction to the type of messiah represented by conventional depictions of Christ. Nietzsche posits himself as a dynamic signifier who engages the reader and provokes them to rethink his or her identity with respect to a worldview based on musical dissonance, and not an otherworldly religion.

¹⁵ Nach dieser Seite hin betrachtet ist mein Leben einfach wundervoll. Zur Aufgabe einer *Umwerthung der Werthe* waren vielleicht mehr Vermögen nöthig, als je in einem Einzelnen bei einander gewohnt haben, vor Allem auch Gegensätze von Vermögen, ohne dass diese sich stören, zerstören durften. Rangordnung der Vermögen; Distanz; die Kunst zu trennen, ohne zu verfeinden; Nichts vermischen, Nichts „versöhnen“; eine ungeheure Vielheit, die trotzdem das Gegenstück der Chaos ist — dies war die Vorbedingung, die lange geheime Arbeit und Künstlerschaft meines Instinkts. (*KSA* 6, 294)

The “core” of *Ecce Homo* is Nietzsche’s depiction of himself, but that “self” is a signifier for a complex and fundamentally unstable phenomenon. In short, Nietzsche begs his readers to redefine themselves and their world using dynamite as a locus for generating meaning.

In this way, Nietzsche’s portrayal of himself in *Ecce Homo* closely resembles that of the “idiot” Jesus Christ as he depicts him in *The Antichrist*. Nietzsche describes this particular Christ as providing a model for self-formation—that is, an example of how to live life. According to Nietzsche, the “real” Christ merely wanted people to enjoy a simple life based on a naïve conception of “goodness.” As indicated in aphorism 33 of *The Antichrist*, Jesus’ life represents a *practice* and not a “faith.” It is a way of approaching and living life on a day-to-day basis to help *everyone* “feel oneself ‘in heaven’” [“‘im Himmel’ zu fühlen”] and that they are part of something immutable and “eternal” [“*ewig*”] (TPN 607; KSA 6, 206). Nietzsche’s revaluation of all values is also not a faith; it is a practice, a way of life, and represents an understanding of self-formation that can and should be practiced every day. That is, Nietzsche encourages his readers to remain deeply pious to musical dissonance. As Bruce Benson describes in *Pious Nietzsche*, philosophers should adhere to a life of musical askêsis, in which musical dissonance provides the structure for one’s self-formation and *Bildung*. However, the only *universally* applicable aspect of the “revaluation of all values” is that everyone will know about it. Only those who have the courage to embrace that *fate* that accompanies this way of life can practice it. Those who follow this way of life will create different and conflicting values, as musical dissonance does not represent a process that can produce regular, predictable, and uniform values.

Another important similarity between Nietzsche, the narrator of *Ecce Homo*, and Jesus Christ, the “idiot” of *The Antichrist*, is the manner in which both men emphasize that the key to “true life” begins with a self-examination of the self. The main difference, however, is that Nietzsche’s self-examination does not lead to “universal love” and “equality” among all men. In *Ecce Homo*, the “revaluation of all values” leads to the emancipation of the will to power within the self and the world around the self. This

creates musical dissonance and not harmony. The revaluation of all values is not a mediocritizing or equalizing force, but an emancipating force. It emancipates the self from the thralldom of an otherworldly, central authority of meaning and truth. However, that contrasts sharply from making everyone “equal” before an all-powerful God. In fact, it segregates people into various ranks of power. Those who have the strength, resolve, and ability to “embrace fate” will produce the noblest values and will form society’s elite.

In a section entitled “The Problem of the Author,” in his essay entitled “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” Bakhtin develops this general point by asserting that the author’s relationship to the reader is important only insofar as it represents a *process*:

The author is authoritative and indispensable for the reader, whose relationship to the author is not a relationship to him as an individual, as another human being, as a hero, as a determinate entity in being, but rather a relationship to him as a *principle* that needs to be followed (only the biographical approach to the author turns him into a hero, into a determinate, existent human being, who can be contemplated). (207)

According to Bakhtin, the traditional “biographical approach,” which attempts to heroize the living author, to his true “face,” or to interpret a text by uncovering authorial intent, is neither significant nor relevant to literary studies. These activities detract from the discursive presence of the author that exists in the text regardless of *when* we read the text, or even whether or not the author is actually alive. Bakhtin maintains that the author’s significance is the “principle” that he represents. Every text contains a quantum of dialogic discourse that represents a unique set of literary styles, interpretations, and choices that an author uses when composing a literary text. These factors represent a “principle” by which the reader can use to create his or her own aesthetic world. Bakhtin explains that

The author must be understood first of all from the event of a work as a participant in that event and as an authoritative guide for the reader in that event. [...] For the reader, the author inside a work is the sum total of the creative principles that have to be actualized; he is the unity of the transgradient moments of seeing that are actively referred to the hero and his world. The individuation of the author as a human being is no longer a primary but a secondary creative act. (207-208)

Bakhtin clarifies that the “principle” actually represents a plurality of “creative principles” within a text. These principles can be accurately described as *gestures*—perceptions, perspectives, literary embellishments, stylistic and rhetorical devices, and narrative styles—that constitute a complete literary work. These many gestures inspire a sense of *potentiality* in the reader. They indicate a sense of what *can be accomplished*. The level of inspiration is entirely contingent upon the power of the “author”—that is, the level of dissonance and vivacity of the “sum total of creative principles.”

In the unpublished fragments that were included with the English edition of “Author and Hero in Aesthetic Activity,” entitled the “Supplementary Section,” Bakhtin refers to Nietzsche’s works as “half-philosophical, half-artistic conceptions of the world” that “are founded on the living event of the author’s relationship to the world, a relationship similar to that of the artist to his hero” (229). Here, Bakhtin emphasizes the processes that constitute an author’s *relationship* to a world and not the biographical particularities of a living author’s existence. In the following lines, Bakhtin asserts that a text that emphasizes this relationship depicts the “*potentiality* of a hero” much more than an explicitly literary hero does.

It is obvious that Bakhtin privileges literary texts that depict an infectious level of dialogism. For Bakhtin, dialogism—“the plurality of voices”—is a measure of a text’s vitality and life. In this essay, Bakhtin describes the relationship between text and reader as akin to that of a teacher and a student. The dialogic text challenges the reader to emulate his or her “sum total of creative principles,” which is reflected in the text’s architectonics. To put it another way, the dialogic text inspires the reader to *follow* the examples inherent in the architectonic structure of the text. This does not mean that the reader should imitate the actions of the hero, but that the reader might feel inspired to follow the cues established by the narrative in which the hero acts.

The plot of *Ecce Homo* revolves around an individual’s attempt to engage in the “revaluation of all values.” Therefore, the “event” in *Ecce Homo*, is the “revaluation of all

values.” Nietzsche the narrator claims that the “revaluation of all values” actually represents “what” he has become. However, that does not mean that everyone should follow the precise actions established by the “Nietzsche” portrayed in the text. In *Ecce Homo*, the “principles” that we should follow refer to the circumstances, drives, and emotions that inspire “Nietzsche” to want to “revalue all values.” These manifold factors amount to the protagonist’s love of dissonance. Dissonance inspires the protagonist to revalue all values in a way that is unique. Thus, the “principle” that *Ecce Homo* inspires the reader to follow, privileges dissonance, and the “potentiality of a hero” in *Ecce Homo* is the reader’s vision of himself as someone who can revalue all values.

In the section entitled “Autobiography,” Bakhtin describes one of the three principle constituents of “biographical value”: the “hero’s affirmative acceptance of life’s ‘fabular’ possibilities. This is the thirst to live life’s ‘fabular’ possibilities to the full—not a definite and distinctly complete *fabula*, but the manifold *fabulas* inherent in life; the thirst to live and experience the ontic particularity of life’s situations, their variability, their diversity [...]” (158). This passage can help us interpret the significance of *Ecce Homo* as an autobiographical work within the context of Bakhtin’s essay. It helps to shed light on why Nietzsche’s depiction of himself is ultimately more significant than his depiction of Zarathustra. The autobiographical aspect of *Ecce Homo* permits Nietzsche to share his own enthusiasm for engaging in the revaluation of all values. He is able to share his enthusiasm for a musical, dissonant philosophy, and provide a convincing and provocative foundation for inspiring the reader to follow the *principles* outlined in his text. To use Bakhtin’s language, the text provides a persuasive “axiological consciousness of the act” represented by the revaluation of all values. The revaluation of all values is a process whose foundation is the result of engaging in life’s “fabular possibilities.” By “fabular possibilities,” Bakhtin refers to the manifold narratives that constitute “human life” in the broadest sense of the word. He claims that it is the hero’s “affirmative acceptance” of life, which consists of the hero’s desire to experience everything and “complete nothing”: to literally live for the joy of

incompletion and the dissonance of dialogism. This accords remarkably well with Nietzsche's concept of *amor fati*, which as I have discussed throughout this study, encourages people to joyfully embrace fate as a plurality of non-teleological possibilities. This includes *suffering*. Whereas some otherworldly philosophies and religions emphasize the necessity of suffering in order to atone for sins or gain entrance into heaven, as Nietzsche contends is the case for Christianity, the revaluation of all values portrays suffering as an intrinsic part of this-worldly existence. We must embrace it.

Following the pattern that Nietzsche establishes in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *Ecce Homo* leaves many fragments of shattered and anachronistic metanarratives in place. It is not by accident that Nietzsche decides to leave so many conspicuous reminders of the Bible and Plato's dialogues scattered throughout his texts. In the same manner that Nietzsche revitalizes the metaphor of the Mosaic "tablet" in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche uses *Ecce Homo* as a vehicle to revitalize—or "*rehabilitate*"—many of the most powerful metaphors that constitute the various metaphysical epistemologies which Nietzsche attempts to overturn. For example, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche suggests that the symbol of a tablet can be used as a symbol of the unattainability and infinite deferral of absolute knowledge and truth, rather than as a symbol for an immutable pillar of truth. The same rules apply to *Ecce Homo*. On the one hand, Nietzsche claims that he is not the founder of a religion, but at the same time he insists that he is the founder of the "revaluation of all values," the herald of the *Übermensch*, and the catalyst of "great politics" that will alter the landscape of human history for untold thousands of years. These are not careless contradictions or signs of insanity. They represent a very careful rethinking of powerful concepts such as savior, redemption, autobiography, individuality, and religion, through his musical, dissonant philosophical approach.

“I am Dynamite”

To add to the controversy, Nietzsche makes it clear that *Ecce Homo* represents a call to arms—perhaps even a declaration of war—against otherworldly epistemologies and worldviews. Among the most controversial topics that I address can be called the *sociology of dissonance*—that is, the types of social relationships that Nietzsche imagines might exist in a post-metaphysical world.¹⁶ How does he expect people to react to this provocative and perhaps even violent book? The following is one of the most pressing questions in Nietzsche scholarship: how can we develop a civilization based on a musical, dissonant epistemology? Should we even try? Does Nietzsche actually expect us to embark on such a contentious project? I suggest that *Ecce Homo* is designed to provoke the reader into taking part in the project of the revaluation of all values, and that indeed, his book does serve as the starting point for a dissonant form of social organization. However, it is important to bear in mind that the social and interpersonal ramifications of his ideas begin with a discussion of the individual.

Nietzsche’s book delineates a direct connection between its writer and the greatest upheaval in the history of modern philosophy. However, this upheaval is the result of a scientific examination of the self. In *Ecce Homo*, the signifier that we refer to as “Nietzsche” is more than just an identity, it is a scientific instrument. Nietzsche describes his body as a device for understanding and examining the world. His tastes, physiological and psychological reactions play a key role in the development of the practice that he calls “the revaluation of all values.” The “revaluation of all values” is not the result of armchair philosophy; it is the result of being Friedrich Nietzsche—having his body, his emotions, his history, his tastes, his illnesses, and his preferences in climate.

¹⁶ See Kemple’s “Weber/Simmel/DuBois: Musical Thirds of Classical Sociology” for a analysis of the role of musical metaphors in late nineteenth and early twentieth century works of social theory.

A complete and accurate interpretation of Nietzsche's "call to arms" requires that we examine the *scientific qualities* of this book. Although *The Gay Science* presents the foundation for a new and provocative method of conducting scientific inquiry, *Ecce Homo* achieves something that *The Gay Science* was not ready to attempt: to fully integrate the act of complete self-examination into scientific investigation. As I have discussed throughout this chapter, Nietzsche declares that he—personally—represents the revaluation of all values. Perhaps the most dramatic declaration is in the first aphorism of the book's last chapter: "Why I am a Destiny": "*Revaluation of all values*: that is my formula for an act of supreme self-examination on the part of humanity, become flesh and genius in me" (BWN 782).¹⁷ Nietzsche also begins the book by declaring that *only he*—Nietzsche the narrator—has had the proper breeding, background, and experiences necessary to prepare to take on such a great project. Others might follow, but it all begins with Nietzsche.

The entire book, his other writings, biography, life experiences, and even his broad range of tastes in climate, food, and daily habits, are part of this story. They have helped him to compare the differences between the "perspective of the sick" and the vantage point of a "rich life" in which values are defined by their superabundance of power: "Now I know how, have the know-how, to *reverse perspectives*: the first reason why a 'revaluation of values' is perhaps possible for me alone" (BWN 679).¹⁸ The verb that Nietzsche uses in the phrase "reverse perspectives" is *umstellen*, which conveys a very complex set of meanings. *Umstellen* can mean "reorganize," "transpose," or "adapt." While the phrase refers to Nietzsche's desire to "reverse" the damage done to humanity by living in accordance with metaphysical philosophies, it is important to bear in mind that this process requires more than simply a quick shift in perspectives. It requires that we gradually work through the

¹⁷ — *Umwertung aller Werthe*: das ist meine Formel für einen Akt höchster Selbstbesinnung der Menschheit, der in mir Fleisch und Genie geworden ist. (KSA 6, 365)

¹⁸ Ich habe es jetzt in der Hand, ich habe die Hand dafür, *Perspektiven umzustellen*: erster Grund, weshalb für mich allein vielleicht eine „Umwertung der Werthe“ überhaupt möglich ist. — (KSA 6, 266)

process of dismantling the values that humanity has created in accordance with an otherworldly authority for truth. The revaluation of all values is much more than a quick replacement for one value with another, but a continual process of rethinking values. To create this-worldly values demands that we never allow a given value to congeal into a seemingly immutable, otherworldly truth.

Nietzsche claims that his act of beginning the “revaluation of all values” will be the catalyst for a “convulsion of earthquakes,” and the “moving of mountains and valleys,” “the likes of which the world has never yet been seen on earth” (BWN 783; KSA 6, 366). On the surface, this statement might seem to be ridiculous—perhaps a symptom of Nietzsche’s impending lapse into “madness” and physical deterioration—but in actuality, it represents one of the boldest statements about the significance of the actual philosopher’s role that has been offered since Plato wrote the “Apology.” Nietzsche portrays himself as a powerful signifier that includes all aspects of his life and works. He is a source of dynamic and destabilizing energy that will send shockwaves throughout the academic world and into the world of everyday life: politics, law, and even the relationship between human beings and the natural world.

To be precise, Nietzsche describes himself as a living representation of the will to power—a dynamic complex of force, that seeks to discharge itself and cause as many ripples as possible in the surrounding area. As I have already discussed, Nietzsche actually claims that he is “not a man,” but “dynamite”: “I am no man, I am dynamite” [*“Ich bin kein Mensch, ich bin Dynamit”*] (BWN 782; KSA 6, 365). If we apply Nietzsche’s own understanding of the will to power to his description of himself, then we are faced with a manifestation of the self that functions like an unstable complex of force.

Nietzsche twice employs the Greek term *dymanis* in his unpublished notes, and in each case, to refer to a palpable expression of force characterized by its “elasticity” and its potentiality (*eKGWB*). *Dynamis* represents energy that is “still hemmed in” and “attempts to actualize itself” (see Chapter Three, page 194). Even more significant is Nietzsche’s claim

that the *gai saber* represents a modality of scientific thinking characterized by a “dynamic interpretation of the world” which is entirely anti-atomistic. *Ecce Homo* is more dynamic than *The Gay Science*. *The Gay Science* attempts to provoke the reader into thinking critically and dissonantly; but *Ecce Homo* inspires the reader to think explosively.

It is important that we do not conceive of dynamite as a disposable piece of machinery. In everyday usage, the word “dynamite” connotes an explosive device that can only be used once. However, the type of dynamite that Nietzsche represents is a machine that can be used over and over again. He is always “dynamite.” That is, he is always a machine that is “always hemmed in,” but also “always attempting to actualize itself,” and one which seeks out new “dynamic interpretations of the world.” It is a self-perpetuating dynamic. To be “dynamite” is not to set off one explosion, but to set off a chain reaction whose explosions will resonate indefinitely.

A conventional biographical analysis of *Ecce Homo* might suggest that the book’s extreme rhetoric is the result of Nietzsche’s rapid physical and mental decline during the period in which he wrote it. However, Nietzsche directly addresses his illnesses. Illness and degeneration represent an important part of his philosophy—it is one of the major reasons he has become so “clever.” In the section entitled “Why I am So Clever,” Nietzsche claims that his bouts with illness have actually helped to sharpen his ability to think critically. In the second aphorism of the chapter, Nietzsche describes the importance of “place” and “climate” in the development of his worldview. Thus, Nietzsche accounts for his physical health, mood, and surroundings in his “act of supreme self-examination.” All of these factors have helped to bring about Nietzsche’s “dynamism.”

Gary Shapiro presents the beginning of a fascinating and compelling hypothesis about the “machinic nature” of *Ecce Homo*, which I note in Chapter Two, in order to delineate various theories to support my hypothesis that *The Gay Science* is a systematic work (see above, pages 195-196). Shapiro concludes that *Ecce Homo* is a narrative “that will generate indefinitely many variations on the basis of certain fundamental oppositions”

(152). He claims that the driving force behind this mechanism is the constant presence of an “imperfect,” shifting, and contradictory narrator that constantly provokes the reader to continually reexamine the information presented in the book. However, Nietzsche’s narrative games do more than merely provoke the reader to question his or her assumptions about the nature of the author, the genre of biography, or Nietzsche himself. They represent a systematic attempt on the part of the author to redefine our concept of the individual, which I contend is a constant process of self-realization as “dissonance become man.” A potential limitation to Shapiro’s argument is in use of the word “oppositions,” which obscures the polyvalent conflation of meaning in *Ecce Homo*. A far more specific and accurate term would be “pluralisms.”

The most powerful and important pluralism in the book is the pervasive and provocative confusion of identities. Thus, the text represents a “machine” that produces results that are dissonant, and do not conform to a regular, specific pattern. For some readers, this confusion might provoke laughter, for others, a profound rethinking of our basic understanding of the self, and yet for others, a complete disrespect for Nietzsche’s integrity as a philosopher. Nietzsche appears to have hoped that the text would provoke a combination of all three reactions. Earlier in this chapter, I note that *Ecce Homo* is about identity and the revaluation of all values, and that one of the book’s most powerful messages is that these two things cannot be extricated from one another. The revaluation of all values is intimately tied to the concept of identity, as it is the “self” that must gather the data necessary to understand, esteem, and analyze values. However, in Nietzsche’s writings, identity is never a simple matter. Going back to his notes and writings from the late 1860s and early 1870s, Nietzsche makes it quite clear that the “self” is a complex signifier for a plurality of narratives, and its existence as a carnal and sensual being. All of these factors are in a constant state of transformation, in which its boundaries and constituents are always being redefined.

Shattering the Masks

The “individualism” that Nietzsche presents in his works is defined by an individual’s willingness to embrace his or her constantly evolving, and transitory identity. This perspective on individualism dates back to his famous critiques of the *principium individuationis* in *The Birth of Tragedy* in the early 1870s. In Deleuze’s terms, Nietzsche presents his readers with a “tragic individualism.” This dynamic and evolving identity refers not only to the development of a particular “self,” but the constant interaction and negation of the self with other “selves,” climate, food, nutrition, people, and art. As with any history or narrative, the “self” represents a complex genealogy and not an essentialized, static identity. It represents a decentred, constantly evolving process, much like the one Nietzsche uses to describe the genealogy of “morals” and “truths” in *The Genealogy of Morals*. In the famous essay “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” Michel Foucault emphasizes that Nietzsche’s history of the values “good” and “bad,” represent a convergence and divergence of different metanarratives for deriving meaning in different times and places, which have no distinct origin or end goal. Likewise, in *Ecce Homo*, the self represents a complex network of voices, stories, and influences.

Foucault discusses Nietzsche’s perspective on history as depicted in his early and late works. Foucault claims that for Nietzsche, the concepts of history and genealogy are inextricably linked: “Genealogy does not oppose itself to history as the lofty and profound gaze of the philosopher might compare to the molelike perspective of the scholar; on the contrary, it rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations and indefinite teleologies. It opposes itself to the search for ‘origins’” (140). Thus, history and genealogy should not appeal to a universal metanarrative, nor should they imply the existence of mixed origins, teleologies, or definitive purposes. This model applies to Nietzsche’s depiction of identity in *Ecce Homo* very well. Rather than referring to the many identities in *Ecce Homo* as “masks” or different “identities,” we should refer to them as voices, each of which represents a distinct genealogy. Interpreting the narrator of *Ecce Homo* as the

convergence of a plurality of genealogies accords with Nietzsche's theory of power, in which centres of force have no distinct origin, telos, or boundaries. In the same way that these centres of force continually define and redefine themselves throughout the "world," Nietzsche's many "voices" constantly transform and interact—often violently—with each other, and with the voices that constitute *Ecce Homo's* readership.

As Alexander Nehamas points out in the chapter entitled "How One Becomes What One Is" in *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*, in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche depicts the self as a "collection" of different states of being, thoughts, and desires:

The unity of the self, which Nietzsche identifies with this collection, is thus seriously undermined. This unity, he seems to believe, is to be found, if it is to be found at all, in the very organization and coherence of the many acts that each organism performs. It is the unity of these acts that gives rise to the unity of the self, and not, as we often think, the fact of the single self that unifies our conflicting tendencies. (180)

Nehamas' study is extensive and discusses many of Nietzsche's texts, including *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Ecce Homo*. He carefully links Nietzsche's discussions of will, force, and power, with the self, and concludes that the self consists of a "collection" that is as dynamic as the constantly shifting and discordant centres of force that constitute the "will to power" in nature. Although Nehamas admires Nietzsche's meditations on the nature of the self, he expresses disappointment that Nietzsche continues to employ the language of individualism. If Nietzsche is so suspicious of the existence and validity of the concept of "self," then why does he constantly employ it? If there is always a "self" that looms behind the process of identity creation, then doesn't that fact support the notion that at bottom, our identity consists of an immutable essence of some sort?

Nehamas seems intent on finding a unity of self somewhere behind the curtain of shifting masks that Nietzsche portrays as the "self": "[...] Nietzsche is concerned with the mastery and power over oneself, envisaging different habits and character traits competing for the domination of a single person. This is one of the reasons why I think that a primary, though by no means the only, object of the will to power is one's own self" (183). Nehamas

not only attempts to isolate a unified will that attempts to “master” the collection of heterogeneous forces under its yoke, but also a unified *body*. That is, our *bodies* help to shape and give form to our “selves.” However, these assertions contradict Nietzsche’s discussions of the will to power, as no one can “master” the will to power, they can only engage with it. For Nietzsche, the “mastery” of the self can only consist of the ability to coordinate and orchestrate the quanta of forces that constitute it. If the self is a process, and not a thing, then the self is not something that can be shaped and sculpted like a piece of marble. However, one can *orchestrate* the self like a symphony.

In a chapter entitled “How One Becomes What One is Not” (an obvious response to the title of the chapter on *Ecce Homo* in Nehamas’ book), Gary Shapiro suggests that it is *nescience* (non-knowledge) of the self that defines Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*:

[...] Nietzsche draws some practical maxims from the *nescience* necessary to becoming what one is that seem flatly incompatible with his implicit claim to know himself as a fatality and as a destiny. [...] Nietzsche follows this maxim with an account of self-becoming as the slow, unconscious working of an “organizing ‘idea’” that operates without the knowledge of the subject (149)

Shapiro suggests that the title, *Ecce Homo*, is a parody of the concept of self-knowledge. He claims that the “indefinite process” of becoming represented by *Ecce Homo* relates to a concurrent process of continual “forgetting” of oneself (149). Shapiro probably alludes to the process of “forgetting” that Nietzsche emphasizes in his essay on history in the *Untimely Meditations*; individuals and cultures should allow themselves the luxury to “forget” history so that they will always feel free to create new histories and identities. Only by forgetting, can history serve the vitality of humanity. Thus, according to Shapiro, “nescience”—the act of “unknowing” oneself—allows one to concentrate on the process of becoming. Ultimately, “becoming” does not lead to a *who*, but a “what,” which Shapiro rightly argues is one of the most obvious, yet overlooked aspects of the book’s subtitle: “How One Becomes *What* One Is” (154). Shapiro asserts: “If we attend to Nietzsche’s language, however, we see that what one becomes is a ‘what,’ a something, rather than a ‘who’” (154). As I have previously

discussed, the “what” refers to Nietzsche’s belief that he has literally become the revaluation of all values: a continual, dynamic *process*.

For Shapiro, Nietzsche’s autobiography represents a narrative of the self that draws attention to its contradictory nature by challenging the notion that identity is based on a foundation of stability or essentiality. Shapiro suggests that Nietzsche’s biography informs us that we can learn a great deal about how our knowledge of the self *does not* conform to conventional and preconceived notions of what it should be. Consonant and essentialized preconceptions of the self are not valid modes of self-perception in *Ecce Homo*. We gain knowledge about the self by examining its contradictions and discrepancies—that is, through *nescience* or agnosticism about the self. By concentrating on the “whatness” of identity, Nietzsche leaves open the possibility that the human being is not delimited by a specific set of criteria and boundaries. The human being represents something that can and will transform and change. This conforms to the spirit of the phrase “becoming-human of dissonance,” which suggests that humanity and human identity is a work in progress that has no specific origin or telos. On the other hand, “whoness” refers to variations upon a theme and presumes that it is possible to agree upon a stable, fixed set of criteria of what constitutes a human being and humanism.

In his book entitled *Nietzsche’s Voice*, Henry Staten suggests that Nietzsche’s identity as represented in his texts represents an “assemblage of these subject positions or ‘voices’” that reflect “inflections of one voice or masks of one persona” (6). In this respect, his interpretation of Nietzsche’s voice accords with Nehamas’. Staten offers an interesting hypothesis about the interactive nature of Nietzsche’s texts; he suggests that the reader can, and should, identify with the polymorphous assemblage of voices that constitutes Nietzsche’s “identity.” He claims that Nietzsche’s voice could be *anyone’s voice*:

[...] it could be said that Nietzsche’s voice is one in the sense that *anyone’s* voice is one, in the sense that we identify it by attaching one person’s name to it. Beyond that I leave open or “bracket” (in the phenomenological sense) the question of the true nature of its ultimate source. The point is that we identify a certain collection of texts as Nietzsche’s, and that we distinguish

what we read or hear in these texts from what we read or hear in other collections that bear other signatures. Different readers or auditors read or hear different things in this text; our task here is to consider the shape of the overall phenomenon that allows itself to be heard in these various ways, and to trace the system of forces that gives it this shape. (6)

Staten's consistent emphasis on the irreconcilable plurality of "voices" and ways of understanding the self is very important. *Ecce Homo* encourages the reader to consider a plurality of viewpoints, but the process is not nearly as gentle as the one that Staten describes. It is far more martial and vigorous: the book attempts to discharge its force onto the reader and provoke him to respond in kind. Nietzsche does not simply throw a hodgepodge of narratives and theories of identity at the reader. The portrayal of voices and theories of the self in *Ecce Homo* is entirely dissonant; it undermines the notion that any voice or identity can be unified, unchanging, and fixed. Thus, it is important to guard against interpreting Nietzsche's depictions of the self and identity that conflict with his dynamic theory of the will to power that underlies the works of his last years. If we do not, the danger that the powerful message carried by the master metaphor of musical dissonance in Nietzsche's works will be lost when we examine smaller, less significant metaphors. One particular metaphor for the self that poses such as risk is the metaphor of the "mask."

According to Jacques Derrida's celebrated reading of *Ecce Homo* entitled *Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name* [*Otobiographies. L'enseignement de Nietzsche et la politique du nom propre*] (1984), Nietzsche's autobiography is best understood as a system of masks. That extricates us from the anxiety of having to answer to the demands of the academic disciplines that have appropriated Nietzsche's texts: philosophy, literature, semiotics, or perhaps the "academy" in general:

[...] I shall read Nietzsche beginning with the scene from *Ecce Homo* where he puts his body and his name out front even though he advances behind a plurality of masks or pseudonyms without proper names. He advances behind a plurality of masks or names that, like any mask and even any theory of the simulacrum, can propose and produce themselves only by returning a constant yield of protection, a surplus value in which one may still recognize the ruse of life. However, the ruse starts incurring losses as soon as the

surplus value does not return again to the living, but to and in the name of names, the community of masks. (*Ear 7*)¹⁹

The most important and influential word in Derrida's passage is "mask." For Derrida, *Ecce Homo* is an assemblage of masks, out of which emerges an unstable, contradictory, and pluralistic identity. The new "Nietzsche" that emerges from *Ecce Homo* represents a powerful statement of identity that subverts conventional and accepted notions of the self, and offers in its stead a labyrinthine matrix of shifting and unstable masks. The "ruse" of life is the fallacious notion that life is teleological or purpose-oriented. Derrida's prominent use of the metaphor and signifier "mask" conjures extraordinarily powerful imagery. It has had an enormous impact on the field of Nietzsche studies and the study of the genre of autobiography. However, I believe that it is important to point out that *Ecce Homo* is one of the only works in which Nietzsche does *not* ever use the word "mask" or any of its cognates.

The metaphor of the mask is indeed one of the most important metaphors in Nietzsche's corpus, and figures prominently in his later works, at least until 1886, when he uses it only twice; in 1887 he uses it three times, and again only twice in 1888—all seven times in his unpublished notes (according to the texts currently available in the *eKGWB*). The distinct absence of such a ubiquitous metaphor in Nietzsche's late works is curious: why would Nietzsche suddenly abandon a word that he employs earlier in such a diversity of contexts?

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, published in early 1886, Nietzsche seems to encourage the use of masks. In an oft-quoted aphorism in the chapter entitled "The Free Spirit," Nietzsche claims that "Whatever is profound loves masks; what is more profound even hates image

¹⁹ [...] je lirai Nietzsche depuis la scène d'*Ecce Homo*. Il y met son corps et son nom en avant, même s'il s'y avance sous des masques ou des pseudonymes sans noms propres, des masques ou des noms pluriels qui peuvent ne se proposer ou produire, comme tout masque et même toute théorie du simulacre, qu'en rapportant toujours un bénéfice de protection, une plus-value où se reconnaît encore la ruse de la vie. Ruse perdante dès lors que la plus-value encore ne revient pas à du vivant mais au nom des noms et à la communauté des masques. (45)

and parable" (BWN 240).²⁰ Additionally, in an unpublished note written in 1885, in the midst of writing *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche affirms this position by stating that the great and noble man needs masks to communicate with everybody except himself: "He knows he is incommunicable: he finds it tasteless to be familiar; and when one thinks he is, he usually is not. When not speaking to himself, he wears a mask" (WP 505).²¹ Although many critics interpret these comments as Nietzsche's fondness for the metaphor of the mask, there is a great deal of evidence in the *Nachlass* that Nietzsche began to reconsider the appropriateness of this metaphor to describe the behaviour of noble, healthy individuals. These ambivalent comments signal the gradual disappearance of this word from Nietzsche's lexicon in the last years of his career. The metaphor of the mask does not convey the dynamism and explosiveness that Nietzsche portrays in *Ecce Homo*. I believe that Nietzsche feared that his readers might interpret the word too literally—as an endorsement of *hiding* oneself from the world.

There is an unpublished note composed in the autumn of 1885—penned perhaps only months after drafting the table of contents for *Beyond Good and Evil*—in which Nietzsche associates masks with a *shame* and disingenuous deception: "Morality as the instinct of *shame* [emphasis mine], as dressing-up, masks, basically well-meaning" (trans. mine).²² The title of this note is entitled "Critique of the Highest Values" ["*Kritik der höchsten Werthe*"], which according to Colli and Montinari consists of sketches for *The Will to Power* (KSA 14, 735-736). Walter Kaufmann anthologizes the last lines of this fragment in Book Three of *The Will to Power*, "Principles of a New Evaluation," in a section entitled "Judgment. True-False" (WP 286-293). The fragment as it appears in Kaufman's edition

²⁰ Alles, was tief ist, liebt die Maske; die allertiefsten Dinge haben sogar einen Hass auf Bild und Gleichniss. (KSA 5, 57)

²¹ Er weiß sich unmittheilbar: er findet es geschmacklos, wenn er „vertraulich“ wird; und er ist es gewöhnlich nicht, wenn man ihn dafür hält. Wenn er nicht zu sich redet, hat er seine Maske. (KSA 11, 452[34:96])

²² Moral als Instinkt der Scham, als Verkleiderung, Maske, grundsätzlich wohlmeinende Interpretation [no punctuation] (KSA 12, 124[2:126])

reads: “What is truth?—Inertia [*inertia*]; that hypothesis which gives rise to contentment [*Befriedigung*]; smallest expenditure of spiritual force, etc.” (WP 291).²³ This 1885 fragment adds to the cadaverous definition of truth that Nietzsche provides in “Truth and Lies”: truth, as it is conventionally perceived, is a quantum of force that exists in an inertial state. The reason for this inertia rests with those who control and disseminate the truth: they are complacent with the lassitude of the metaphors that constitute their truths. Perhaps the context of Nietzsche’s discussion of masks in this fragment indicates that they represent inertia—perhaps the inertia of those who believe that they are powerful. Inertia is completely unacceptable in all of Nietzsche’s thought.

Some time in the middle of 1886, Nietzsche wrote an unpublished aphorism that explores the problematic and ambiguous nature of the mask metaphor. The aphorism consists only of the title—“On the Problem of Masks” [*“Zum Probleme der Maske”*—and a quote—from Stendhal’s work on Napoleon: “An almost instinctive faith of mine is that every powerful man lies when he speaks, and all the more so, when he writes” (trans. mine).²⁴ Some critics, including Stanley Rosen, affirm that Nietzsche’s interest in this passage by Stendhal accords with Nietzsche’s affirmation of the power of mask metaphors as expressed in *Beyond Good and Evil* (Rosen “Suspicion,” 112). However, does Nietzsche intend to convey that masks pose a problem to those who seek authenticity, thus undermining my conviction that Nietzsche’s attitude becomes ambiguous in the final years of his career? Perhaps Nietzsche’s decision to cite Stendhal, at least in this particular case, represents a moment in which he questions whether or not men of power *need* to cloak themselves in a mask, and whether or not masks actually represent an obstacle to an even more powerful and dynamic expression of power.

²³ *Was ist Wahrheit?* (inertia, die Hypothese, bei der Befriedigung entsteht, geringster Verbrauch von geistiger Kraft usw.) (KSA 12, 125[2:126])

²⁴ Zum Problem der Maske. „Une croyance presque instinctive chez moi, c’est que tout homme puissant ment, quand il parle, et à plus forte raison, quand il écrit.” Stendhal, *vie de Napoléon*, préface p. XV. (KSA 12, 177[4:2])

In another unpublished note entitled “Falseness” (“*Die Falschheit*”) written in 1887, Nietzsche states that it “is a sign of a broken instinct when man sees the driving force and its ‘expression’ (‘the mask’) as separate things—a sign of self-contradiction, and victorious far less often. Absolute innocence in bearing [...] a ‘good conscience’ in falsity, the certainty with which one grasps the greatest and most splendid words and postures—all this is necessary for victory” (WP 203).²⁵ Here Nietzsche seems to undermine his previous assertions that the mask serves as an appropriate metaphor for the expression of a strong will to power. The final instance in which the word “mask” appears in Nietzsche’s extant writings is in an unpublished aphorism written during the spring of 1888. The aphorism is entitled “Will to Power as Moral” [“*Wille zur Macht als Moral*”] (KSA 13, 220[14:6]): “Here one must have no *treaty*: here one must eradicate, annihilate, and wage war—one must above all *draw out* the Christian-nihilistic measure of value [*Werthmaß*] and fight under every mask [...]” (trans. mine).²⁶ In this powerful fragment, Nietzsche depicts the “mask” as the symbol of something that shields and veils inertia, metaphysical comfort, and a nihilistic worldview. In the previous sentence, he associates these qualities with the “‘Otherworldly’ Corruption” [“*Jenseits’—Corruption*”] against the “real world” [“*wirklichen Welt*”], “Becoming” [“*des Werdens*”], and the “World of Being” [“*Welt des Seiendes*”] perpetuated by socialists, communists, and Christians—all of whom he accuses of being metaphysicians of essentially the same ilk.

Could it be that the “mask” represents a tool that is longer needed in a world in which an actual revaluation of all values is in full swing? Perhaps the continued use of

²⁵ Es ist ein Zeichen von *gebrochenem* Instinkt, wenn der Mensch das Treibende und dessen „Ausdruck“ („die Maske“) *getrennt* sieht — ein Zeichen von Selbstwiderspruch, und viel weniger siegreich. Die absolute *Unschuld* in der Gebärde [...] das „gute Gewissen“ in der Falschheit, die Sicherheit, mit der man nach den größten und prachtvollsten Worten und Stellungen faßt — Alles nothwendig zum Siege. (KSA 12, 324[8:1])

²⁶ Hier darf es keinem *Vertrag* geben: hier muß man ausmerzen, vernichten, Krieg führen — man muß das christlich-nihilistische Werthmaß überall noch *hinausziehen* und es unter jeder Maske bekämpfen... (KSA 13, 220[14:6])

masks as a tool to generate new perspectives and knowledge lacks a certain measure of “good conscience” and implies a disparity between force and its “expression” in words and deeds? It seems as though Nietzsche originally regarded the mask as a necessary metaphor to facilitate the eventual revaluation of all values. Later in his career, however, he regards it as one that was not as necessary.

Describing Nietzsche as advancing behind masks does not accord with the *dynamism* of Nietzsche’s book, which seems less interested in exploring and juxtaposing different perspectives than exploding and burning them. *Ecce Homo* represents a *war* against all masks and the advancement of a new and blatantly incendiary form of identity, which Nietzsche came to believe would radically transform our conception of the self, the manner in which we interact, and the way we shape our institutions. We need to advance behind “dynamite” and not “masks.” Only in this way can we ensure that our actions generate more dissonance and more dynamite. This accords with the process of the revaluation of all values. We must not only create dissonance, but also cultivate it, spread it, and perpetuate it. As I emphasize earlier in this chapter, this might very well be the result of his “madness” and physical decline, but it is also consistent with the development of the imagery deployed in his texts over the years.

“Since the Old God is Abolished, I am Prepared to Rule the World —”

Nietzsche’s autobiographical text is provocative, aggressive, and militant. *Ecce Homo* is a call to arms and a declaration of war. There is a great deal of speculation as to Nietzsche’s *reasons* for writing *Ecce Homo*. However, the evidence that Nietzsche believed he was writing a declaration of war and call to arms is compelling. In the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), Colli and Montinari include the titles of two missing chapters that they contend Nietzsche wanted published in the final draft of *Ecce Homo*: “Declaration of War” [“Kriegserklärung”] and “The Hammer Speaks” [“Der Hammer redet”]. “The Hammer Speaks” is identical to aphorism 29 of “On Old and New Tablets” of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*,

and constitutes the text of the final page of *Twilight of the Idols*. According to Colli and Montinari, Nietzsche's family destroyed the "Declaration of War" because they believed it would portray Nietzsche as a lunatic. And for reasons that are not clear, "The Hammer Speaks" was appended to the final manuscript of *Twilight of the Idols* (KSA 14, 453-455). In addition to these two texts is a short manifesto penned by Nietzsche in 1888, entitled "Decree Against Christendom" [*"Gesetz wider das Christenthum"*] which contains seven militant propositions, including directives to imprison and alienate priests, physically destroy Christian institutions, and avoid all forms of "anti-nature."²⁷ Although Nietzsche's plans for this document are not clear, Colli and Montinari have placed this document in between *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* in the *Kritische Studienausgabe*, as the "Decree" was discovered in a cassette of documents that they believe Nietzsche worked on when he compiled *Ecce Homo*. Yet some scholars have hypothesized that this is a coincidence, and that in fact, Nietzsche originally penned this document when he wrote "On Old and New Tablets" several years earlier (KSA 14, 448-454).

Nietzsche's belief that religion is deeply intertwined with science is quite apparent in the "Decree," as he directs his readers to go easy on Catholics and deeply pious Christians, and to seek out and destroy Protestants and other "enlightened" Christians first, as they have the greatest potential to cause havoc and destruction. Nietzsche clearly betrays his sympathy for Catholics and pious Christians, who are motivated by a passionate belief in God without regard to the cold, rationalistic influence of modern science that he associates with Protestantism. The alliance between modern science and religion represents the convergence between two metaphysically oriented systems of belief. While many of

²⁷ The full title of the decree, with both subtitles: "Decree against Christendom / Proclaimed on the Day of Salvation, on the first day of Year One (— on the 30th of September 1888 of the false time scheme) / War to the Death against the Depravity: the Depravity is Christendom."

Gesetz wider das Christenthum. / Gegeben am Tage des Heils, am ersten Tage des Jahres Eins (—am 30. September 1888 der falschen Zeitrechnung) / Todkrieg gegen das Laster: das Laster ist das Christenthum. (KSA 6, 254)

Nietzsche's contemporaries undoubtedly believed that modern science and religion were compatible, Nietzsche clearly believed that science was stripping religion of whatever redeeming qualities it had left, namely a respect for the vicissitudes of a moody and mercurial God. Science and philosophy contributed to the mediocritizing process that is transforming civilization:

Second Proposition. — Every participation in a religious service is an attack on public morality. One should be more severe [*härter*] toward Protestants than against Catholics, and more severe toward liberal Protestants than against the devout. The criminality in being Christian increases to the degree that the Christian approaches science. The criminal of criminals is consequently the *philosopher*. (trans. mine)²⁸

According to Shapiro, scholars have generally associated this “Decree” with the materials Nietzsche compiled for the publication of *Ecce Homo* (which understandably terrified many editors, both past and present), as evidence that Nietzsche’s belief that his role as a philosopher is akin to that of a general (146-147). I believe that scholars must be cautious when taking these materials into consideration and that they should not consider them “proof” of anything, but merely evidence to support a variety of theories. Nietzsche’s notebooks are filled with many contradictory documents, in various states of completion. It is difficult to ascertain which—if any—of these documents reflects the ideas Nietzsche wanted to convey to his public. Yet, when considering the dire and apocalyptic predictions he makes throughout *Ecce Homo*, there can be no doubt that Nietzsche wanted people to read *Ecce Homo* as a call to arms, and even a manifesto of sorts. In this chapter, I have addressed the question: what is Nietzsche’s plan of attack? Do we accept these decrees at face value? That is, that we should use terrorist tactics against Christendom? Is “dynamite” a metaphor for some sort of suicide attack upon modern philosophy and science?

Alternatively, is it perhaps possible to interpret the decrees and other such statements as

²⁸ *Zweiter Satz.* — Jede Theilnahme an einem Gottesdienste ist ein Attentat auf die öffentlich Sittlichkeit. Man soll härter gegen Protestanten als gegen Katholiken sein, härter gegen liberale Protestanten als gegen strenggläubige. Das Verbrecherische im Christ-sein nimmt in dem Maasse zu, als man sich der Wissenschaft nähert. Der Verbrecher der Verbrecher ist folglich der *Philosoph*. (KSA 6, 254)

examples of flights of fancy and perhaps even metaphors for a far more complex line of attack?

Nietzsche's martial attitude toward philosophy is also reflected in the seventh aphorism of the chapter entitled "Why I am So Wise" in *Ecce Homo*. The aphorism begins with a declaration of Nietzsche's passion for "war": "I am warlike by nature. Attacking is one of my instincts" ["*Ich bin meiner Art nach kriegerisch. Angreifen gehört zu meinen Instinkten*"] (BWN 687; KSA 6, 274). Nietzsche explains that it is important that one learn *how to be the right kind of enemy*—simply being warlike is not necessarily a sign of strength. One must be free of "contempt" and not with respect to enemies that are "beneath oneself." Nietzsche provides four rules of warfare, which are briefly summarized as follows: only take on *victorious causes*, only take on causes for which one *cannot find allies*, never attack *persons*, and only attack when a "personal quarrel is excluded." At first, some of these criteria might seem absurd and hypocritical. Doesn't Nietzsche encourage us to take up arms against Christendom and metaphysics? Doesn't Nietzsche vehemently attack Richard Wagner and David Strauss throughout his career? He does; but, he claims that these attacks are symbolic; he doesn't attack the actual person, but the effect that their ideas and personas have had on culture. That is, he attacks their *masks*. Whether or not Nietzsche's defense of his allegedly personal attacks is accurate is not as important as his main directive, namely, not to "get personal," as doing so will weaken one's position. As for the first two rules, it goes without saying that both Wagner and Strauss represented "successful" and popular causes. Although Nietzsche might have very well found people who would have *sympathized* with his tirades against these and other controversial figures, his use of the term "allies" or "comrades" [*Bundesgenossen*] suggests that Nietzsche does not want to participate in political controversies. He does not want people to "choose" his side, as such an alliance would imply the formation of an entente between dissonant points of view.

The evidence that I have gathered in this study indicates that Nietzsche believes that change—however dramatic—occurs both *violently* (hard, dynamically, and by smashing

tables of values) but also gradually. “The revaluation of all values,” as depicted through the process of “tablet-smashing” requires that the philosopher (that is, the anti-metaphysical philosopher, and not the metaphysical philosopher whose destruction Nietzsche advocates in the “Decrees”), constantly create new and more powerful metaphors. By powerful, I refer to self-conscious metaphors that reflect their dense, polyvalent, dynamic chains of signification, and internal dialogism. Thus, the process of “smashing” tablets and being “hard” also represents a very regulated and disciplined process, which as I describe in Chapter Three, reflects a revaluated understanding of the concepts of the “pious” and “ascetic.” It is a musical, dissonant process of metaphor creation. Therefore, it is difficult to predict how Nietzsche’s call to arms will manifest itself. Will it require that someone destroy a church or will it merely require that someone write an aphorism? It is difficult to predict.

The description Nietzsche gives of his warlike nature in *Ecce Homo*, however, is quite different from the “decrees” and suggests an attitude that accords with his understanding of “eristic” social relationships, as described in “Homer’s Contest” (see Chapter One, pages 100-101 and 123-124) and the “new nobility” depicted in *Zarathustra*. Human beings must organize themselves in a manner that strengthens their respective wills to power and reflects their respective degrees of “nobility.” In these late works, the degree of one’s nobility corresponds to one’s ability to engage in the revaluation of all values, a process that involves the continual creation of dynamic, dissonant metaphors. Yet, the revaluation of all values is a collective process and a *competitive* process. Everyone who engages in the revaluation of all values competes with each other. As Nietzsche explains in “Homer’s Contest” many years before, a society must be bound together by a commitment to nurture and cultivate competition, erism, and what I describe in this study as musical dissonance.

To be able to engage in the process of tablet smashing, a process that mirrors the dissonant processes that reflect the will to power, is an act of great nobility, as it requires that an individual accept the dissolution of esteemed values, ideas, and identities, in order

to increase the vitality of his or her society. As Nietzsche specifically states throughout *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and his later works, to increase one's will to power requires one to *yield* to a greater power, and perhaps even allow one to be overcome by a greater power. The will to power is an inherently deindividuating force. Thus, the consequences of the revaluation of all values as the foundation for a system of social organization include a sense of community and solidarity among those who participate in the process, but also an increased level of dissonance and tension throughout a society. On the one hand, everyone will be working toward a common goal—to foster dissonance, generate a great discharge of power, and affirm “life”—but the manner in which each person realizes this objective will be different. The full realization that humanity represents “dissonance become man” or a “becoming-human of dissonance” [*Menschwerdung der Dissonanz*] sets the stage for a radical conception of civilization and modernity that subverts the metaphysical philosophies of Judeo-Christianity, Platonism, modern science, and all of the ideologies that Nietzsche attacks throughout his career.

As Gary Shapiro points out, there is compelling evidence to support the hypothesis that Nietzsche considered *Ecce Homo* an integral part—if not a substitute—for his unfinished four-volume work entitled *The Revaluation of All Values*:

For a long time Nietzsche planned to write a comprehensive work, *The Revaluation of All Values*, from which he expected great things. At one time, he projected *The Antichrist* as the first of the work's four parts. But rather than complete the work he turned to the composition of *Ecce Homo* which became, in effect, a substitution for a work that was never written. (145)

According to Shapiro, even the canonical Colli and Montinari editions are fraught with uncertainty (161-163). Shapiro's main point is that it is difficult to ascertain precisely how Nietzsche envisioned *Ecce Homo* with respect to his other late publications. However, we can be certain of the importance that Nietzsche ascribed to his own body, texts, and personality as the crowning achievement of his life's works: his desire to articulate and encourage humanity to engage actively in the “revaluation of all values.” Perhaps the fragmentary state in which Nietzsche left the manuscript of *Ecce Homo* reflects his

ambivalence over how his goals regarding the “revaluation of all values” could be more effectively achieved.

Shapiro notes that the editors of *Ecce Homo*, beginning with Nietzsche’s sister and including Colli and Montinari, have made strategic editorial decisions when compiling editions of *Ecce Homo* for publication. Nietzsche’s sister Elizabeth claims that she destroyed certain sections that she feared would signal Nietzsche’s delirium, which Shapiro claims includes “attacks on Bismarck, the Hohenzollerns, and the German Reich” and other pronouncements that “announce Nietzsche’s readiness for war and his willingness to rule the world” (161). He questions Colli and Montinari’s decision to publish the “Decree” between *The Antichrist* and *Ecce Homo* in the *Kritische Studienausgabe* as it might prejudice the reader’s interpretation of *Ecce Homo* as a belligerent text. Shapiro maintains that the text is inherently fragmentary, and implies that even if we had an “authoritative” and complete text, it would still read like a fragmentary and contradictory text.

Yet, the one thing that we can be sure of is that Nietzsche waged a war against metaphysical and otherworldly philosophies throughout the works I have discussed in this chapter. This war involves the active revaluation and rehabilitation of all values by relentlessly fighting against otherworldly systems of valuation. Whether or not he intended this war to manifest itself in some conventional way—by restricting the rights of Protestants or blowing up churches—is a question that we might never be able to answer. In my opinion, these provocative documents represent the daydreams of someone fervently committed to a cause. Acting like a thug does not seem like something that the author of Nietzsche’s published works would advocate. In any case, Nietzsche did create a *philosophical weapon* in this works. He created a *scientific, philosophical system* by which people can explode the metaphysical foundations that underpin Western philosophy and ensure that these foundations can never be reestablished. The “scientific” aspect involves the creation of new types of knowledge through the active implementation of the *gai saber* (the “gay science”), while the “system” is actually an “anti-system,” in which thinkers

deliberately and “piously” employ musical, dissonant thinking to perpetuate the revaluation of all values and ensure that metaphysical and otherworldly ways of thinking never predominate again. The system is a bomb that once set off, never stops exploding. Nietzsche likely hoped that his book would bring an infusion of dissonance and erism into the world that causes destruction when people simply read it.

Ecce Homo stands apart from Nietzsche’s other works in that it links the most powerful themes of Nietzsche’s philosophy with the portrayal of a man—the founder of the “revaluation of all values”—who has set an example that others can follow (or at least try to follow). That the consequences of “revaluation of all values” will entail the destruction of actual human beings, property, and institutions seems almost certain from the tone of “Why I am a Destiny.” Nietzsche’s warnings are ubiquitous, explicit, and clear. However, the realization of his ominous predictions—the moving of mountains and earthquakes—do not appear to be the result of Nietzscheans running through the streets beating up Christians, but the large-scale collapse of a “fable” that has been mistaken for the “true world” for far too long. The dismantling of this fable involves the infusion of musical, dissonant metaphors into our system of valuation, language, and the shattering of all metaphysical masks.

CODA

THE PLACE OF DISSONANCE AS AN AESTHETIC CONCEPT

In 1947, after the surrender of Germany and Japan to Allied forces, Thomas Mann published *Doktor Faustus*, an extraordinarily dense, philosophical novel, which chronicles the life and achievements of Adrian Leverkühn, a fictional composer, who in the fictional world of Mann's novel, "invents" the twelve-tone method of composition. Mann wrote this novel while living in California, where he settled with many other German-speaking intellectuals during and after the Second World War. Arnold Schoenberg, the actual inventor of the twelve-tone method, and Theodor Adorno, a philosopher and critic who took great interest in the activities of both Schoenberg and Mann, also settled in California. As Thomas Mann chronicles in *The Story of a Novel: The Genesis of Doctor Faustus*, a book that describes the events surrounding the genesis and composition of *Doktor Faustus*, Adorno helped him to revise and develop many sections of the novel that focus on music theory and history (see especially pages 42-48). Although Schoenberg had no direct involvement in the composition of the novel, many of his ideas figure prominently in it. Mann gave Schoenberg no credit in the initial publication of the novel, and it was not until after the composer vented his anger at his compatriot, that Mann appended a brief note to the text that acknowledged the significance of Schoenberg's musical and theoretical accomplishments in the novel (see "Author's Note" in *Faustus*, 535; page 672 in the German edition). This note has appeared in subsequent editions.

The purpose of this Coda is not to "conclude" this dissertation, but to gesture beyond it, and comment upon the significance of its master metaphor—musical dissonance—in the writings of Adorno, Mann, and Schoenberg. These writers found inspiration, thematic material, literary devices, and a musical, dissonant way of thinking in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche. Above all, these thinkers helped me to understand the place of musical dissonance as an aesthetic concept in twentieth and twenty-first century thought. Their writings provide concrete examples of how Nietzsche's portrayal of musical dissonance has

inspired diverse, far-reaching cultural criticism. Schoenberg's writings demonstrate that he was passionately concerned about how the master metaphor of musical dissonance can provoke composers to *revalue* and *rehabilitate* music. In addition, he hoped that the emancipation of the dissonance in musical composition would lead to the emancipation of aesthetics from timeworn, overly historicized aesthetics. As I underscore below, Schoenberg's ultimate goal, was to create a system of musical composition that would teach people to *hear* again using a radical, provocative new aesthetic in which the "centre is everywhere." This process bears a striking similarity to the way Nietzsche argues that Zarathustra resurrects the art of hearing by creating powerful metaphors infused with musical dissonance (see Chapter Three, page 219). This rehabilitated art of hearing would inspire people to relearn how to *think*—a process that could inspire new ideas and ways of critical thinking in many fields. Adorno and Mann—inspired in part by Schoenberg's and Nietzsche's achievements—imbue their respective critiques of culture with the metaphor of musical dissonance in order to explore the possibility that musical, dissonant thinking can facilitate the rehabilitation and revitalization of modernity. Therefore, this Coda illuminates the significance of musical dissonance as an aesthetic concept—as portrayed in my readings of Nietzsche's works—in twentieth century cultural criticism, particularly in the writings of Adorno, Schoenberg, and Mann.

In Adorno's works, musical dissonance represents an aesthetic safeguard and bulwark against kitsch, sentimentality, and cultural stagnation, in a manner that parallels its function in Nietzsche's works, in which musical dissonance erodes the metaphysical foundation of philosophy *and* ensures that philosophy remain free of otherworldly ways of thinking. In the works of Thomas Mann, particularly *The Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* and *Doctor Faustus*, musical dissonance also functions as an aesthetic concept, yet one that is carefully wrapped in layers of irony and parody. Musical dissonance is presented in a variety of ways, namely as an extended metaphor for revaluated, rehabilitated conceptions of politics, national identity, cosmopolitanism, and critical thinking. They all resist the

spectre of historicism and offer the reader provocative visions of modernity; however, Mann frames these critiques with highly ironic self-criticism. This self-criticism provokes the reader to think about the consequences of dissonant thinking. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Nietzsche portrays musical dissonance as a dynamic, explosive, and *dangerous* aesthetic. Indeed, this aesthetic resists historicism and offers thinkers a way to overcome—that is, move beyond—the narrative of *Bildung* as a teleological, metaphysical process. But it also leaves room for dangerous “upheavals”—a convulsion of earthquakes” and a “moving of mountains and valleys, the like of which has never been dreamed”—as Nietzsche describes the inevitable effect that his philosophy will have on humanity in *Ecce Homo* (BWN 783, see also Chapter Four, page 234).¹ Adorno and Mann—in their respective works, and together in *Doctor Faustus*—explore the consequences that dissonant thinking has had, and will probably continue to have, in modern times. While clearly extolling the potential of musical dissonance as an aesthetic concept, they explore how it can also be used to justify terror, particularly through totalitarian ideologies. Therefore, this Coda helps to contextualize Nietzsche’s attempt to overcome modernity through musical dissonance through several of his most influential readers. In addition, it paves the way toward future research on musical dissonance as an aesthetic concept.

Reading Schoenberg, Adorno, and Mann’s writings on twelve-tone composition together reveals that they are inextricably connected in ways that none of the author’s respective autobiographical writings can ever show. The broad implications of the twelve-tone method clearly weighed on the minds of all three thinkers. The significance of Nietzsche as a subtext to their musings on dissonance and twelve-tone composition links their writings. Nietzsche’s passionate arguments in favour of musical dissonance as the “foundation” for a philosophy resonate throughout their texts. The “luring call of the Dionysian bird” [“*dem wonnig lockenden Rufe des dionysischen Vogels lauschen*”] (BWN 139;

¹ [Wir werden] Erschütterungen haben, einen Krampf von Erdbeben, eine Versetzung von Berg und Thal, wie dergleichen nie geträumt worden ist. (KSA 6, 366)

KSA 1, 149), which inspired Nietzsche to infuse his works with dissonance in the hope that they would inspire the transformation of Western civilization, reverberates through the writings of Schoenberg, Adorno, and Mann, who all wrote their own manifestos which apotheosize the power of musical dissonance.

Long before Mann wrote *Doktor Faustus*, he wrote an extremely long, ironic, political book-length essay entitled *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, published in 1918. The essay's primary argument is that Germany represents a "protesting empire" ["*protestierende Reich*"].² Published at the end of World War One, this text is generally reviled by scholars, as it overtly and viciously attacks "democracy" and espouses "conservative ideas." The scholarly community generally ignores it or excuses it as an aberration or temporary lapse of good judgment on the part of the author. History prefers to remember Thomas Mann as the German intellectual who pleaded with the German people to embrace democracy during the years leading up to and during the Second World War.³ In this book, Mann essentially argues that Germany—its culture, history, and national character—reflects "protestantism" in the literal sense of the word. If does not, then it *should*. Mann describes Germany's protesting nature as an inherent unity of the nation. In a short chapter entitled "The Protest" ["*Der Protest*"], Mann claims that World War One is a manifestation of Germany's protesting nature:

"The German war," as it is called with every possible justification, lies in Germany's inborn and historical "protestantism," that this war is essentially a new outbreak, perhaps the grandest, the final one, as some believe, of Germany's ancient struggle against the spirit of the West, as well as the struggle of the Roman world [...]. I will not be dissuaded from the belief that all German "patriotism" in this war—especially that which manifested itself

² It is important to note that Mann borrows this epithet from a short essay by Dostoevsky entitled "The Germanic World Problem. Germany is a Protesting Kingdom" (1877), published in an anthology of Dostoevsky's journalistic writings entitled *A Writer's Diary*. Mann uses Dostoevsky's essays on Germany, Russia, and European politics as a launch point for his argument that Germany represents a "protesting kingdom."

³ See Mann's *The Coming Victory Democracy*, published in 1938 for an example of his pro-democracy rhetoric.

so unexpectedly, or almost unexpectedly—was and is, in its essence, instinctive, innate partisanship for precisely this protestantism [...]. (29)⁴

Throughout the course of the 432 pages of the English edition of *Reflections*, Mann explains that Western civilization is the purveyor of the spirit of late Roman decadence. Europe is being mediocritized by the forces of parliamentary democracy, suffrage, equal rights, internationalism, and science. Germany, on the other hand, is wholly “cosmopolitan” [“*kosmopolitisch*”] in the purest sense of the word: that is, it is not characterized by any provincial or petty national ideals and attributes (17; 23). It is a nation defined by its transformative and dynamic nature. In a short essay entitled “Assorted Thoughts on the Problem of Cosmopolitanism” [“*Abgerissene Gedanken zum Problem des Kosmopolitismus*”], Mann explains that German cosmopolitanism is defined by its nature as a nation of “middleness” [“*die Mitte*”] and “betweenness” [“*das Zwischen*”] (trans. mine, 1014). It is Germany’s “middleness” which is the *fuel* of its dynamic, dissonant, protesting nature.

This “middleness” does not represent a stable, unitary construction. Citing Nietzsche, Mann claims that Germany is defined by its “pathos of the middle” [“*Pathos der Mitte*”] that reflects the nation’s dynamic character (1014). Specifically, Mann refers to aphorism 244 in the section entitled “Peoples and Fatherlands” [“*Völker und Vaterländer*”] of *Beyond Good and Evil*, in which Nietzsche describes Germany as a nation composed of the most “monstrous mixture and medley of races, perhaps even with a preponderance of the pre-Aryan element, as ‘people of the middle’ in every sense” [“*ungeheuerlichsten Mischung und Zusammenrührung von Rassen, vielleicht sogar mit einem Übergewicht des vor-arischen Elementes, als ‚Volk der Mitte‘ in jedem Verstande*”] (BWN 368; KSA 5, 184). Nietzsche claims

⁴ [...] »der deutsche Krieg« heißt, in dem eingeborenen und historischen »Protestantentum« Deutschlands liegen; daß dieser Krieg im wesentlichen einen neuen Ausbruch, den großartigsten vielleicht, den letzten, wie einige glauben, des uralten deutschen Kampfes gegen den Geist des Westens, sowie des Kampfes der römischen Welt [...]. Ich lasse es mir nicht nehmen, daß aller deutsche »Patriotismus« in diesem Kriege—und namentlich jener, der sich unerwarteter oder kaum erwarteter Weise kundgab—seinem Wesen nach instinktive, eingeborene, oft erst nachträglich reflektierte Parteinahme für eben jenes Protestantentum [...]. (39-40)

that the Germans “elude definition” [“entschlüpfen der Definition”] by the criteria of modern political ideology (BWN 368; KSA 5, 184). Germany exists in a constant state of negation with its neighbours and itself. According to Mann, the German people have the capacity to develop an entire system of morality and valuation with respect to their middleness. According to the following passage, middleness endows the German people with a quality that is naturally suited to the modern age—so much so, in fact, that the German nation has the potential to serve as a model for what constitutes a genuine world citizenry. While Thomas Mann’s dream of a world citizenry is not original, as utopian thinkers from all stripes of the political spectrum share it, Mann’s contention that a world citizenry and its system of valuation should have a foundation of musical dissonance is novel, provocative, and distinctly Nietzschean. In the following passage—also from “Assorted Thoughts”—it almost seems as though Mann has a copy of Nietzsche’s lectures on Heraclitus in front of him as he describes a system of ethics and morality based on contradiction and discord:

Nietzsche wields a brash philology, when he derived the name of the German folk from “tiusche” folk—the “folk of the middle”—what a wise appellation! The folk that constitutes the citizenry of the World-Middle are the illusive folk, the folk of deviousness and a sense of non-binding geniality that plays between the contradictions—and with the morality and devoutness of the illusive “Betweenness,” and the belief in cognition and insight, toward a formation [*Bildung*] of world citizenry. (trans. mine)⁵

Mann betrays his debt to Nietzsche throughout *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* and these shorter essays. He claims that the German nation is defined by its “will to power and wordly greatness” [“seine Wille zur Macht und Erdengröße”] (17; 22). In the chapter entitled “Politics” (and citing Nietzsche), Mann claims that Germany’s destiny is to “protest against the *nationalisation* of Germany, in which [Nietzsche] saw at the same time a

⁵ Nietzsche trieb eine kecke Philologie, als er den Namen des deutschen Volkes von »tiusche« Volk, »Täusche-Volk« ableiten wollte, —aber eine sehr geistvolle. Das Volk bürgerlicher Weltmitte ist das täuschende Volk, das Volk der Verschlagenheit und des ironischen Vorbehaltes, nach beiden Seiten, dessen Sinn mit unverbindlicher Herzlichkeit zwischen den Gegensätzen spielt—und mit der Moralität, der Frömmigkeit dieses täuschenden »Zwischen«, dem Glauben an Erkennen und Einsicht, an weltbürgerliche Bildung. (1014)

denationalization, internationalization and democratization. [...] a clearly German protest [...] in which Nietzsche may possibly have had an 'untimely' [...] impact" (175).⁶ Clearly, Mann is influenced by a broad range of Nietzsche's books, ranging from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *The Will to Power*, and that his vision of Germany as a *protesting* nation is also that of a musical, dissonant nation. It is a nation that is defined by its plurality and dynamism. It functions in a manner that is remarkably consistent with "dynamite" as Nietzsche describes it in *Ecce Homo*. According to Wysling, the title of *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* is an "attempt to save the apolitical romanticism that Thomas Mann had taken over from Nietzsche [...]. What [Mann] wanted to defend was and remained intellectual freedom, an apolitical-aestheticist nonpartisanship" (24-25). Unfortunately, as Wysling notes, Mann realized that such a goal was only achievable "through one-sidedness and partisanship" (25). Mann's realized—just as Nietzsche realized when he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*—that mixing philosophy with rhetoric that resonates with populism generally attracts populists and those who wish to manipulate the populists. This rhetoric alienates the philosophers and intellectuals.

Toward the end of "Politics," Mann claims that the German nation functions like German music, particularly the polyphonic music that flourished after the Reformation:

[...] German music from Bach to Reger has been the *punctum contra punctum*, the great fugue, not only the resonant expression of the Protestant ethic, but with its powerfully polyphonic joining of the self-will and subordination, the image and the artistic-spiritual reflection of German life itself. How should civilization's literary man, the man of Western "rights," not hate all this? And what, once again, would a musician do with his "teaching"? (233)⁷

⁶ [...] der Protest gegen die *Nationalisierung* Deutschlands, in der er zugleich eine *Entnationalisierung*, *Internationalisierung* und *Demokratisierung* erblickt [...] —ein überaus deutscher Protest also, mit welchem Nietzsche allenfalls »unzeitgemäß« [...] Mundstück wirkte [...] (234)

⁷ [...] die deutsche, von Bach bis auf Reger,—ist das *punctum contra punctum*, die große fuga, nicht nur tönender Ausdruck protestantischer Ethik, sondern, mit ihrem gewaltig-vieltönigen Ineinander von Eigenwille und Ordnung, Abbild und künstlerisch-spirituelle Spiegelung des deutschen Lebens selbst gewesen. Wie Sollte der Zivilisationsliterat, der Mann der wesentlichen »Rechte«, dies Wesen Nicht hassen? Und was, noch einmal, finge mit seine »Lehre« ein Musiker an? (312)

For Mann, polyphonic music represents a powerful force that has the ability to serve as the foundation for a system of social organization. It is an all-inclusive system of social organization, in which *everybody* has a place and a specific function, in the same way that the notes in a polyphonic musical composition are ordered according to the strict demands of contrapuntal forms of music. Here, everything has its place, yet nothing is “equal” in the democratic sense of the word. The equality in a polyphonic society—as Mann describes it—exists only in the fact that every element has a specific role to play. No thing is “wasted.” There is no entropy. Everything is part of a powerful unity defined by its plurality. However, there is nothing in Mann’s book that suggests that the individual members of this dissonant plurality should be accorded “equal rights.” Each member represents a centre of force whose power is constantly shifting and changing. Mann describes a process that is remarkably similar to the processes that define Nietzsche’s “will to power,” as I describe in the Introduction.

The implications of such a method of social organization reach far beyond the confines of a given society. It inspires an enormous amount of criticism from the outside. As Mann implies in this passage, the world has no choice but to react to such a powerful system. Indeed, it is as if Mann were describing a political system that functions like a “Heraclitean fire machine.” Mann’s polyphonic polity represents a dynamic quantum of force that generates dissonance both inside and outside of the machine. His provocative and quixotic image of Germany as a state does not represent a stable identity; it represents an extraordinarily musical, dissonant, and dynamic set of processes. Its *Bildung*—that is, its formation and growth as a collectivity of individuals—is radical, resists historicizing, and derives meaning from a musical, dissonant aesthetic. In addition, it represents a *medium* for disseminating dissonance, as by nature, Mann describes the “protesting nation” as a polity that cultivates dissonance and spreads it to other social entities.

In his book on Mann, *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann*, Erich Heller emphasizes that Mann’s most distinguishing characteristic, both as a human being and as a

writer, is his profligate use of *irony*. It exists everywhere in his texts. Among the few contemporary studies that do not dismiss Mann's reflections is an article by Joe Kroll, who maintains that for Mann "art is the ironic, erotic, [and] according to Mann's definition, conservative principle [...]. Art mediates between these two principles" (236). But for Kroll, "irony acts not as a principle of opposition, but as one of reconciliation," which represents the *radically conservative* aspect of Mann's political ideology (238). That is, he does not interpret irony as the unsettling, dissonant, dynamic force that Mann claims it is throughout his book. For Kroll, irony represents a force that creates tension in order to arrive at reconciliation. Although I agree with Kroll's belief that irony constitutes a transfiguring force in the political views that Mann outlines in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, the notion that reconciliation is its goal accords neither with Mann's writings, nor the Nietzschean subtexts that are clearly present throughout Mann's works of the period. As Mann outlines in "Assorted Thoughts on the Problem of Cosmopolitanism":

Irony is the pathos of the middle. It is also its ethics and morality. Hasty choice amidst the ballots of the world is not generally the way of the German Volk, whose native soil is the realm of world contradictions. I have heard that in Hebrew, the words "cognition" and "insight" have the same etymology as the word "Betweenness." (trans. mine)⁸

Clearly, Mann intends to posit irony as a force that accords with Nietzsche's concept of *dynamite*. It is like a bomb that keeps on exploding; it is a source of dissonance. During the 1920s, Mann portrayed an imaginative, yet highly contentious, vision of the German nation as a polity that is fueled by dissonance. Dissonance is both its source and its goal. There is no sign that "reconciliation" is part of Mann's program. It is very likely that Mann intended to plant a volatile question into the already explosive political and philosophical discourse of the period of the Great War and the Weimar Republic that followed. *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* seems to portray a sequel to Nietzsche's *Untimely Meditations*, as evidenced

⁸ Ironie ist das Pathos der Mitte. Sie ist auch ihre Moral, ihre Sittlichkeit. Schnellfertige Option zwischen den Wahlfällen der Welt ist im allgemeinen nicht die Art des zwischen den Weltgegensätzen siedelnden Volkes der Deutschen. Erkennen und Einsicht, hörte ich sagen, seien im Hebräischen desselben Wortstammes wie »Zwischen«. (1014)

by Mann's use of the word *Betrachtungen* (that is, "Reflections," "Meditations"). Mann wants to introduce a destabilizing element into the discourse of modernism that was neither "left" nor "right," but *beyond* politics, exactly as his mentor Nietzsche described himself a generation earlier. It is an entirely *decentred* system of social organization and derives meaning from the extended metaphor of musical dissonance.

Unfortunately for Mann, his experiment failed. Scholars have been much more forgiving of Nietzsche than they have been to his admirer, Thomas Mann. The fact that Nietzsche is a far better cultural critic and philosopher than Thomas Mann is certainly one of the reasons, but a more pragmatic reason is simply that Mann should have known better than to have used language that can be interpreted as outright nationalism. Whereas Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy* during the early halcyon years of the Second Reich in which Germany achieved nationhood and Bismarck helped to lead Germany to the status of a world power, Mann wrote *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* during World War One, which historians almost unanimously paint as a war of German aggression. Mann was certainly not unaware of the precarious implications of his book, but he took the risk anyway, and *never* apologized for having done so: "I am so far from defining myself intellectually through my *écrits*, that it is much more accurate to see the literary treatment of my thoughts as the only secure means of getting rid of them, to move beyond them to other, new, and, quite possibly, utterly opposed thoughts—*sans remords!*" (qtd. in Wysling 25).

Many years later, Mann wrote *Doktor Faustus*, in which a fictional composer devises a system of musical composition that bears a suspicious resemblance to the polyphonic system of social organization that Mann describes in *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. In Chapter Two, Adrian Leverkühn engages in a heated debate with the narrator of the novel, Serenus Zeitblom, who describes himself as a secular humanist. Leverkühn describes his system as inspired by the notion of a "rational total organization of all musical material" [*"einer rationale Durchorganisation des gesamten musikalischen Materials"*] (205; 257). On the one hand, the twelve-tone system guarantees a decentred system of composition, but it is

also totalitarian, in a way that bears a striking resemblance to the system that Schoenberg describes in “Opinion or Insight?” (see Introduction, page 54).

In the following passage, Leverkühn discusses the implications of organizing musical compositions around a twelve-tone row in one of his own pieces:

Each tone in the entire composition, melodic and harmonic, would have to demonstrate its relation to this predetermined basic row. None would dare appear that did not fulfill its motif function within the structure as a whole. Free notes would no longer exist. That is what I would call a strict style. (205)⁹

After exchanging some comments, Zeitblom suggests, “the entire disposition and organization of the material would have to be finished before the actual work could begin” (207).¹⁰ This statement suggests that the twelve-tone system is totalistic. The freedom from the central authority of a tonal centre comes with a precarious price: *every tone* has a predetermined relationship to the twelve-tone row that guarantees its freedom from a tonal centre. However, therein lies the problem of the twelve-tone row. Embracing the twelve-tone system promises release from the thralldom of a tonal centre in which dissonances are grafted onto consonances, and notes are strewn about purposelessly in awkwardly composed music, and sentimentality reigns supreme. However, adopting the twelve-tone system also promises a new kind of thralldom: the musical equivalent of panopticism—an all-hearing ear. The twelve-tone system represents an all-seeing eye. It is a highly structured system of musical composition that literally accounts for everything. Leverkühn believes that this is a worthwhile tradeoff. Zeitblom remains skeptical. Zeitblom describes the implications of Leverkühn’s system as follows:

“Bound by the self-imposed constraint of order, which means free.”
“Well, yes, the dialectic of freedom is unfathomable. But whoever shaped

⁹ Jeder Ton der gesamten Komposition, melodisch und harmonisch, müßte sich über seine Beziehung zu dieser vorbestimmten Grundreihe auszuweisen haben. Keiner dürfte auftreten, der nicht in der Gesamtkonstruktion seine motivische Funktion erfüllte. Es gäbe keine freie Note mehr. Das würde ich strengen Satz nennen. (258)

¹⁰ Die ganze Material-Disposition und –Organisation müßte ja fertig sein, wenn die eigentliche Arbeit beginnen soll [...]. (260)

the harmony could hardly be called free. Would the building of chords not be purely haphazard, something left to blind chance?"

"Say, instead: left to the constellation, the polyphonic value of each tone building a chord would be assured by the larger constellation. The historical results—the *emancipation of dissonance* from resolution [emphasis mine], so that dissonance achieves absolute value, as can already be found in some passages in late Wagner—would justify every cluster of sound that can provide its legitimacy to the system."

"And when the constellation produces something banal: consonance, the harmony of the triad, the cliché, the diminished seventh?"

"It would mean the constellation has renewed what was worn-out."

"I see there is an element of restoration in your utopia. It is very radical, but it eases the prohibition that has in fact already been placed on consonance. The return to old-fashioned forms of variation is a similar feature" (207)¹¹

The exchange between Leverkühn and Zeitblom reveals that the twelve-tone method of composition bears a remarkable similarity to the revaluation of all values as portrayed in Nietzsche's texts. The twelve-tone method represents a system that generates transformations of values through musical, dissonant metaphors. Every tone has a "polyphonic value," which Leverkühn clearly portrays to be equivalent to a metaphorical value. That is, every note represents a set of relationships with other tones. These relationships are decentred, as they do not defer to a central authority of meaning that transcends the value of any given note. The "prohibition" placed on consonance *imposes* a decentred relationship between the members of the system. Every instance that a "time-

¹¹ »Gebunden durch selbstbereiteten Ordnungszwang, also frei.«

»Nun ja, die Dialektik der Freiheit ist unergründlich. Aber als Gestalter der Harmonik wäre er kaum frei zu nennen. Blicke die Akkordbildung nicht dem Geratewohl, dem blinden Verhängnis überlassen?«

»Sage liebe: der Konstellation. Die polyphone Würde jedes akkordbildenden Tons wäre durch die Konstellation gewährleistet. Die geschichtlichen Ergebnisse, die Emanzipation der Dissonanz von ihrer Auflösung, das Absolutwerden der Dissonanz, wie es sich schon an manchen Stellen des späten Wagner-Satzes findet, würde jeden Zusammenklang rechtfertigen, der sich vor dem System legitimieren kann.«

»Und wenn die Konstellation das Banale ergäbe, die Konsonanz, Dreilangharmonik, das Abgenutzte, den verminderten Septimenakkord?«

»Das wäre eine Erneuerung des Verbrauchten durch die Konstellation.«

«Ich sehe da ein wiederherstellendes Element in deiner Utopie. Sie ist sehr radikal, aber sie lockert das Verbot, das doch eigentlich schon über die Konsonanz verhängt war. Das Zurückgehen auf die altertümlichen Formen der Variation ist ein ähnliches Merkmal.« (260-261)

worn" value reappears, it is immediately torn apart by the regulatory forces of the twelve-tone system. Anachronism, decadence, and transcendence are prohibited by fiat. Progress and change are dictated, implemented, and enforced by the system (at least theoretically). In a passage from an essay entitled "Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg," Adorno compares the strict rules of twelve-tone composition to the Old Testament's ban on imagistic representations of God: "One could say that Schoenberg translated the Old Testament ban on images into music. This alienates us, where his tone is concerned" [*"Man könnte sagen, Schönberg habe das alttestamentarische Bilderverbot auf die Musik übertragen; das befremdet an seinem Ton"*] (638; 440). He describes Schoenberg as having the characteristics of a religious fanatic.

The question of creative freedom in the twelve-tone system is paramount. With so many rules and the specter of "predetermination" inherent to the system, is it possible for the artist to be truly creative? Alternatively, is the artistic prowess of the composer on par with that of a crossword puzzle player? As I discuss in Chapter Two, one of Nietzsche's greatest fears is that mathematicians will place themselves at the service of the mathematics rather than place mathematics at the service of the human being (see pages 184-185). This problem is readily apparent in Leverkühn's system: the composer must ultimately yield to a mathematical table, that is, the "magic square," that represents all of the permutations and variations upon a twelve-tone row that the composer must use as thematic material. In Chapter Twenty-Five, Adrian Leverkühn has a conversation with the Devil in a state of feverish delirium. During this conversation, Leverkühn poses the question of creativity to the Devil, who declares: "We create nothing new—that is others' business. We merely deliver and set free. We let the lameness and shyness, the chaste scruples and doubts, go to the Devil. We stimulate and, with but a little tickle of hyperaemia, we sweep away weariness, be it small or large, private or that of the age" (252).¹² This comment summarizes

¹² Wir schaffen nichts Neues—das ist anderer Leute Sache. Wir entbinden nur und setzen frei. Wir lassen die Lahm- und Schüchternheit, die keuschen Skrupel und Zweifel zum

the quandary of the freedoms and unfreedoms offered by the twelve-tone system very well. The system delivers the user from anachronism, stagnation, and weariness, but does it offer the artist *life*? That is, does the twelve-tone system offer the artist a life-affirming system, in the Nietzschean sense of the word—a system that allows the artist to live and create according to a musical, dissonant epistemology, to nurture and cultivate more dissonance, and encourage others to do so as well?

Adorno's book *Philosophy of New Music* contains two essays on modern music: "Schoenberg and Progress" and "Stravinsky and Restoration" (see pages 20-21 in the Introduction). To summarize, the former applauds Schoenberg's twelve-tone system as representative of a philosophy that has the potential to revitalize modernity through the emancipation of the dissonance in music, while the latter, harshly accuses Stravinsky's compositional techniques of being a rehashing of old ideas in new clothing. However, Adorno's praise of Schoenberg is not without reservations. In a section entitled "Form," Adorno asserts, "The construction of truly free forms delineating the uniquely occurring constitution of the work is denied by the unfreedom that is imposed by the serial technique through the ever-recurring appearance of the same. [...] For the symmetries of the twelve-tone row are insubstantial and without depth. The result is that they refer always to harmonically symmetrical relationships that they are to express or produce" (76).¹³ According to Evelyn Cobley, "Form" portrays Adorno's fear that "Schoenberg created a system" that is "'questionable as an ideal" because the drive toward the total integration of all elements struck him not only as totalitarian in fascist terms but also as complicit with the destruction of meaningful social relations under the reifying impact of late capitalism" (187).

Teufel gehen. Wir pulvern auf und räumen, bloß durch ein Bißchen Reiz-Hyperämie, die Müdigkeit hinweg,—die kleine und die große, die private und die der Zeit. (318)

¹³ Die Konstruktion wahrhaft freier, die einmalige Beschaffenheit des Stücks umschreibender Formen wird verwehrt von der Unfreiheit, die durch die Reihentechnik, durch das wieder und wieder Erscheinen des Gleichen [...]. Denn es bleiben die Zwölftonsymmetrien wesenslos, ohne Tiefgang. Das macht, daß sie zwar zwanghaft sich ergeben, aber zu nichts mehr nutzen. (94)

Adorno also draws attention to the *democratically* totalitarian aspects of the twelve-tone method. In a passage from “Toward an Understanding of Schoenberg” that resounds with Nietzsche’s and Mann’s disdain for the mediocritizing effects of democracy through the imposition of universally applicable “equal rights,” Adorno seems to mock the revolutionary potential of the twelve-tone method as depicted in Schoenberg’s song “*Lockung*” [“*Temptation*”] (in *8 Lieder for Soprano*, Op. 6). Adorno claims, “In the end, every sound became autonomous, all tones enjoyed equal rights, and the reign of the tonic triad was overthrown” [“*Am Ende wurde jeder Klang autonom, alle Klänge gleichberechtigt und die Vorherrschaft des tonischen Dreiklangs gestürzt*”] (636; 438). Adorno sounds as though he is sarcastically describing a petty revolution, in which one totalistic regime supplants another.

However, Adorno holds Schoenberg’s compositions in high praise—and rightly so—because of its ability to inspire people to *think*. In my opinion, this reason overrides all of Adorno’s reservations about Schoenberg’s system in his critiques of the New Music, as the power of Schoenberg’s music to provoke people to think critically is monumental—perhaps even unparalleled—in twentieth century thought:

Hence Schoenberg’s music demands the opposite of what the title of a well-known American radio program called “*easy listening*.” The ear that does not want to be helplessly left behind must voluntarily perform the entire work of composition once again, independently. But the habit of listening that is dominant, and that is perhaps growing even stronger thanks to the culture industry, the business of music in a more or less de-concentrated way, as a sequence of isolated stimuli. There is reason to believe that even so-called classical music is in great measure consumed in this fashion. Both the universally familiar quality of the works that are repeated over and over again, and the well-established and familiar language that they use are contributing factors. Schoenberg broke with all of this. He disdains the usual fare. His music is not satisfied with the language it finds at hand, but instead creates its own, out of itself. (“Toward an Understanding” 632)¹⁴

¹⁴ Daher verlangt Schönbergs Musik das Gegenteil von dem, was der Titel eines bekannten amerikanischen Radioprogramms »easy listening«, bequemes Hören, nannte: das Ohr, das nicht hilflos zurückbleiben will, muß die ganze Arbeit des Komponierens von sich aus noch einmal leisten. Die vorherrschende und von der Kulturindustrie, dem Betrieb der ganzen und halben Unterhaltungsmusik womöglich noch verstärkte Hörgewohnheit ist aber darauf geeicht, Musik mehr oder minder dekonzentriert, als Folge isolierter sinnlicher Reize wahrzunehmen. Grund ist zur Annahme, daß selbst die sogenannte klassische Musik in

As echoed in the section entitled “Intellectualism” [“*Intellektualismus*”] in the Introduction to the *Philosophy of New Music*, Adorno is disgusted with the listening habits of modern music lovers, characterized as it is by the regression of history. Adorno believes that the modern listener has been conditioned by late-capitalist bourgeois sensibilities that impel it to seek the comforts of “hit tunes.” Although we generally associate “hit tunes” with music of the radio and internet age, it is important to note that Adorno uses this word to refer to Tchaikovsky, whom he accuses of “portray[ing] despair with hit-tune melodies” [“*der noch die Verzweiflung mit Schlagermelodien porträtiert*”] in the guise of “emotionally” evocative music (*Philosophy* 14; 20). He laments that “hit tune” composers overshadow the contributions of more progressive composers such as Schoenberg who do not offer “despair,” but rather a truly provocative alternative to conventional, anachronistic, and decadent ways of thinking. Tchaikovsky wrote before the advent of the radio, but his catchy tunes managed to disseminate through vast populations of listeners who hankered for the “metaphysical comforts”—as Nietzsche would refer to them—of “easy listening” music. Adorno’s critique of modern music (that is, bad, or at the very least, unsatisfactory music) is entirely analogous to Nietzsche’s critique of modern science and modern philosophy, both of which, he believes to have a consonant, metaphysical orientation.

Adorno approves of one of the coercive aspects of Schoenberg’s twelve-tone system: it forces people to think and react critically to music, and provokes them to alter their philosophical worldviews. In this way, the twelve-tone method functions like a Nietzschean “gay science,” which provokes people to continually rethink all perspectives, systems, definitions, and codes. Schoenberg’s twelve-tone method might effect the

weitem Maß auf diese Weise konsumiert wird. Dazu trägt ebenso die Qualität des Allbekannten der immer wiederholten Werke bei wie die eingespielte und vertraute Sprache, deren sie sich bediente. Schönberg hat mit alldem gebrochen. Er verweigert die gewohnte Speise. Seine Musik gibt sich nicht mit der vorgegebenen Sprache zufrieden, sondern schöpft die eigene aus sich selbst. (434)

emancipation of the dissonance from consonance, but the “centre” is *not* “everywhere”; it is systematically distributed across a tightly regulated pattern of twelve tones.

Thomas Mann’s *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* (and the related essays I discuss) may have its flaws, but it attempts—at least in spirit—to achieve a goal that Schoenberg was not able to attain. The system of polyphonic social organization that Mann describes attempts to “cook chance,” as Deleuze puts it. That is, it attempts to construct a system in which dissonance has been emancipated, but is not subjected to a central authority for deriving meaning, nor a totalistic system of regulation and control. He describes his ideal German society as one fueled by a universal respect and passionate enthusiasm for discord and musical dissonance. Like Nietzsche, Mann attempts to emancipate dissonance without employing a “mathematical table” that people must use to impose dissonance on their world like a fabric die or a cookie mold. Mann likely derived his inspiration from Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, *The Gay Science*, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, and *Ecce Homo*, which rely on humanity’s ability to cultivate its own “becoming-human of dissonance” [*“Menschwerdung der Dissonanz”*]. As I have demonstrated throughout this study, this process *requires* that human beings cultivate themselves as laughing dancers, who grow by following paths of “twists and turns.” Their behaviour is conditioned by their ability to embrace “chance” and “fate” and allow themselves to interact with each other and the world in which they live as if they were “spurs” or slippery stones on a riverbed. For Mann and Nietzsche, human beings are not equal. Just like the many centres of force that comprise the “monster of energy”—that is, the “will to power,” that Nietzsche declares forms the fabric of the universe—human beings are constantly competing for different ranks of power. Mann and Nietzsche inspire their readers by encouraging them to cultivate living dissonance from within, and not enthrall themselves to an externally imposed system, as Schoenberg does.

Adorno’s position is clearly ambivalent. Although he decidedly fears the consequences of the totalitarian aspects of the twelve-tone system, he is clearly attempting

to teach his readership how to “understand” Schoenberg and the new music. Adorno isolates the “progressive” and totalitarian aspects of the method. In all likelihood, Adorno took some of his cues from Schoenberg’s essays, which plainly outline the reasons that the composer believed it was necessary to impose a dictatorship of dissonance in the new music (see Introduction, pages 54-55). Perhaps Adorno admires him for having had the nerve to do so. If he did not, Adorno and Mann might not have been able to formulate such brilliant critiques of his provocative method of musical composition, which has inspired many people, including myself, to “think.”

My brief comments on Schoenberg’s, Adorno’s, and Mann’s theoretical writings about music and dissonance are intended to elucidate my discussion of Nietzsche’s writings. This short Coda only touches upon the broad significance of twentieth and twenty-first century responses to Nietzsche’s writings about musical dissonance. However, these closely related responses clearly illustrate a problem that I have discussed throughout this dissertation: how do we respond to Nietzsche’s suggestion that musical dissonance can and should be the foundation of an epistemology? That we are expressions of a “becoming-human of dissonance”? Is our reluctance to do so a sign that we are still desperately clinging to metaphysically oriented philosophies? Should we follow Nietzsche’s provocative lead, and if so, should we choose Schoenberg’s coercive path or follow the “nonpolitical” route that the forty-year old Thomas Mann chose when he wrote *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*? Although Schoenberg’s path is more rational and structured than Mann’s, it is no less threatening than Mann’s. Adorno’s essays probably offer the best course of action: think about it some more and don’t make the mistakes that Schoenberg, Leverkühn, or the younger Thomas Mann made. Nietzsche’s statement that “the centre is everywhere” has indeed proven to be dynamite.

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