Nietzsche, mysticism and the god who isn't one

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This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy of The University of Western Australia

School of Humanities

Discipline of Philosophy

2019
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Acknowledgements

This research was supported by a Theresa Symons Postgraduate Scholarship in Philosophy and an Australian Government Research Training Program (RTP) Scholarship.
Note on translations

I have made use of existing translations from the German where ever possible, and noted the source in the footnotes. Where no translation is known to me, I have offered my own. In these cases I have typically quoted the original beside my translations, so as to make immediately apparent my errors to anyone whose incompetence in German is less great than my own.
“The word “I” is the true shibboleth of humanity.”

—Martin Buber\(^1\)

Introduction

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes:

“Against mediators.—Those who want to mediate between two resolute thinkers show that they are mediocre; they lack eyes for seeing what is unique. Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes.”

Nietzsche’s mediators are innumerable: I vow to sound them out.

In the now enormous literature on Nietzsche and religion, there already exist a number of studies that focus on his purported mysticism. Some of these relate—if not assimilate—Nietzsche to the great mystics of the East, and some to those of the West. Mostly the former. Indeed, one could adapt Chesterton’s quip and say that comparative philosophers seem to be forever insisting that Nietzsche and Buddhism are very much alike, especially Buddhism.

I do not take issue with comparative approaches as such—indeed my debt to them will soon become clear. But what has been lacking in all the studies which I have encountered is an adequate engagement with Nietzsche’s own avowed ancestry. What this leads to is a kind of comparison in which there is not the mutual illumination one desires, but rather one term is illuminated in light of the other, and so starts to look a lot like it—albeit, as Chesterton might have said, *less so*. One term becomes *comparisans* and the other *comparisandum*, which is really just to say that we are not doing comparison but mediation.

When Nietzsche’s heredity is not grasped, his project is mistaken for what it is not. Understanding the tradition from which Nietzsche’s religious thought developed can assist future comparative work. When each of the terms of a comparison makes sense in its own light, then they can begin to genuinely unsettle and enrich each other.

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2 GS§228, p. 212.
3 In what follows, I do not simply take it as granted that Nietzsche is a mystic. Chapter II and III in particular provide evidence to this end. But it is not especially my aim to establish that the shoe fits. Whether or not it is ‘licit’ to apply the term to Nietzsche is not a question that particularly interests me. For how I use the term ‘mystic’, and a brief address of general concerns about its use, see Appendix A.
5 G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, The Bodley Head, 1909, pp. 238-239: “Students of popular science, like Mr. Blatchford, are always insisting that Christianity and Buddhism are very much alike, especially Buddhism.”
Studies of Nietzsche and mysticism have relied upon de-emphasising what is quite obvious to most readers of Nietzsche: his unabashed egoism. This is unfortunate because, to my mind, some of the most interesting questions relate not to the tension between Nietzsche’s supposed mysticism and his atheism, but rather to the tension between his mysticism and egoism\(^6\).

How do we make sense of this tension without simply negating one of the claims? Well, one way is to cast Nietzsche as a kind of centaur, or as one scholar has described him, a zebra with both egoistic and non-egoistic stripes\(^7\). But I cannot say to everything “half and half”\(^8\).

Another way is offered in what follows, one that could be called Goethean. Yet it may seem as though I’ve already broken my vow, and that I’m simply casting Nietzsche as that Goethe-double that rode past the original on the path to Drusenheim\(^9\). That may be my specific evil and most natural inclination, but it is not my intention.

I am not trying to prove that Goethe had many of Nietzsche’s insights, and that Nietzsche is less ‘original’ than we suppose\(^10\). Rather, I think that Nietzsche’s insights must be seen as developments of—as belonging to—a tradition to which Goethe also belonged, and that flows back through Spinoza to the Pre-Platonics; I believe that Nietzsche’s insights become more coherent—become more themselves—when they are understood in this context.

In a note, Nietzsche wrote “My ancestors: Heraclitus, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe”\(^11\). One of my aims, then, is to situate Nietzsche’s religious thought within the very tradition that he claimed to belong to. This might seem like a wholly unnecessary undertaking, if one hadn’t looked at the vast literature that takes other paths, paths that I will show lead not to understanding but to mediation.

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It is to Kaufmann that I owe my belated recognition of the indispensability of studying Goethe to anything approaching a full appreciation of Nietzsche’s thought. Kaufmann emphasised this throughout his career, from his \textit{Nietzsche} (1950) to his late trilogy \textit{Discovering}

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\(^6\) Indeed, it is principally on the recognition of this ‘tension’ that Nietzsche has much to offer in any comparative study with thinkers in other mystical or religious traditions.

\(^7\) I discuss a paper with this title in chapter II.

\(^8\) GS§32, p. 103.


\(^10\) As, for example, Stack attempted—and I think rather implausibly—in his study of Nietzsche and Emerson. See: G.J. Stack, \textit{Nietzsche and Emerson: An Elective Affinity}, Ohio University Press, 1993.

\(^11\) NF-1884,25[454].
the Mind (1980)\textsuperscript{12}. In the first volume of the latter, Kaufmann writes that “immersion” in Goethe is “precisely what is needed” to understand Nietzsche\textsuperscript{13}. More and more, I find that this analysis is right.

Although Kaufmann tells us that Goethe “was not a philosopher”\textsuperscript{14}, he insists that we take Goethe’s thought, and especially his way of thinking, seriously. In the English-speaking world, most who have taken Goethe seriously have been within the Anthroposophical movement. Here, Goethe is typically considered a kind of proto-Steiner—that is, a pioneer who fell short of the breakthrough into the domain of the supersensible; a man of genius, albeit lacking in the clairvoyance of his successor. Now, I know rather less about Anthroposophy and Steiner than perhaps it behoves me to admit. But let me say that I do not consider Goethe’s abstention from metaphysical speculation (call it “spiritual knowledge” if you will) to be a shortfall, but true clairvoyance: the clarity to see into and remain with phenomenological reality, rather than looking beyond or behind it.

The Anthroposophical movement’s tacit ‘ownership’ of Goethe may well be off-putting for many who are keen to avoid wading into such muddy waters\textsuperscript{15}. But Goethe is certainly no obscurant and there is no reason why we cannot approach him directly, which is what I propose to do in what follows\textsuperscript{16}.

Nietzsche is the mystic who says: “I want to give egoism a good conscience [Ich will dem Egoism das gute Gewissen schaffen]”\textsuperscript{17}. It is Goethe who presents us with the clue as to how

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\textsuperscript{12} See also several essays of W. Kaufmann, From Shakespeare to Existentialism, Anchor Books, 1960.
\textsuperscript{13} W. Kaufmann, Discovering the Mind, Volume I: Goethe, Kant, and Hegel, Transaction Publishers, 1991, p. 51 (abbreviated from here on DTMI).
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., p. 25.
\textsuperscript{15} Goethe was obviously important to Steiner. Steiner edited the Goethe’s scientific works early in his career, and maintained an abiding interest in Goethe’s thought. However, Steiner is plainly a thinker who drew on an eclectical range of influences. The emphasis on the esoteric in Steiner does not have its theoretical roots in Goethe, but rather in the romantic-idealistic milieu with which Goethe critically engaged. See for example, R. Steiner, Philosophy and Anthroposophy, Anthroposophical Publishing Co., 1929. In this essay, Steiner discusses his philosophical roots. For example, he explicitly discusses his own views in relation to Fichte’s conception of the I (Ibid., p. 51).
\textsuperscript{16} In chapter I, I shall make liberal use of the work of Henri Bortoft, who has been published by Anthroposophical Society imprints and Steiner-associated presses, and he makes good use of Steiner’s works on Goethe. In Bortoft’s own words, the “esoteric enterprise” of Anthroposophy “has had the effect of taking attention away from other aspects of [Steiner’s] work, especially his luminous contribution to understanding Goethe”. This gives some idea of his attitude towards the relative merits of these two thinkers. See: H. Bortoft, Taking Appearances Seriously, Floris Books, 2012, p. 156 (abbreviated from here on TAS).
\textsuperscript{17} NF-1882,16[15]. I happen to think Nietzsche is right about this compatibility. But perhaps I am confused, and incorrigibly so: perhaps the spiritual life just is un-self-centering. Perhaps I have simply never got over the values inscribed in my childhood by my satyr-like father when he would repeatedly sing—with much buffoonery—the chorus of the pop song “Ego Is Not a Dirty Word”.

3
there is only one soul that dwells in Nietzsche’s breast and not two. Goethe conceives of a whole that is not apart from the parts, a One that is not one.

It is to this conception that we turn first—one which will help us to make sense of what Nietzsche means in his apparent denial of both part and whole, saying that “the one is at the same time the many,” that the many are the One, but then to claim that there is no One. This ‘Goethean’ conception of One and many is, I think, a rather simple one—so simple that it is at first difficult to see. In the first chapter, I will attempt to elucidate it from several directions I then undertake an inquiry into the aetiology of anaemia and explore Nietzsche’s ancestry with a discussion of Spinoza, Hegel and Empedocles through the eye of the augenmensch.

That Nietzsche too believed in such a One becomes clearer in the second and third chapters, respectively on Nietzsche’s engagement with mysticism and his conception of fate. Here I bow to some of the most instructive mediators—in particular, Stambaugh, Haar, and Parkes—before laying blows. I claim that Nietzsche was a mystic, but neither Dōgen nor Eckhart; and that Nietzsche was a fatalist, but neither Turkish nor Russian.

In the fourth chapter, a mathematician is questioned on the value of one before the morality of unselfing is exposed as less general than specific. Furthermore, Zerrissenheit is deemed sublime without sublation—as the very possibility of what is holy and whole.

19 Ibid, p. 58.
20 This should indicate something about the order of the chapters, and the relationship of parts to whole in what follows. The discussion of ancestry is necessary to orient our explorations of mysticism and fate, but these explorations offer strong support to my situating of Nietzsche’s thought within that tradition. This is an example of how the chapters are strongly mutually informing. What I describe here rather linearly is, then, an arbitrary way of breaking the cycle.

I do some of my best work in the footnotes, but one role that they often serve is to suggest external connections between various parts of the work. Where these are offered in-text (as way-markers for readers), they often feel tacked-on. I must say that I have the strongest distaste for our cultural tendency to bush walk with nose pressed to the map or with eyes scanning for way-markers, always seeking for assurance that we’re on the path. I hope that the thin markers offered help to orient the reader while being infrequent enough that what one is looking at is the path and not the signposts. Once one begins to see the whole, these external connections are entirely dispensable. The danger in making them too prominent is that they can impede the attempt to see the whole, they can become a substitute for it.

As for this introduction, then, I hope the reader shall see that the whole is not here apart from the parts. Introductions have the unfortunate tendency of suggesting otherwise, and often start by “driving the spirit out of the parts”. My introductory comments may at first appear obscure, but they should become much clearer as one reads on. I realise and regret this is an affront to the sound advice to make life easy for one’s readers, and I hope it is not taken for obscurantism, for muddying the waters that they might appear deep (c.f. TSZ “On Poets”, p. 128).

21 These three important scholars are my main interlocutors in much of what follows, but I cannot claim them as my interpretative ancestors. How I read Nietzsche has been very greatly informed by the out-of-fashion ‘humanist’ Kaufmann, who showed a much greater sensitivity to Nietzsche’s intellectual climate than many of his successors.
In the fifth, a dithyramb is sung to the god who is not one. Finally, in the sixth chapter, Hafez breaks free from the pious prigs, shrugs off his Sufi cloak, and is seen naked wearing the mask of Dionysus.

Quite the breadth, I confess. However it seems to me that these things must be seen together if they are ever to be seen, thus there is nothing for it but to plunge into the many and hope all is redeemed in the whole.\footnote{If I have given birth to a chimera, then I hope the parts are not so poorly cobbled together that she cannot dance (c.f. BVN-1870,58).}
Chapter I: Ancestry

I.1

In *The Problem of Knowledge*, Cassirer writes of Goethe that “there prevails in his writings a relationship of the “particular” to the “universal” such as can hardly be found elsewhere in the history of philosophy or of natural science”.

For our purposes, the relationship between universal and particular can be treated as the same as the relationship between One and many, and the relationship between whole and part.

Cassirer warns that Goethe’s concept is radically original, and so it is bound to be misunderstood when cast in others’ terms. He goes on to describe this relationship as follows:

“It was his firm conviction that the particular and the universal are not only intimately connected but that they interpenetrate one another. […] There is no question which of the two is of greater value, or whether one is superior or subordinate to the other. Here a perfectly reciprocal determination holds. “The particular always underlies the universal; the universal must forever submit to the particular.” The relation between the two, according to Goethe, is not one of logical subsumption but of ideal or “symbolic” representation. The particular represents the universal, “not as a dream and shadow, but as a momentarily living manifestation of the inscrutable””.

Though this conception of “perfectly reciprocal determination” is not always easy to comprehend, there are many ways to help dawn this aspect of Goethe’s thinking.

Here, I will first discuss the nature of the symbol in Goethe’s poetry, before showing some examples of the relationship between One and many in his later poetry, and then finally

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24 I am somewhat hesitant to use this phrase of Cassirer’s, for it might be seen as implying a kind of fetishizing of symmetry and a worship of the geometric. Nothing could be further from either Goethe or Nietzsche than Poe when he writes in *Eureka* that “the sense of the symmetrical is an instinct which may be depended on with an almost blindfold reliance. It is the poetical essence of the Universe—of the Universe which, in the supremeness of its symmetry, is but the most sublime of poems…” (E.A. Poe, *The Complete Works of Edgar Allan Poe: Volume XVI*, ed. J.A. Harrison, Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1902, p. 302). Perhaps this point shall become clearer in my discussion of Spinoza below.
making use of two analogies for this relationship: the duck/rabbit and the transmission hologram.

In the second part of Zarathustra, we read

“Alles Unvergängliche — das ist nur ein Gleichnis!”

Kaufmann translates this as

“All the permanent—that is only a parable!”

This is of course a play on the first two lines of the chorus which ends the second part of Goethe’s Faust:

“All Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis…”

Again in Kaufmann’s translation:

“What is destructible
Is but a parable…”

Nietzsche often played with these famous lines. In the “Blessed Isles” of Zarathustra, it is to show his preference for becoming over being. The section reads:

“Evil I call it, and misanthropic—all this teaching about the One and the Plenum and the Unmoved and the Sated and the Permanent. All permanence—that is mere parable! And the poets lie too much.
It is of time and becoming that the best parables should speak: let them be a praise and a justification of all impermanence.”

But was Goethe lying? Was he taking sides with being over becoming? There is great debate about the translation here: should Gleichnis be translated ‘allegory’, ‘metaphor’,

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25 Cassirer writes that Goethe’s “uniqueness was long unrecognized because those who sought to make his ideas intelligible looked for analogies, which obscured rather than clarified their meaning” (Ibid., pp. 144–145). The analogies to which I will appeal, though by no means perfect, will hopefully be illuminating—indeed, they have actually arisen in philosophical and scientific contexts influenced by Goethean thought.
26 J.W. Goethe, Goethe’s Faust, op. cit., p. 503.
‘parable’, ‘simile’, or ‘symbol’? Furthermore, Goethe’s understanding of these concepts is debated, and that is the point of greatest relevance to us.

I will argue that Goethe’s idea of the symbol does not place its meaning beyond itself. The One is not one—it is not apart from the many, and it is not a unity that excludes multiplicity. The One has to be seen in the many.

Describing the difference of his poetic approach to that of Schiller, Goethe writes:

“There is a great difference whether a poet is looking for the particular that goes with the general, or sees the general in the particular. The first gives rise to allegory [Allegorie] where the particular only counts as an example, an illustration of the particular; but the latter in fact constitutes the nature of poetry, expressing something particular without any thought of the general, and without indicating [hinzuweisen, pointing to] it. Now whoever has this living grasp of the particular is at the same time in possession of the general, without realizing it, or else only realizing it later on”

28

There are two other sections in the Maxims and Reflections that help to illuminate the distinction:

“Allegory transforms an object of perception into a concept [Begriff], the concept into an image [Bild], but in such a way that the concept continues to remain circumscribed and completely available and expressible within the image”

29

“The symbolic [Symbolik] transforms an object of perception [Erscheinung, phenomenon] into an idea [Idee], the idea into an image, and does it in such a way that the idea always remains infinitely operative and unattainable [unerreichbar] so that even if it is put into words in all languages, it still remains inexpressible [unaussprechlich]”

30

Whether one sees the general through the particular (allegory) or in the particular (symbolism) is important. The allegory is instrumental: it is to be looked past to the

28 M&R§279.
29 M&R§1112.
30 M&R§1113.
concept that it points to. The symbol, on the other hand, is to be looked into to the inexpressible idea that it contains. Todorov writes:

“The degree of abstraction is not the same in the two instances: in allegory, the concept, belonging strictly to reason, is opposed to the idea in symbol—we may suppose that this “idea” is drawn by Kantian overtones to a global and “intuitive” apprehension”31.

Todorov goes on to catalogue some of the differences between allegory and symbol:

“The meaning of the allegory is finite, that of the symbol is infinite, inexhaustible; … meaning is completed, ended, and thus in a sense dead in allegory; it is active and living in the symbol… [The symbol is] productive, intransitive, motivated; it achieves the fusion of contraries; it is and it signifies at the same time; its content eludes reason: it expresses the inexpressible. In contrast, allegory … is already made, transitive, arbitrary, pure signification, an expression of reason… The symbol is produced unconsciously, and it provokes an unending task of interpretation; the allegory is intentional, and can be understood without “remainder”…”32

This distinction between allegory and symbol is surely important in translating and understanding the famous Chorus Mysticus mentioned above:

“Alles Vergängliche
Ist nur ein Gleichnis;
Das Unzulängliche,
Hier wird’s Ereignis;
Das Unbeschreibliche,
Hier ist’s getan;
Das Ewig-Weibliche
Zieht uns binan”

"All that is temporal
Symbol is solely;
The insufficient
Here’s attained wholly;
The indescribable,
Here it is done;
The ever-feminine
Beckons us on”33

“What is destructible
Is but a parable;
What fails ineluctably,
The undeclarable,
Here it was seen,
Here it was action;
The Eternal-Feminine
Lures to perfection”34

_Gleichnis_ here can be read either as allegory/simile or as symbol/metaphor. If it is allegorical, then it is conceptual and points away from itself to the general. If it is

32 Ibid., pp. 206–207.
33 P. Weigand offers this translation in “Problems in Translating the Song of the Chorus Mysticus in Goethe’s _Faust II_”, _The German Quarterly_, vol. 33, no. 1, 1960, pp. 26–27.
symbolic, then it does not point to the universal but contains the universal inside the particular. I believe that the latter is what is meant, for where the concept pointed to by an allegory is “circumscribed”, “reachable”, and “expressible”, the symbolic is transformed into an idea that captures what is “unreachable” and “inexpressible”. And this is just what follows—making fully apparent the insufficient [das Unzulängliche], and of doing the indescribable [das Unbeschreibliche].

Goethe conceived of the part as symbolic of the whole, the many as symbolic of the One. But what is the nature of symbolism? It is symbolic not because it represents a type. This would be to confuse Goethe with the Platonic idea of the individual as an imperfect representation of an ideal form. For Goethe as for Nietzsche, variation is not a deviation from a form, rather it is basic. So how are we to understand the Goethean conception of symbolism? In “Gott, Gemüt und Welt” (distinct from the later cycle Gott und Welt), Goethe writes:

“Willst du dich am Ganzen erquicken, 
   So mußt du das Ganze im Kleinsten erblicken”\(^{36}\)

In Bowring’s translation: 

“If the whole is ever to gladden thee, 
   That whole in the smallest thing thou must see”\(^{37}\)

We could take this as our clue. However, it might sound purely epistemological: that we can only see the whole in the part does not necessarily mean the whole exists only in the parts. So let us look at a few other places where this is discussed by Goethe.

In a letter to Schubarth, Goethe wrote that “all that happens is symbol, and as it represents itself perfectly, it points to the rest [Alles was geschieht ist Symbol, und, indem es vollkommen sich selbst darstellt, deutet es auf das Uebrige]”\(^{38}\).


In the historical section of *The Theory of Colours*[^1], Goethe writes that *some* particulars are more effective symbols of the universal than others[^2]. Archetypal phenomena [*Urphänomene*] are instances “worth a thousand, bearing all within itself [*ein Fall oft Tausende wert ist, und sie alle in sich schließt*]”. This is a part of his criticism of inductive generalisation, in particular of Bacon for whom “the range of phenomena all had equal value”[^3]. Goethe also describes the archetypal phenomenon as “symbolic, because it includes all instances [*symbolisch, weil es alle Fälle begreift*]”[^4], and says that in “true symbolism [*die wahre Symbolik*]”, “the particular represents the universal… as a live and immediate revelation of the unfathomable [*das Besondere, das Allgemeinere repräsentiert... als lebendig-augenblickliche Offenbarung des Unerforschlichen*]”[^5]

All of this suggests that the symbol does not point away from itself to something else, but rather that the particular reveals itself as the universal. As Goethe writes, “the universal and particular coincide: the particular is the universal manifesting under different conditions [*Das Allgemeine und Besondere fallen zusammen: Das Besondere ist das Allgemeine, unter verschiedenen Bedingungen erscheinend*]”[^6].

This conception of One and many is seen in Goethe’s late poetry, and I think especially in the cycle “God and World [*Gott und Welt*]”. In this cycle, the relationship between God and World (read: One and many, whole and part) is expressed from different perspectives. This is especially true of the way the cycle was amended posthumously, where the final lines of “Eins und Alles”[^7] are seen as in a mirror in the added poem “Vermächtnis”:

“For the Eternal onward moves in all,
And into nothing everything must fall,
If it in being would persist

[*Das Ewige regt sich fort in allen,*]

[^2]: *This* is an epistemological claim. All phenomena contain the whole – but not all of them reveal it as clearly.
[^5]: MCR§314 [TM].
[^6]: MCR§569 [my trans].
[^7]: This is a direct translation of *hen kai pan*, an expression associated with Spinoza. In a letter to Herder from Italy, Goethe wrote that “botany in particular has revealed a ἕν καὶ πᾶν” (6 September, 1787)—we should think here of the remark that “the plant is nothing but leaf”.
Denn alles muss in Nichts zerfallen,
Wenn es im Sein beharren will
[Kein Wesen kann zu Nichts zerfallen!
Das Ew’ge regt sich fort in allen…]“47

“No thing on earth to nought can fall,
The Eternal onward moves in all…“46

There is a monograph study of this cycle by Sachers that is worth consulting.48 Sachers discusses the relationship of the ideas expressed by Goethe here to those of Leibniz, Spinoza, and others. However, Sachers discerns “philosophical indecisiveness” and speaks of Goethe as “awkwardly poised between” these thinkers, rather than judging that Goethe was developing a distinctive position.49 It is understandable to draw the conclusion—about individual poems, and the cycle as a whole—that Goethe offers no coherent account. In some sense, I think this is true. And this is what makes Goethe quite unique amongst philosophers, and his philosophical influence upon Nietzsche easy to overlook. Goethe himself had written to Jacobi:

“As for me, with the multifarious directions of my character, a single way of thinking cannot be enough; as a poet and artist, I’m a polytheist, as a natural scientist, however, a pantheist, and I’m the one as decisively as the other…“50

49 Sachers makes these remarks specifically about Eins und Alles: ibid, p. 87. But in her study of the legacy of this poem (where she discusses the effect of Eckermann’s addition of “Vermächtnis” to the cycle on our interpretation), Sachers speaks of the “poem’s idiosyncrasy as well as its inconsistency with regard to its philosophical predecessors”. See: R. Sachers, “Goethe’s Legacy? ‘Eins Und Alles’ and its Career in Scholarship”, German Life and Letters, vol. 61, no. 2, 2008, p. 189.
50 January 6, 1813. The translation is Dollenmayer’s. See: R. Safranski, Goethe: Life as a Work of Art, trans. D. Dollenmayer, Liveright Publishing Co., 2017, ch. 29 (from here on GLWA; the version I have does not preserve pagination, so I give here the chapter numbers instead). In the Maximus (also quoted in Safranski), we read “Investigating nature / We are pantheists, / Writing poetry, polytheists / Morally, monotheists [“Wir sind naturforscheid Pantheisten, dichtand Polytheisten, sittlich Monotheisten”]. I will return to this point on multiplicity later, particularly in chapter V.
Wary of ossification [Verknöcherung] and everything frozen [erstarren]\(^{51}\), Goethe demonstrates a loose grip on conceptual formulations lest we end up ensnared in our own “inadequate theoretical pronouncements [unzulängliche theoretische Aussprüche]”\(^{52}\).

Goethe seems to see with “many eyes”, from many perspectives. Having said this, Goethe’s position is hardly one of simple incoherence.

Let us consider just a few phrases from poems in the “God and World” cycle. In “Parabasis”, Goethe writes of “…the One Eternal / Multiply self-manifest […das ewig Eine, / Das sich vielfach offenbart]”\(^{53}\). This suggests that there is not an ontologically prior One which manifests in the many\(^{54}\), but rather that there is a reciprocal relationship: the whole does not exist apart from the parts.

In “Epirrhema”, Goethe writes “What’s alive cannot be one / it’s always manifold [Kein Lebendiges ist ein Eins, / Inmer ist’s ein Vieles]”\(^{55}\). We shouldn’t be duped by German grammar into making that one into a One. For the point is, what is One is never one\(^{56}\). As Nietzsche later will say, “all unity is unity only as organisation and cooperation”\(^{57}\), and “everything simple is merely imaginary, is not ‘true.’ But whatever is real, whatever is true, is neither one nor even reducible to one”\(^{58}\).

Also in “Epirrhema”, we read of nature that “nothing is inside and nothing outside / because what’s inner is outer [Nichts ist drinnen, nichts ist draußen; / Denn was innen, dass ist außen]”. We are to rejoice in the “the true appearance [des wahren Scheins]”, for nature is an “open secret [öffentlich Geheimnis]”\(^{59}\).

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\(^{51}\) This is the sense in which Nietzsche describes Heraclitus as warm (see: EH§BT.3, p. 273).

\(^{52}\) M&R§578, pp. 125–126.


\(^{54}\) As in the Panentheism, particularly clearly in Neoplatonic forms. Some poems in this cycle might suggest such a relationship, such as “Prooemion”, where we read: “What would he be, a God from outside prodding, / Who spun the spheres around a finger, nodding? / The world to move from inside suits his pleasure, / Himself in nature, nature in self to treasure, / So that the life in him that weaves and is / May never lack his Mind, his Energies [Was wär ein Gott, der nur von außen stieße, / Im Kreis das All am Finger laufen ließe! / Ihm ziemt’s, die Welt im Innern zu bewegen, / Natur in Sich, Sich in Natur zu bogen, / So dass, was in Ihm lebt und weht und ist, / Nie Seine Kraft, nie Seinen Geist vermisst]” (trans. Middleton; GSP, p. 227). In what follows, the difference between these interpretations will become clearer.

\(^{55}\) C. Middleton trans., GSP pp. 158–159; amore literal translation would be: it’s always a many [ein Vieles], a multiplicity.

\(^{56}\) In On Morphology Goethe writes that “no living thing is unitary in nature; every such thing is a plurality. Even the organism which appears to us as individual exists as a collection of independent living entities” See: Scientific Studies, op. cit., p. 64.

\(^{57}\) NF-1885,2[87] (WP§561, p. 303).

\(^{58}\) NF-1888,15[118] (WP§536, p. 291).

In the poem “True Enough”, Goethe criticises the “philistine maxim” that “into the core of nature, no earthly mind can enter”. On the contrary, he says “…in every place / We’re at the center [Ort für Ort / Sind wir im Inneren]”. For Goethe, “Nature has neither core / Nor outer rind, / Being all things at once [Natur hat weder Kern / Noch Schale; / Alles ist sie mit einem Male]”\(^{60}\). Once again, as in “Epirrhema”, the outer is the inner. We could say that the inner is “seen in” the outer, but we should not imagine that this means the outer is a reflection of the inner. The connection is more intimate, for the inner is not independent of the latter and only manifest or revealed in it.

This is just as we have been saying with the One and many and whole and part: the whole does not exist apart from the parts. The relationship suggested is thus strikingly different from that of the Neoplatonists.

In *Wilhelm Meister's Journeyman Years*, Goethe offers the following criticism of Neoplatonism:

> “You cannot blame idealists of ancient and modern times for so vigorously urging people to mark well the one single unity from which all things spring and to which everything is, it seems, to return. For, of course, the vivifying and ordering principle is so straitened in its manifestation that it scarcely knows how to save itself. On the other hand, however, we also go short if we force back the forming principle and the higher form itself into a single unity which is in the course of vanishing before our outer and inner apprehension”

> “We human beings are entirely dependent on extension and movement; it is in these two general forms that all other forms, especially those perceptible to the senses, are made manifest. A spiritual form, however, is in no way lessened when it is made outwardly apparent, provided that its emergence is a true generation, a truly new birth. What is generated is not less good than its generator; indeed, it is the advantage of living generation that the end-product can be more excellent than what generates it”\(^{61}\)

The idea here is that manifestation is in no sense a fall\(^{62}\). For the Neoplatonist, the unmanifest One is perfect, and each successive emanation is gradually less so. The

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\(^{60}\) M. Hamburger trans., GSP, pp. 236–237.


\(^{62}\) See also Safranski’s brief but interesting discussion of these passages in GLWA, ch. 31.
journey of the one back up to the One is redemptive. But for Goethe, individuation is not an error.

For Goethe, the One is not apart from the individuals, the ones. Appearance and reality are not cleft. This is absolutely fundamental for understanding Goethe, and this is often missed by interpreters who confound Goethe’s concept of the archetypal with the understanding of Platonism as positing a world behind appearances.

Cassirer writes of the German intellectual environment of Goethe’s time that

“Everywhere, a “universal” was sought: however, this universal is not conceived as a self-contained reality, as the abstract unity of a genus juxtaposed to its individuals, but as a unity which exists only in a totality of specific individuals”.

Bortoft comments on this passage:

“The important point in reading this statement of Cassirer’s is to make an effort of imagination to read it in the perspective of “multiplicity in unity.” If we don’t, then its radical significance is lost, and it seems to say little more than that unity is all the parts taken together (like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle). But the whole is present within its parts, imparting itself within each part but never coming into presence totally and finally in any one part”.

The whole here is in the parts—but this shouldn’t be taken to mean that the parts piece together to form a whole. That is similar to the misreading of Richards when he contrasts Goethe’s archetype with that of Owen:

“His efforts would also differ from those of later anatomists, like Richard Owen, who would pursue a general archetypal pattern but one that illuminated the least common denominator of the vertebrate class, describing the vertebrate archetype

63 All of this relates to Nietzsche’s affirmation of individuation and thus to his defense of the egoic. Nietzsche compares egoism to the “law of perspective” where “what is closest appears large and weighty” (GS§162, p. 199), and one should not think this is a criticism. I seem to recall a very explicit rejection of regarding this as mistaken, but cannot place my finger on it at present. Nonetheless, there are many discussions of this topic, such as in his Attempt at a Self-Criticism (“alles Leben ruht auf Schein, Kunst, Täuschung, Optik, Notwendigkeit des Perspektivischen und des Irrthums”). See also BGE§188, p. 102; EH. Destiny §7, p. 333; and NF-1885,36[20] (WP§637, p. 340). Though Nietzsche does think this self-inflation can be magnified “to the point of insanity” NF-1887,11[226] (WP§339, p. 185).


as essentially a string of vertebrae. By contrast, Goethe conceived the archetype as an inclusive form, a pattern that would contain all of the parts really exhibited by the range of different vertebrate species.”

While Richards is certainly right that Goethe’s view is not of a lowest common denominator, he is wrong to think of the Goethean archetype as amalgam of particulars. Bortoft writes that “the way to the whole is into and through the parts.” But going through should not be understood as going behind or beyond. This would again be to take the Neoplatonic position, as represented in poems of Michelangelo such as:

“My eyes, desirous of beautiful things,
and my soul, likewise, of its salvation
have no other means to rise
to heaven but to gaze at all such things.”

This conception comes out quite clearly, I think, in a famous passage in Eckermann’s Conversations with Goethe:

“The highest which man can attain… is astonishment; if the primary phenomenon causes this, let him be satisfied; more it cannot bring; and he should forbear to seek for anything further behind it: here is the limit. But the sight of a primitive phenomenon is generally not enough for people; they think they must go still further; and are thus like children who, after peeping into a mirror, turn it round directly to see what is on the other side

[Das Höchste, wozu der Mensch gelangen kann... ist das Erstaunen, und wenn ihn das Urphänomen in Erstaunen setzt, so sei er zufrieden; ein Höheres kann es ihm nicht gewähren, und ein Weiteres soll er nicht dahinter suchen; hier ist die Grenze. Aber den Menschen ist der Anblick eines Urphänomens gewöhnlich noch nicht genug, sie denken, es müsse noch weiter geben,

67 Bortoft discusses Richards’ interpretation on this point in TAS, pp. 141–144.
68 WON, p. 12.
69 Sonnet 107, Michelangelo, The Poetry of Michelangelo, trans J.M. Saslow, Yale University Press, 1991, p. 239; c.f. sonnet 260, extracted in Ibid, p. 31: “A violent burning for prodigious beauty / is not always a source of harsh and deadly sin… / Far from hindering empty passion from flying higher, / love stirs and wakes us, and feathers our wings; / and from that first step, with which it’s not satisfied / the soul can mount up and rise to its creator”.

16
That is, there is nothing *behind* the archetypal phenomenon. Here the particular is symbolic of the whole without pointing to a whole outside itself. We are to look *into* the particular, not behind it.

One of the clearest places that this relationship of One and many can be seen is in Goethe’s scientific work, and particularly in his work on plant morphology.

In his *Italian Journey*, Goethe writes “in the organ of the plant which we are accustomed to call the *leaf* lies the true Proteus who can hide or reveal himself in all vegetal forms. From the first to last, the plant is nothing but *leaf*... [in demjenigen Organ der Pflanze, welches wir als *Blatt* gewöhnlich anzusprechen pflegen, der wahre Proteus verborgen liege, der sich in allen Gestaltungen verstecken und offenbaren könne. Vorwärts und rückwärts ist die Pflanze immer nur *Blatt*...]

The leaf is symbolic of the plant. The whole plant is revealed in the leaf. But the plant is not something apart from its organs, its ‘leaves’.

Bortoft, a physicist and writer on Goethe and science, offers two images that may be helpful in understanding this conception of the One and many: the duck/rabbit and the hologram.

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72 Bortoft also discusses a range of other examples. Those looking for a more concrete example may wish to see his discussion of potatoes in TAS pp. 124–125.

In the famous duck/rabbit, discussed by Wittgenstein in the *Investigations* as a paradigm of aspect-seeing, both aspects are the whole. That is to say, both the duck-aspect and the rabbit-aspect use all of the graphic marks. Bortoft describes this as “an instance of ‘multiplicity in unity’. One figure does not occupy only part of the picture, while the other figure occupies the other part – it is duck/rabbit, not duck and rabbit”.

The transmission hologram is also in many ways a helpful image for the relationship between part and whole in Goethe’s thought. It is worth noting that Bortoft was a student of the physicist David Bohm, to whom we owe the holographic model of the cosmos.

If one breaks an ordinary photographic slide into several pieces and then projects the pieces, each will show only a part of the original image. But if one breaks a transmission hologram into several pieces and then views these with a laser, one can see whole image in each piece. Each “part” contains the whole. Bortoft is worth quoting at length on this point:

“No matter how often we break the hologram plate, the picture is undivided. It remains whole even while becoming many. This essential irreducibility of the whole is so strong that it seems inconceivable that there is any way in which the whole could have parts. This is very much opposite to the view we usually have of the relation between parts and whole, which is a view that effectively denies the primacy of the whole. We are accustomed to thinking of going from parts to whole in some sort of summative manner. We think of developing the whole, even of making the whole, on the practical basis of putting parts together and making them fit. In this conventional way of working, we see the whole as developing by “integration of parts.” Such a way of seeing places the whole secondary to the

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74 Goethe’s influence on the *Investigations* is significant. See for example, §654 (Ibid, p. 175) where Wittgenstein refers not only to Urphenomena but also references Goethe's thought that “everything factual is already theory... Don't go looking for anything beyond phenomena: they are themselves what they teach” (M&R§575).

75 As Wittgenstein makes clear, he thought that aspect seeing was useful for illuminating “an enormous number of interrelated phenomena and possible concepts” (Ibid, p. 209).

76 TAS, p. 126; see also Bortoft’s discussion of this in WON, pp. 266ff; esp. p. 268 where he discusses the limitations of this as an analogy for Goethe’s understanding of nature, saying that the issue is not that it only has two aspects, but that it has a determinate number of aspects: “We would have to imagine a multi-perspectival figure which was self-productive, i.e., producing new perspectives of itself out of itself”. The idea here is that the whole grows perspectives, which in turn interpret the whole. This is closely akin to Nietzsche’s view. In *Twilight* (Morality§5, p. 490), we read that “life itself values through us when we posit values”; we are surely not to consider life as apart from the living. The world doesn’t exist as an “in itself”—it doesn’t exist apart from the perspectives of its “parts”: as Nietzsche writes in a late note, “as if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective! By doing that one would deduct relativity”. In this fragment, Nietzsche says that “each center of force adopts a perspective to the entire remainder” and that “reality consists precisely in this mutual interpretation. NF-1888,14[184] (WP§567, p. 305).

parts, because it necessarily implies that the whole comes after the parts. It implies a linear sequence: first the parts, then the whole. The implication is that the whole always comes later than its parts”

Bortoft warns against the temptation to err in the opposite direction:

“Faced with the primacy of the whole, as seen in the hologram, we may want to reverse the direction of this way of thinking of the whole. This we would do if we thought of the parts as being determined by the whole, defined by it, and so subservient to the whole. But this approach is not the true primacy of the whole either. It puts the whole in the position of a false transcendental which would come earlier than the parts, and so would leave them no place. This approach effectively considers the whole as if it were a part, but a “superpart” which controls and dominates the other, lesser parts. It is not the true whole, and neither can the parts be true parts when they are dominated by this counterfeit whole. Instead, there is only the side-by-sideness of would-be parts and the counterfeit whole. This is a false dualism”  

This final point about the whole not being a part is essential to understand. The parts belong to the whole, but the whole is not apart from the parts. Bortoft continues:

“We cannot know the whole in the way in which we know things because we cannot recognize the whole as a thing. If the whole were available to be recognized in the same way as we recognize the things which surround us, then the whole would be counted among those things as one of them. We could point and say “Here is this,” and “There is that,” and “That’s the whole over there.” If we had the power of such recognition, we would know the whole in the same way that we know its parts, for the whole itself would simply be numbered among its parts. The whole would be outside its parts in the same way that each part is outside all the other parts. But the whole comes into presence within its parts, and we cannot encounter the whole in the same way that we encounter the parts. We should not think of the whole as if it were a thing. Our everyday awareness is occupied with things. The whole is absent to this awareness because it is not a thing among things. To everyday awareness, the whole is no-thing, and since this awareness is awareness of something, no-thing is nothing. The whole which is no-thing is taken as mere

78 WON, pp. 9–10.
nothing, in which case it vanishes. When this loss happens, we are left with a world of things, and the apparent task of putting them together to make a whole…”

That the whole is not a thing among things might suggest that it is simply non-manifest. The Neoplatonists certainly did not conceive of the One as a thing. The difference here is that the One there still has ontological priority: it is independent of the parts, and is reflected in them. For Goethe, the relationship is not one of reflection but one of reciprocity.

In an essay published in his journal *On Morphology*, Goethe writes

> “The German has the word *Gestalt* for the complex of existence of an actual being. He abstracts, with this expression, from the moving, and assumes a congruous whole to be determined, completed, and fixed in its character. But if we consider *Gestalts* generally, especially organic ones, we find that independence, rest, or termination nowhere appear, but everything fluctuates rather in continuous motion…

> [Der Deutsche hat für den Komplex des Daseins eines wirklichen Wesens das Wort Gestalt. Er abstrahiert bei diesem Ausdruck von dem Beweglichen, er nimmt an, daß ein Zusammengehöriges festgestellt, abgeschlossen und in seinem Charakter fixiert sei. Betrachten wir aber alle Gestalten, besonders die organischen, so Einden wir, daß nirgend ein Bestehendes, nirgend ein Ruhenendes, ein Abgeschlossenes vorkommt, sondern daß vielmehr alles in einer steten Bewegung schwanke…]”

I take this to be an especially clear statement of Goethe’s formative conception of the whole. The whole cannot be thought of as standing behind the parts. The whole is itself *becoming*. This developmental understanding is essential to grasping Goethe’s thought, which is, as Cassirer put it, “dynamical throughout”. This point may at first be very difficult to understand, given the “unique character” of Goethe’s thought and our tendency toward rigidifying concepts. But in this very essay, Goethe advises us that if we wish to develop “a living view of Nature, we must attempt to remain as active and as plastic as the example she sets for us”.

80 On priority, see WON, p. 273.
83 Ibid., p. 144.
Perhaps Goethe’s view reminds us of nothing so much as a certain interpretation of Heraclitus—and one that Nietzsche himself subscribed to. Before turning to Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus, where “the one is the many [das Eine ist das Viele]…”^84, let me say a parenthetical word about Goethe’s relationship to Heraclitus.

I.2

The directness of Heraclitus’ influence on Goethe is disputed^85. We read in Wheelwright’s *Heraclitus* (1959) that “Goethe... evinced a lively interest in Heraclitus after Schleiermacher had presented him with a first collection of some of the Fragments^86, but the author offers no evidence to support this claim. Perhaps Wheelwright has picked up on the earlier and similar remark by Diels (1909) that “From his Werther period to the Eckermann conversations, Goethe liked to profess his adherence to Heraclitus”^87. Cleve (1965) comments that

“…this statement by Diels is pure fiction. Nowhere has Goethe mentioned the name of Heraclitus, and it is almost certain that he did not even read the Heraclitus monography of Schleiermacher (whom he vehemently disliked), although the first volume (1807) of the *Museum dey Altertumswissenschaft*, containing that monography on pp. 315–533, was respectfully dedicated to Goethe by the editors”^88

Bapp (1921) devoted sixty pages of study to Goethe and Heraclitus, but claimed that any resonance in their thought reflects “a kinship of natures [eine Verwandtschaft der Naturen]” rather than any direct influence^89.

The only unmistakable reference to Heraclitus in Goethe’s work that I know of is in the poem “Permanence in Change” (again in the “God and World” cycle) where we read “None could swim that very river / Twice, so quick the changes came [...in demselben Flusse / Schwimmst du nicht zum zweitenmal]”^90. This reference to the most famous of the fragments may well have been picked up as an isolated line (from Plato, for example) and not read in the original.

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^84 PTAG§6, p. 57.
^85 In what follows, I offer the years of publication to indicate the scarcity of attention shown to this subject. I know of no publication more recent than Cleve that offers anything original on this topic, though I welcome correction.
^88 Ibid.
Directness of influence aside, the similarity of their thought is striking, particularly in Nietzsche’s reading of Heraclitus on the One and the many, to which we now turn.

Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus is expounded at greatest length in his lecture course *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, and to a lesser degree in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*. In these early works, we see Nietzsche struggling to articulate the relationship of the One and many that he found in Heraclitus. For example, in the former he writes:

“…this is the intuitive perception of Heraclitus; there is no thing of which we may say, “it is.” He rejects Being. He knows only Becoming, the flowing. He considers belief in something persistent as error and foolishness. To this he adds this thought: that which becomes is one thing in eternal transformation, and the law of this eternal transformation, the Logos in all things, is precisely this One, fire (το πῦρ). Thus, the one overall Becoming is itself law; that it becomes and how it becomes is its work. Heraclitus thus sees only the One, but in the sense opposite to Parmenides’…”

What is this conception of the One that is opposite to that of Parmenides? This is the point that is crucial for us. Nietzsche continues:

“All qualities of things, all laws, all generation and destruction, are the continual revelation of the existence of the One: multiplicity, which is a deception of the sense according to Parmenides, is for Heraclitus the cloth, the form of appearance, of the One, in no way a deception: otherwise, the One does not appear at all.”

We should take care not to be confused by this articulation, especially the talk of multiplicity clothing the One. The One is not hidden behind the many. It is manifest in and as the many—and nowhere else.

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91 PPP, pp. 62–63.
92 Ibid., p. 63.
93 This is discussed in chapter 3 of M. Anderson, *Plato and Nietzsche: Their Philosophical Art*, Bloomsbury, 2014, esp. pp. 82–84, though it should be clear that my interpretation deviates from Anderson’s. Note that this is sometimes given as the distinction between pantheism and panentheism, and that in the latter, God has some place ‘outside’ manifestation (i.e., that manifestation doesn’t exhaust God). See J.W. Cooper, *Panentheism*, Baker Academic, 2006, p. 18: “panentheism affirms that although God and the world are ontologically distinct and God transcends the world, the world is “in” God ontologically”.

22
The One is not one. The One is itself becoming, it is “eternal transformation”. This bears comparison with Duyvendak’s translation of the first line of the Daodejing⁹⁴:

“The Way that may be regarded as the Way is other than a permanent way”⁹⁵

Actually, this is much more suggestive in his French version:

“La Voie vraiment Voie est autre qu’une voie constante”⁹⁶

Taking Duyvendak as our cue, we might say:

“The way that isn’t wayward is not truly the Way”

Translators tend to render this along the lines of “the way that can be spoken (or walked, wayed⁹⁷) is not the permanent way”⁹⁸. This might suggest that there is a permanent way, that the Dao is something eternal, but revealed to us as something impermanent. But Duyvendak’s translation suggests a world of becoming without a ground of being, that the Dao is itself on the way—and it is not on the way somewhere, which is why I have said above that it is wayward.

Whether this is the right way to interpret the Daodejing or Heraclitus’ fragments is obviously debated⁹⁹, but our interest here is Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus. And this can, I think, be stated quite firmly. As Nietzsche puts it much later, in Twilight:

“Heraclitus will remain eternally right with his assertion that being is an empty fiction. The “apparent” world is the only one: the “true” world is merely added by a lie”¹⁰⁰

This shows Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus was one of becoming without opposite¹⁰¹. Nietzsche himself develops this concept by conceiving of being only in a relative sense: as a

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⁹⁴ I do not intend to make any more general statement about Heraclitus’ (or Nietzsche or Goethe’s) affinity with Daoism. This point can be easily overstressed.
⁹⁸ Duyvendak argued that the term dao did not have the sense of spoken in the period in which the text was composed.
⁹⁹ Richardson notes scholarly debate over whether Heraclitus has a philosophy of flux versus a philosophy of becoming. See J. Richardson, Nietzsche’s System, Oxford University Press, 1996, esp. p. 78 and p. 86.
¹⁰⁰ TWIII.2, p. 481.
¹⁰¹ Nietzsche himself develops this concept by saying that being is simply a “slower tempo of becoming” (NF-1887,9[62] (WP§580, p. 312))—that is, by articulating a kind of ‘relative’ being or ‘degrees of being’ (NF-1887,10[18] (WP§485, p. 268)).
reduced “tempo of becoming”\textsuperscript{102}. A similar conception is seen in \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, where Nietzsche writes:

“Heraclitus… denied the duality of totally diverse worlds—a position which Anaximander had been compelled to assume. He no longer distinguished a physical world from a metaphysical one”\textsuperscript{103}

On this characterisation, Heraclitus believed in the reality of the apparent world\textsuperscript{104}—that is, as we saw in Goethe’s “Epirrhema”, the outside is the inside.

Returning again to the \textit{Pre-Platonic Philosophers}:

“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 \textit{cosmodicy} over against his great predecessor, the teacher of the injustice of the world”\textsuperscript{105}

Again, we might be confused by this idea of the One \textit{evidencing itself} as the many. This might suggest that we only encounter the One in the many, but not that the One only \textit{is} in the many. Yet the latter is surely Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus. Thus in \textit{Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks}, Nietzsche has Heraclitus proclaim that:

“The struggle of the many is pure justice itself! In fact, the one is the many [\textit{das Eine ist das Viele}]…”\textsuperscript{106}

And in the same section

““The world is the \textit{game} Zeus plays,” or, expressed more concretely, “of the fire with itself. This is the only sense in which the one is at the same time the many”…”\textsuperscript{107}

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\textsuperscript{102} NF-1887,9[62] (WP§580, p. 312); c.f. NF-1887,10[18] (WP§485, p. 268): “The concept of the substance is a consequence of the concept of the subject: not the reverse! If we relinquish the soul, “the subject,” the precondition for “substance” in general disappears. One acquires degrees of being, one loses that which \textit{has} being”.

\textsuperscript{103} PTAG§5, p. 51.

\textsuperscript{104} This might seem incompatible with Heraclitus’ thought that “nature loves to hide”. That fragment and its interpretation are discussed throughout P. Hadot, \textit{The Veil of Isis}, op. cit.

\textsuperscript{105} PPP, p. 63.

\textsuperscript{106} PTAG§6, p. 57.

\textsuperscript{107} Ibid, p. 58.
This passage—as well as the one above of Heraclitus’ *cosmodicy*\textsuperscript{108}—show an early association in Nietzsche’s interpretation of Heraclitus and what he would later call “the innocence of becoming”\textsuperscript{109}. This association is quite strong and can be seen in several places. For example, we read in very next section of *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*:

“In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence. And as children and artists play, so plays the ever-living fire. It constructs and destroys, all in innocence. Such is the game that the aeon plays with itself. 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 hybris but the ever self-renewing impulse to play calls new worlds into being…”\textsuperscript{110}

Similarly, in the *Birth of Tragedy*:

“…the dark Heraclitus compares the world-building force to a child that places stones here and there and builds sand hills only to overthrow them again”\textsuperscript{111}

This idea is not put in quite these words in Heraclitus’ fragments. Kahn offers the following translation:

“Lifetime is a child at play, moving pieces in a game. Kingship belongs to the child.”\textsuperscript{112}

Davenport, however, seems to follow Nietzsche’s lead:

“Time is a child building a sand-castle by the sea, and that child is the whole majesty of man’s power in the world”\textsuperscript{113}

The original fragment says nothing about sand or sea. But in *The Iliad* we read:

\textsuperscript{108} C.f. Nietzsche on theodicy: NF-1887.10\{21\} (WP\$1019, pp. 526–527).
\textsuperscript{109} See TI Four Great Errors, §§7–8, pp. 499–501.
\textsuperscript{110} PTAG§7, p. 62.
\textsuperscript{111} BT§24, p. 142.
“[Apollo] kicked down the wall of the Achaeans as easily as a child who playing on the sea-shore has built a house of sand and then kicks it down again and destroys it…”\(^\text{114}\)

It becomes plain that this is the origin of Nietzsche’s association, for he writes in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*:

“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”\(^\text{115}\)

(In Philo’s *De aeternitae mundi*, we see a critique of the Stoic notion of perpetual creation and destruction (of the same?)—an idea derivative of Heraclitus\(^\text{116}\); if the world is created the same as the old, then the demiurge has “wasted his toil and differs not a whit from quite senseless children who often when playing on the beach erect great mounds of sand and then undermine them with their hands and send them tumbling back to the ground”\(^\text{117}\))

The association between Heraclitus and the innocence of becoming is also seen in a note where Nietzsche writes

“That the world is divine play [*göttliches Spiel*] beyond good and evil—for this, my predecessors are the philosophy of Vedanta and Heraclitus”\(^\text{118}\)

So, let us consider how this connects Heraclitus to Nietzsche’s conception of will to power, and especially how it informs Nietzsche’s conception of the One and the many.

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In his *Metaphysics*, Aristotle writes that while “Anaximenes […] assumed that air was prior to water and was especially a principle of the simple bodies”, “Heraclitus of Ephesus thought it was fire”\(^\text{119}\). This is a very misleading interpretation for, as Kahn writes, Heraclitus’ fire should not be treated “as a physical theory of the same sort as Anaximenes’…”\(^\text{120}\) Kahn goes on to say that:


\(^{115}\) PPP, pp. 65–66.

\(^{116}\) See for example Heraclitus’ fragment that the *kosmos* “ever was and is and will be: fire everliving, kindled in measures and in measures going out” (XXXVII, A&TH, p. 45). On the connection between the Stoics, Heraclitus, and the Eternal Recurrence, see EH§BT.3, pp. 273–274.


\(^{118}\) NF-1884,26[193]. If one wishes to inquire into Nietzsche’s understanding of Vedanta, the place to start is surely a text by Nietzsche’s friend Deussen which he was reading around this time: P. Deussen, *Das System des Vedânta*, 1883.


\(^{120}\) A&TH, p. 20.
“Heraclitus accepts the Milesian view of a world order in which the opposition and transformation of elementary powers is governed by measure and proportion. But he denies that this order is imposed upon the world by any power from without. Instead, he deifies one of its internal constituents. For to say that fire is ‘everliving’, that it ‘ever was and is and will be’ is to say, simply, that it is eternal and divine. Yet Heraclitus insists upon the fact that this god participates in the changing life of nature, ‘kindled in measures and in measures going out’… What is striking about Heraclitus’ statement is that it confronts us with the double paradox of a world order identified with one of its constituent parts, and an eternal principle embodied in the most transitory of visual phenomena…”

Not only is it clear from this that fire is not some basic stuff—fire is, of course, basically dynamic. And that means it cannot be basic in the sense of simple. Fire also cannot be behind in a sense that makes it separate from (and ontologically independent of) what appears. Fire cannot be unmanifest: it is essentially generative. Thus Heraclitus names as his One that which is decidedly not one.

As Nietzsche said of Heraclitus’ fire, “the one is at the same time the many [das Eine ist … zugleich das Viele]”. And we find Nietzsche using this same formulation to describe his will to power more than a decade later:

“This world: a monster of energy, without beginning, without end; … a play of forces and waves of forces, at the same time one and many [zugleich Eins und „Vieles“]…; a sea of forces flowing and rushing together, eternally changing… This is 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? … This world is the will to power—and nothing besides! And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!”

This is an intriguing aphorism, surely one of the most controversial of the unpublished notes, both in content and interpretation. It is polished, as not many of the notes are. But some scholars, including Montinari, have argued that it was discarded.

But for our purposes, it helps us to understand the conception of the One and many being articulated here: it is one where the One is not behind the many, but where “the One is the many [das Eine ist das Viele]”. In other words, the whole is not apart from the parts. Commenting on this interpretation, Anderson anticipates our puzzlement:

“What are we to make of a One that exists as, and only as, a many? We expect there to be something to this One as a one: we expect for it, as itself, at least some degree of ontological independence. Otherwise there would be no reason to mention it, much less to stress it, apart from multiplicity…”

As we saw above, Cassirer said that the Goethean conception of the One and the many “can hardly be found elsewhere in the history of philosophy or of natural science”. Having explored this conception above, we are less likely to be puzzled here. Nietzsche’s One is not apart from the many—it is not a one. I believe that this is why Nietzsche chose Dionysus as his attempt to personify the One, for Dionysus is the god who is not one, a god of essential ambiguity. That is a point to which I will return later (chapter V). But for now, let us turn to another one of Nietzsche’s “ancestors”: Spinoza.

1.3

In attempting to understand the distinctive contribution of Goethe to Nietzsche’s religious thought, it will help to take some time to consider the relationship between Goethe and Spinoza. In a late fragment, Nietzsche writes:

“Goethe has said of Spinoza—whom he occasionally calls his saint—“I feel very close to him, although his mind is much deeper and purer than mine…”

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123 Indeed, all of the tension as to how to deal with the unpublished material seems to be concentrated in this one aphorism.
124 M. Montinari, Reading Nietzsche, trans. G Whitlock, University of Illinois Press, 2003, pp. 89–90; Leiter cites Montinari as a part of his argument against an ontological reading of the will to power (B. Leiter, Nietzsche on Morality, Routledge, 2002, p. 139). There is much debate about the status of this fragment, with Montinari claiming it was set aside after being substantively incorporated into BGE§36—but the difference between these aphorisms (the endings aside) is noteworthy. Williams notes that this fragment is “entirely crossed out” (L. Williams, Nietzsche’s Mirror, Rowman & Littlefield, 2000, p. 77). Magnus, Williams’ source, says that N. set aside this note “by February 1888 as material for which he had no further use” (B. Magnus, “Nietzsche’s philosophy in 1888: The Will to Power and the Ubermensch”, Journal of the History of Philosophy, vol. 24, no. 1, 1986, p. 88).
125 M. Anderson, op. cit., p. 83.
126 NF-1887,9[176].
Though Nietzsche hugely admired Spinoza\(^{127}\), he came to consider Spinoza’s purity bloodless. We see this in another late note, where Nietzsche compares two types and their respective ideals: strengthening of life (pagan) and diluting of life (anaemic)\(^{128}\). For the former, deification is felt “in the greatest abundance”. For the latter, it is felt “in the most fastidious selectivity”.

Nietzsche tells us that these types actually see the world differently. The pagan\(^{129}\) type sees the world as “fuller, rounder, more perfect”. The vision of the anaemic type is thinned out: “the world is seen as more empty, pale, diluted”, and so “intellectualisation and unsensuality take on the rank of perfection” and “the brutal, the animal and direct, what’s closest are most avoided…”

We can see this as engendering very different forms of spirituality\(^{130}\). For the pagan, the divine is the pregnant, the ripe—“one bestows”\(^{131}\). For the anaemic, the divine is the transparent, the light. The pagan type affirms the fulness of existence, while the anaemic type is fastidiously selective, thinning out what is that he might affirm the remainder—“one removes, one chooses”.

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\(^{127}\) See for example BVN-1881,135. Spinoza becomes important for Nietzsche right at the time of the recurrence and the appearance of Zarathustra.

\(^{128}\) NF-1887,11[138] (WP§341, pp. 186–187); he actually discusses a third: the ‘anti natural’ type, whose ideal is the “denial of life” and who experiences the divine in the “contempt for and destruction of life”. But this type is not relevant to us here.

\(^{129}\) The terms pagan and heathen can be misleading. Etymologically, they indicate non-city dwellers, the people of the pagus or heath. But, of course, they also seek to say something about the way of life, and hence the form of spirituality, of such people. What it is meant to suggest about this way of life is generally vague, only that they are deviations from the dominant code of the polis. This vagueness did not seem to especially bother either Goethe or Nietzsche, both of whom described themselves as pagans. We must understand paganism in Nietzsche’s sense as plenitude in all forms, as good conscience in all that is natural (NF-1887,10[193] (WP§147, p. 94); NF-1887,11[35] (WP§1047, p. 538). Nietzsche understands it as the classical but says that this word “offends my ears, it is far too trite and has become round and indistinct”, thus he uses the term Dionysian (GS§370, pp. 330–331). I will return below to a characterisation of the Dionysian in chapter V.

\(^{130}\) With respect to the fullness of ‘pagan’ vision versus the thinness of ‘anaemic’ vision, we might mention a few similar distinctions. In The Colossus of Maroussi, Miller offers an attempt at capturing the difference between French (pantheistic) and Greek (pagan) spirituality: the former blurs distinctions between individual objects, while the latter sees everything as distinct (Miller makes clear that he takes this to be to do with latitude, with the angle of the light): “In Paris one roams from quarter to quarter through imperceptible transitions, as if moving through invisible beaded curtains. In Greece the changes are sharp, almost painful… Everything is delineated, sculptured, etched… You see everything in its uniqueness—a man sitting on a road under a tree… Whatever you look at you see as if for the first time… Every individual thing that exists, whether made by God or man, whether fortuitous or planned, stands out like a nut in an aureole of light, of time and of space…” (See: H. Miller, The Colossus of Maroussi, Secker & Warburg, 1945, p. 140). Blyth attempts something similar in his differentiation of Zen from pantheism and mysticism: “Mysticism and Zen overlap, but are distinct. Mysticism sees the infinite meaning in the (apparently) trivial thing; Zen sees the thing, the fall of Adam, your own fall out of the window, and no more. True, everything is in the thing, but it is not seen as everything, but as the thing” (See: R.H. Blyth, Zen in English Literature and Oriental Classics, E.P. Dutton & Co, 1960, pp. 212–224).

\(^{131}\) That one “gives away” suggests that one enriches what one sees. Indeed, that the pagan type sees everything as “fuller, rounder, more perfect” bears comparison with NF-1888,14[117] (WP§800, p. 421): “artists should see nothing as it is, but fuller, simpler, stronger”.

29
In this note, Nietzsche says that under certain circumstances, the anaemic can be the ideal of those who “represent” the pagan\textsuperscript{132}, thus, he writes, “Goethe sees his “saint” in Spinoza”\textsuperscript{133}. We might say that what is promissory in Spinoza is fulfilled in Goethe: the deification and affirmation of becoming in its concreteness. I say “becoming in its concreteness” even though this is not an especially handsome phrase, for I want to stress that we are not talking about affirming the idea of becoming, but becoming itself\textsuperscript{134}.

How are we to draw the distinction between Goethe and Spinoza? Nietzsche tells us that Goethe “sought help… from Spinoza” in the process of overcoming his age. But it was principally through “practical activity”, through “putting himself into the midst” of life that Goethe was able to achieve this ascent to the classical or pagan ideal. Spinoza taught these values—but Goethe embodied them. One remains largely at the level of intellect, while the other is fully incarnate. This is Goethe’s overcoming of the eighteenth century “by a return to nature, by an ascent to the naturalness of the Renaissance”\textsuperscript{135}.

Spinoza’s ideas are undoubtedly helpful, but they are quite insufficient for this transformation. This is why there is such an emphasis on sensory cultivation in Goethe and in Nietzsche: they understood that one could come to experience the world differently, but this was not primarily a matter of thought or knowledge. Indeed, both saw our lopsided intellectual development as a large part of the problem. The decadent knows more than he can feel. The senses thus need to be given “a more fundamental value than to that fine sieve” of the conscious intellect: “The strength and power of the senses—this is the essential thing in a well-constituted and complete man: the splendid “animal” must be given first—what could any “humanization” matter otherwise!”\textsuperscript{136}

Goethe’s own remarks about his “saint” are very interesting and help to disambiguate their positions. Take for example his letters to Jacobi following the publication of the latter’s On

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\textsuperscript{132} It is also for the anaemic type that the concept of the non-conceptual excites. Reacting against their own non-sensuality, they might declare that the world as disclosed without intellectual embellishment is truth and thus try to take sides with the whole (against the part, against their own ‘contribution’, as if this were not reality). I pick up this point with my discussion of the dead world and dissimulation in chapter 2.

\textsuperscript{133} NF-1887,11[138] (WP§341, pp. 186–187); we might think of other examples, such as Blake’s relationship to Swedenborg. More often, of course, successors move in the opposite direction: think of Steiner’s relationship to Goethe, the move toward the ‘supersensible’ and esoteric.

\textsuperscript{134} The contrast between Goethe and Spinoza cannot be drawn in terms of Weber’s this-worldly and other-worldly mysticism—both thinkers surely fall into the former category. We are talking about kinds of this worldly affirmation (See: M. Weber, The Sociology of Religion, trans. E. Fischoff, Methuen & Co, 1963, pp. 166ff). We also must not think that the distinction is that the one is deifying natura naturans and the other natura naturata. For both it is the process that is divine. Though for Goethe, there seems to be no world of nature—nature just is naturing, and as we see below he does not share Spinoza’s concept of Nature (i.e. nature as an integrated whole, as a one).

\textsuperscript{135} TI§IX.49, p. 553.

\textsuperscript{136} NF-1886,5[34] (WP§1045 pp. 537–538).
the Teachings of Spinoza. The so-called “pantheism controversy [Pantheismusstreit]” launched by this book has been much discussed, and I do not particularly wish to enter into that here in any depth. Let us just briefly consider three letters to Jacobi, starting with that of June 9, 1875:

“Forgive me for wanting to fall silent when the subject of a divine being is raised, which I know only in singular things. Nobody can rouse me to their close and deep contemplation more than Spinoza himself, though the singular things seemed to disappear before his gaze… Here I am in the mountains, seeking the divine in herbs and stones… [Vergieb mir daß ich so gerne schwiege wenn von einem göttlichen Wesen die Rede ist, das ich nur in und aus den rebus singularibus erkenne, zu deren nähern und tiefern Betrachtung niemand mehr aufmuntern kann als Spinoza selbst, obgleich vor seinem Blicke alle einzelne Dinge zu verschwinden scheinen… Hier bin ich auf und unter Bergen, suche das göttliche in herbis et lapidibus…]”137

Here, I think, Goethe makes a point of Spinoza’s ‘anaemic’ tendency, with the singular things [einzelne Dinge] vanishing or diminishing [verschwinden] before his gaze. Goethe, the ‘eye man’ [Augenmensch], stays with the phenomena: he sees the universal and the divine in the singular. Spinoza, the optician, was an eye man of a different sort: grinding lenses for instruments that expand one’s vision, but also, if used injudiciously, lead to a weakening of the visual senses. For Goethe, our very senses needed to be developed, rather than supplemented with instruments:

“Man himself, insofar as he is making sound use of his senses, is the greatest and most exact physical, i.e. scientific, apparatus that can be imagined, and this, precisely, is the most disastrous aspect of modern physics: that experiments have been, as it were, separated [abgesondert] from the human factor and that nature is to be recognized only by the evidence of artificial instruments…”138.

This dissociation of the human element (through mathematisation, instrumentation), though doubtless a major factor in the success of the scientific revolution, was seen by Goethe to be perilous as the focus on instrumental augmentation would lead to a weakening and undervaluing of the senses139, and to a lopsided development wherein

137 June 9 1875. German text quoted in H. Lange, op. cit., p. 20.
138 M&R§706 [TM].
139 Goethe’s point was not only that these instruments can be highly misleading, but that without our senses developed strongly, we lack the ability to understand this and are liable to be deceived. In particular, this was his criticism of the use of the prism in Newton’s optics.
people could know more than they feel—that is, he was concerned with what Nietzsche would come to call décadence.

In his *Ethics*, Spinoza said that “the more we understand singular things, the more we understand God [Quo magis res singulares intelligimus, eo magis Deum intelligimus]”. Goethe could hardly have agreed more. It is not a matter of knowing the divine by knowing lots of things, as if piecing together a lot of parts to form a view of the totality. This knowledge is not summative, but is rather gained by knowing individual things deeply, by seeing into them. The universal is not to be encountered anywhere else but in the particular: “the universal and the particular coincide…”

The distinction, then, is not in their understanding of the relationship of particular and universal. In the same letter, Goethe writes of Spinoza that “He does not prove the existence of God, existence is God. If for this reason others would brand him Atheist, then I would praise him and call him most Theist and most Christian… [Du erkennst die höchste Realität an, welche der Grund des ganzen Spinozismus ist, worauf alles übrige ruht, woraus alles übrige fließt. Er beweist nicht das Daseyn Gottes, das Daseyn ist Gott. Und wenn ihn andre deshalb Atheum schelten, so mögte ich ihn theissimum ia christianissimum nennen und preisen…]”

Far from distancing himself from Spinoza’s deification of existence, Goethe in fact strengthens it. Goethe alludes to in his letter to Jacobi of October 21 1875:

“You know I am not of your opinion about the matter. To me, Spinozism and Atheism are two different things… Although I do not share his conception of Nature itself, yet if I were to specify one book, among all that I know, that agreed most closely with my conception, I would have to name the *Ethics*…[Du weißt daß ich über die Sache selbst nicht deiner Meinung bin. Daß mir Spinozismus und Atheismus zweyerley ist… ohne seine Vorstellungsart von Natur selbst zu haben, doch wenn die Rede wäre ein Buch anzugeben, das unter allen die ich kenne, am meisten mit der meinigen übereinkommt, die Ethik nennen müsste…]”

Here Goethe points to Spinoza’s conception as the least misleading. There is much in common: for both men, right understanding is dynamic and intuitive. Yet Goethe says that

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141 “For the true naturalist,” writes Cassirer, “one “pregnant instance,” not countless, scattered observations, exhibits the “immanent law” of nature”: E. Cassirer, *The Problem of Knowledge*, trans. W.H. Wogolom, Yale University Press, 1950, p. 146. This is the basis of Goethe’s critique of Bacon, and his own appreciation of those instances “worth a thousand”.

Spinoza’s is still not his own conception of nature. What is the difference? Spinoza’s whole mathematical approach is obviously deeply inimical to Goethe, and this reflects a difference of concreteness, or, perhaps more accurately, groundedness. The distinction is subtle, but I think that this is just what Nietzsche means in calling Spinoza an anaemic precedent. While Spinoza comes to appreciate the divinity of manifestation, there is not the “animal vigour” needed here for the affirmation of the whole, rather there is a “delicate selection” and what is affirmed is really an abstraction.

Finally, in the letter of May 5 1786, Goethe writes to Jacobi:

“Where you say we can only believe in God, then I tell you, I set great store by seeing. When Spinoza speaks of *scientia intuitiva*, and says “This species of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things”, these few words give me the courage to devote my whole life to the contemplation of things that are within my reach…

[Wenn du sagst man könne an Gott nur glauben p. 101. so sage ich dir, ich halte viel aufs schauen, und wenn Spinoza von der Scientia intuitiva spricht, und sagt: Hoc cognoscendi genus procedit ab adaequata idea essentiae formalis quorundam Dei attributorum ad adaequatam cognitionem essentiae rerum; so geben mir diese wenigen Worte Muth, mein ganzes Leben der Betrachtung der Dinge zu widmen die ich reichen…]“

Unlike many others, Goethe does not criticise Jacobi’s emphasis on belief as irrational, nor does he misconstrue Jacobi as an enemy of reason. Rather than claiming we can know God, Goethe thinks that God can be seen. But what does this mean? What is this seeing? Goethe stresses the role of Spinoza’s third type of knowledge, “intuitive knowledge [*scientia intuitiva*]”, which he links with seeing—but he means seen in the imagination, not the in the external world.

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143 Indeed, the whole concept of Nature as an integrated whole, as a *one*, is foreign to Goethe. As we saw above, for Goethe, “What’s alive cannot be one / it’s always a many [Kein Lebendiges ist ein Eins, / Immer ist’s ein Vieles]” (SP pp. 158–159 [TM]) and “no living thing is unitary in nature; every such thing is a plurality. Even the organism which appears to us as individual exists as a collection of independent living entities” (*Scientific Studies*, op. cit., p. 64).


145 The difference between imagination and conception or ideation is important here. Goethe spoke of “exact sensorial imagination [exakte sinnliche Phantasie]” (See Goethe’s review of Stiedenroth’s *Psychologie zur Erklärung der Seelenerscheinungen*, published in *On Morphology* in 1824). The basic point is that the “observer” becomes an extension of the phenomenon. On this point, see WON, pp. 301–320, and (anticipating the obvious question about fantasy) note 292, p. 402. Also see the Hindrichs paper cited below.

146 On this point, Bortoft writes (WON, p. 21): “Goethe believed that the organization or unity of the phenomenon is real and can be experienced, but that it is not evident to sensory experience. It is perceived by an intuitive experience—what Goethe called *Ausbauung*, which “may be held to signify the intuitive knowledge
This point seems to be missed by Horst Lange when he writes:

“We should realize that Goethe takes the term “intuitive” in a different sense than Spinoza does. If we look again at [the letter of May 5th, 1786], it is clear that Goethe associates the third kind of knowledge with visuality: key words in the letter are “Anschauen,” “schauen,” and “Betrachtung.” It appears that he associates the immediacy of the third kind of knowledge with the immediacy of the knowledge we believe we get from visual perception. This latter immediacy is, of course, the foundation of many metaphors in our language: for example, we say that we “saw” the solution to a complex problem or that we understood a somewhat complicated situation “at a glance,” and Goethe seems to have been taken in by these metaphors. But, as Spinoza’s example of the law of proportion shows, there is nothing peculiarly visual to his third kind of knowledge, and nowhere in the Ethics does he argue for the privileging of the eye in science. We might “see” the solution to the equation “at a glance,” but we do not use our eyes.”

But has Goethe been “taken in”? Goethe is not at all speaking about “seeing God” as some manifest external entity (something natured, incarnate), but rather in the naturing of the nature that is “within reach”. What is important here is that the divine order is not concealed. This was the heart of the disagreement between Jacobi and Goethe: Jacobi held that “nature hides God [die Natur verberge Gott]” whereas Goethe believed that nature is an “open secret [öffentlich Geheimnis]”.

Goethe would surely agree with Wittgenstein: “nothing is concealed… nothing is hidden”. For Goethe, it is we who obscure nature by our way of approaching it—and that this obscuration may be avoided if we take the right approach to

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149 Once again, see Hadot’s discussion of this in The Veil of Isis, op. cit., esp. pp. 247–261. One of Hadot’s phrase is especially apt: “...if Isis is without veils, it is because she is entirely form, that is, entirely veil; she is inseparable from her veils and her forms” (p. 259).
Goethe often speaks of Nature as having an “open” or “manifest secret” [öffentlich Geheimnis] (e.g. M&R 2011). See Hadot (op. cit) on Goethe on this point.
This is indeed how Goethe himself characterised the disagreement when reflecting back upon it in 1812:

“How could this strange, restricted, one-sided proposition [einseitigbeschränkter Ausspruch] fail to alienate me in spirit for ever from the noblest of men whose heart I have loved and honoured? How could it fail to alienate me, a man whose pure, deep, native and habitual mode of apprehension had so taught him to see God in Nature and Nature in God that it had become the very basis of his existence?”

The mention of “one-sidedness” here is important, and we shall return to this very shortly in discussing another of Nietzsche’s remarks on Goethe and Spinoza. But let us first see how Lange continues his analysis of Spinoza and Goethe:

“Even more importantly, Spinoza is quite adamant in making a distinction between what he calls an “image”, i.e., anything visual, and an idea. He insists that only the idea can be the carrier of truth. Mixing up the two—in other words, holding that truth can somehow be seen—is for him one of the fundamental mistakes of epistemology (2P49S). It is not farfetched to say that Goethe not only fails to heed Spinoza’s warning but even places the visual in the center of his scientific interests. In his reflections on his methodology, Goethe often stresses the importance of proper seeing. We should not consider it a coincidence that what he considered his greatest scientific achievement, the Farbenlehre, theorizes about what is the absolute precondition of all seeing, namely light. And it is equally impossible to understand the results of his other great scientific interest, morphology, without the constant visualization of its material. His characterization of himself as “Augenmensch”; his deep appreciation of the visual arts; and his objections to eyeglasses, microscopes, and telescopes, which are charged with creating “unnatural” vision (particularly in Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre)—all of this points to what we can call the “optocentrism” of Goethe’s worldview.”

151 Goethe says that what is needed is a “gentle empiricism [zarte empirie]” (M&R §565)
In Faust (op cit., p. 115) we read: “Mysterious in the light of day, / Nature, in veils, will not let us perceive her, / And what she is unwilling to betray, / You cannot wrest from her with thumbscrews, wheel, or lever”.
It has been said that “Goethe inverts Spinoza”\textsuperscript{154}, by proceeding from knowledge of the essence of what is “within reach” to knowledge of essence of the divine. To characterise Goethe’s position as an inversion of Spinoza is not quite right—there is, however, certainly a modulation, a bringing down to earth, a fulfilment.

As we have already said, Goethe and Spinoza are certainly different species of \textit{angenmenschen}. What is revealed here is a difference in their way of understanding intuition. Spinoza’s is, as Lange rightly says, more \textit{conceptual}, and Goethe’s more \textit{sensuous}.

For Spinoza, the salvific power of \textit{thought} was absolute. Thinking in a geometrical manner [\textit{more geometrico}], man can realise his essential belonging to (put more heretically, identity with) the world’s substance, which for Spinoza is \textit{God or Nature}. For Goethe, intuition and perception (or idea and image) are to be reconciled, not divorced\textsuperscript{155}. This can be seen in the fact that Goethe saw the \textit{archetype} as both idea \textit{and} phenomenon\textsuperscript{156}.

Goethe’s description of the symbol as “transform[ing] a phenomenon into an idea”\textsuperscript{157} is instructive. Recall that for Spinoza, image and idea must be kept strictly apart\textsuperscript{158}. On Goethe’s view, we do not have this hard distinction: as we see here, the symbol enables the mediation between idea and image. We should not transform the phenomenon into a concept (as in allegory), and thus have the particular dissolve before our gaze—but rather to see \textit{into} it, to keep it alive.

Just as Goethe saw “one-sidedness” in Jacobi, so too will Nietzsche see this in Spinoza. The criticism of Spinoza is that he is not \textit{earthy enough}: there is a tendency away from the sensuous and toward the abstract, the conceptual, the bloodless.

\textsuperscript{154} See J. Neubauer, “Goethe and the Language of Science”, in \textit{The Third Culture: Literature and Science}, e.d E.S. Shaffer, Berlin, de Gruyter, 1998, p. 53, note 3; Lange, as we have seen, makes a similar point.


\textsuperscript{156} In Goethe’s mature thought, the archetype is a phenomenon but it is \textit{not} an empirical object of experience, which is how he had conceived of it in his first thoughts on the Urpflanze, for example. See: WON, pp. 82–83. For understanding Goethe’s concept of the archetype, a closer point of departure than the Platonic \textit{idea} is the Aristotelian \textit{entelechy}—a term which Goethe uses a good deal in the \textit{Conversations}. But again we should bear in mind Cassirer’s point about assimilating Goethe to other thinkers: his interpretation of Aristotle is surely idiosyncratic (c.f. my comments in this section on his interpretation and modification of Spinoza).

\textsuperscript{157} M&R§1113.

\textsuperscript{158} H. Lange, op. cit., pp. 22–23.
Novalis may have called Spinoza a “god intoxicated man [Gott-trunkener Mensch]” but, for Nietzsche, Spinoza’s “intellectual love of God” is too anaemic, too feverless a form of reverence to merit the term love. In the fifth book of The Gay Science, Nietzsche writes

“…amor intellectualis dei is mere clatter and no more than that: What is amor, what deus, if there is not a drop of blood in them?”

This is the section in which Nietzsche says that “ideas are worse seductresses than our senses, for all their cold and anaemic appearance”. He is discussing the heartlessness of philosophy:

“These old philosophers were heartless; philosophizing was always a kind of vampirism… Don’t you have a sense of something enigmatic and uncanny? Don’t you notice how the spectacle unrolls before you, how they become ever paler—how densensualization is interpreted more and more ideally? Don’t you sense a long concealed vampire in the background who begins with the senses and in the end is left with, and leaves, mere bones, mere clatter? I mean categories, formulas, words…”

This criticism comes up again in one of Nietzsche’s unpublished fragments:

“Great philosophers are rarely found. What of Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Spinoza: how impoverished, how one-sided! … The great Greeks—Heraclitus, Empedocles, Parmenides, Anaxagoras, Democritus—are fuller. The conscience of Christianity has ruined many full people, e.g. Pascal and Meister Eckhart. It spoils the concept of the artist: it has cast a timid hypocrisy over Raphael such that his transfigured Christ is a fluttering fanatical little monk who he does not dare show naked. Goethe stands well”.

160 GS§372, p. 333.
161 GS§373, p. 333.
I discuss this fragment with respect to Eckhart in chapter II; Pascal is considered at greater length in chapter IV.
Goethe stands well [Goethe steht gut da] amongst the pre-Socratics because he is fuller [voller] than the one-sided [einseitig] philosophers of our time, even (perhaps especially) than geniuses like those four mentioned\textsuperscript{163}. This fullness consists in his sensuality, and his freedom from Christian conscience, by which Nietzsche means the bad conscience, the inwardness, the focus on sin and redemption, but also the anaemic thinning out and esteeming as perfection “intellectualisation’ and unsensuality”.

In \textit{Dichtung und Wahrheit}, Goethe writes

“The principle to which all Hamann’s expressions may be referred is this: “All that man undertakes to perform, whether by deed, by word, or otherwise, must proceed from all his powers united; everything isolated is worthless.” A noble maxim, but hard to follow…”\textsuperscript{164}

The phrase quoted here ends “alles Vereinzelte ist verwerflich”. Notice the similarity to the phrase that Nietzsche uses with respect to Goethe in \textit{Twilight} when he speaks of the faith “that only the particular is loathsome, and that all is redeemed and affirmed in the whole [dass nur das Einzelne verwerflich ist, dass im Ganzen sich Alles erlöst und bejaht]”\textsuperscript{165}.

To decontextualise, to isolate, is to make the thing worthless. Goethe saw holism as the essence of Hamann’s thought, as it surely was of Goethe’s own. This is not to say that he was uncritical of Hamann\textsuperscript{166}, and in this very passage he points out the need for words and concepts to be isolated for the purposes of communicability. But he does share Hamann’s doubts about the possibility of systematisation, and the tendency within these systems for antinomies to arise due to reification of terms, where we “mistake words for concepts and concepts for the things themselves”\textsuperscript{167}. This is not to mention broader agreements on the value of the senses, which is born in part from a shared sense of the danger of getting caught in intellectual map making.

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\textsuperscript{163} This interpretation of the passage is very different to that of Shapiro, who renders “Goethe steht gut da” as “Goethe’s got it right there”, making it a comment on Goethe’s interpretation of Raphael’s \textit{Transfiguration} (See: G. Shapiro, \textit{Archaeologies of Vision}, University of Chicago Press, 2003, p. 116).


\textsuperscript{165} TI§IX.49, p. 554. This phrase has seemed mysterious to some, including M. Tanner, \textit{Nietzsche}, Oxford University Press, 2000, p. 92.


Hamann criticised Spinoza, writing that “he occupied himself too much with spider webs [Spinneweben]... which can only entangle small insects”\(^{168}\). Both Goethe and Nietzsche would be extremely wary about the temptation towards systematisation, and this is one of the points where both of them shift markedly from Spinoza. Indeed, Nietzsche uses language very much like Hamann’s, writing in *Twilight* that “Nothing is less Greek than the conceptual web-spinning of a hermit—*amor intellectualis dei* after the fashion of Spinoza…”\(^{169}\) and in *The Antichrist*:

“They spun their webs around [God] until, hypnotized by their motions, he himself became a spider, another metaphysician. Now he, in turn, spun the world out of himself—*sub specie Spinozae*. Now he transfigured himself into something ever thinner and paler; he became an “ideal,” he became “pure spirit,” the “Absolute,” the “thing-in-itself”…”\(^{170}\)

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In the May 5th letter to Jacobi, Goethe writes

“God has punished you with metaphysics and rammed a stake in your flesh, whereas he has blessed me with physics so that I can have pleasure when contemplating his works… […*Gott mit der Metaphisick gestraft und dir einen Pfahl ins Fleisch gesezt, mich dagegen mit der Phisick geseegnet, damit mir es im Anschauen seiner Wercke wohl werde.*]”\(^{171}\)

That Goethe’s religion is *physical* and not *metaphysical* not only reflects the fact that it is rooted in the senses—that it is, as Nietzsche described it, *pagan*. It also reflects the fact that this Goethean religiosity *denies the very existence* of the metaphysical: it makes no distinction between surface and essence: “Nature has neither core / Nor outer rind”\(^{172}\).

When Goethe says that we are to “rejoice in the true appearance [*Freuet euch des wahren Schein*]”\(^{173}\), this must not be understood as seeking redemption in *illusion*, as we see in


\(^{169}\) TII§IX.23, p. 528; C.f. TII§II.4, p. 482.

\(^{170}\) AC§17, p. 585; c.f. GM§III.9, p. 113.

\(^{171}\) Quoted in J. Neubauer, op. cit., p. 53.

\(^{172}\) M. Hamburger trans. SP pp. 236–237.

\(^{173}\) Ibid. [TM]; Hamburger has “joy in true semblance take…”
Nietzsche’s philosophy from the period of the *Birth*, perhaps best expressed in the following early note:

“My philosophy is an *inverted Platonism*: the further something is from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in illusion [*Schein*] as the goal”\(^{174}\)

Rather, Goethe’s thinking here must be understood in the sense of Nietzsche’s later discussion of the Greeks as “superficial—*out of profundity*”\(^{175}\). *Schein* is no longer understood as *mere* semblance, illusion. There is no “true world” behind appearances. The apparent world *is* reality\(^{176}\). To “stop courageously at the surface”, means to realise that there is nothing *behind* the surface\(^{177}\).

I.4

Let us take a brief divagation to consider how the foregoing helps us to understand the relationship of both Goethe and Nietzsche to Hegel, relationships that have often been misunderstood.

In his *Buddha is Dead*, Bazzano writes of Goethe that:

> “His benevolent, wise and extraordinarily broad humanity appears to equal him to a Taoist sage. But Goethe proved to be two-faced. A model of wholeness and integrity in Nietzsche’s eyes, and undoubtedly one of the greatest artists who ever lived, Goethe did not show the same loftiness in matters of the world, for he achieved success by entertaining typically German vices: inveterate sentimentalism and moral insincerity. His fault was to refrain from publicly opposing the danger of the so-called “new German philosophy” (Hegel’s) in spite of having fully understood its absurdity. Why did he not oppose it? Because it was the *philosophy of the establishment*. Goethe had the privilege of reading the works of a far greater thinker than Hegel, the young Schopenhauer, who was his devotee. He refrained from encouraging and publicly endorsing Schopenhauer, thus condemning him to the neglect and misunderstanding of his contemporaries…”\(^{178}\)

\(^{174}\) NF-1870,7[156] (TEN p. 52).

\(^{175}\) GS§P.4, p. 38.


\(^{177}\) C.f. GS§373, pp. 334–336. I take up this theme intermittently in what follows.

This notion of Goethe as the embodiment of the establishment seems to have originated in 19th century attempts to get out from under his shadow\textsuperscript{179}, and has proved surprisingly enduring\textsuperscript{180}. No doubt Goethe’s public reserve—especially in the later period of his life—did little to discourage this\textsuperscript{181}. I think that this caricature is not helpful in illuminating Goethe’s relationship to Hegel and Schopenhauer, and if we want to understand those relationships, we must probe more deeply.

In 1814, Goethe wrote the following in Schopenhauer’s album:

\begin{quote}
“To rejoice in your own worth
You must grant worth to life on earth

[Willst du dich deines Wertes freuen,
So mußt der Welt du Wert verleihen]\textsuperscript{182}.
\end{quote}

Schopenhauer had completed his \textit{On the Fourfold Root of the Principle of Sufficient Reason} the previous year. In Goethe’s advice, we see a major difference between two men: their valuation of appearance. For Schopenhauer, the apparent is essentially illusion. For Goethe, the apparent world \textit{is} reality. Goethe’s inscription suggests that Schopenhauer’s otherworldliness was the cause of his morbidity. To esteem oneself, one must esteem the natural world to which one belongs.

In a letter to Zelter, Goethe acknowledges the closeness of his own position to Hegel:

\begin{quote}
“Nature does nothing in vain is a philistine old saw. Nature is eternally alive and active, superfluous and extravagant in order that what is eternal may be
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{179} Safranski discusses this conception of Goethe in the concluding chapter of GLWA, where he writes that “the next literary generation, young writers of the 1820s,” branded Goethe “the greatest egotist and a prince's toady who had feathered his own nest and was indifferent to the fate of those who labor and are heavy laden. Börne hurled thunderbolts at Goethe, saying that he had not used his “fiery tongue” to defend the rights of the common people. One heartless aristocrat fewer, some said at the news that Goethe was dead. Something of that still clings to Goethe’s image: the philistine who tends to his lovely garden and seeks shelter from the storms of history, selfishly concerned for his own welfare…”

\textsuperscript{180} I once had a long discussion with an Irish theologian who was writing a novel based around the life of Goethe who found it most amusing that I should take Goethe as a model of authenticity. I confess that I am strongly influenced here as elsewhere by Kaufmann, who presented Goethe in such a light and dealt explicitly with the “myth that pictures him as a pillar of society” in DTMI, §6, pp. 17–20.

\textsuperscript{181} I take up the theme of Goethe’s privacy—and his remove from public affairs—in chapter IV. Kaufmann writes in DTMI, §7, p. 21: “Goethe was an exceptionally strong personality, and in his works he made no effort to hide his light under a bushel. Reversing the practice of many others, he came to hide himself more and more in social situations-behind the mask of the Herr Geheimrat von Goethe—while he revealed his character in his writings”.

\textsuperscript{182} Quoted in GLWA, ch. 9; Safranski deals with the topic of Goethe and Schopenhauer, including substantive differences of opinion, in ch. 27. Bazzano himself quotes this passage (op. cit., p. 17).
continuously present, because nothing can persist. With that, I even think I’m approaching the Hegelian philosophy.”183

As we have seen above, Goethe probably did not have a direct engagement with Heraclitus, and we see here that he associates the Heraclitean idea of flux with Hegel (on whom Heraclitus did exert explicit influence).

Nietzsche himself could see Goethe’s proximity to Hegel, writing in one place that “Hegel’s way of thinking is not far different from Goethe’s…”184 Nietzsche believed Schopenhauer had misunderstood Hegel, and commented on the former’s “unintelligent wrath” toward the latter185.

Now a word on Nietzsche’s affinity with Hegel. On Nietzsche’s reading, Hegel sought to develop “a pantheism through which evil, error, and suffering are not felt as arguments against divinity”186. There is a good deal of similarity here to Nietzsche’s characterisation of the Dionysian (in the BT sense) as “the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life”187.

In one of the notes just quoted, Nietzsche says that unlike Hegel, “Schopenhauer… appears as a stubborn morality man, who, in order to justify his moral valuation, finally becomes a world-denier. Finally a “mystic”…”188 Again, this suggests Nietzsche’s greater affinity with Hegel189.

In a fairly common interpretation, Haar distinguishes Nietzsche from Hegel by reading Hegelian sublation as the negation or resolution of tension190. But this is not right. Hegel was highly influenced by Heraclitus, who wrote that people “do not comprehend how a thing agrees at variance with itself; it is an attunement turning back on itself, like that of the bow and the lyre”191. Thus in the Science of Logic, we read: “all things are in themselves contradictory [alle Dinge sind an sich selbst widersprechend]”192.

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183 Quoted in GLWA, ch. 34.
184 NF-1887,9[178] (WP§95, p. 60).
185 BGE§204, p. 122; C.f. BGE§252, p. 189.
186 NF-1885,2[106] (WP§416, p. 223).
188 NF-1885,2[106] (WP§416, p. 224).
189 As we will see below, however, Nietzsche does think of Hegel’s project as in some way a moral one. See also the discussion of Nietzsche and Hegel in Kaufmann’s NPPA, esp. ch. 2, “Nietzsche’s Method”.
Like Heraclitus and Nietzsche, Hegel saw that harmony is in the tension of opposites—not the resolution of that tension into uniformity. This is the correct understanding of the *coincidentia oppositorum*: not that they cancel out into unity, but that the polarity of “opposites” is their unity.\(^{193}\)

That in many important ways Nietzsche is closer to Hegel than to Schopenhauer is not at all to deny that there are great differences between Hegel and Nietzsche.\(^{194}\) As Nietzsche writes in the *Gay Science*, Hegel attempted “to persuade us of the divinity of existence, appealing as a last resort to our sixth sense, “the historical sense’…” Nietzsche, unlike Hegel, does not put his faith in history. Much like John Gray in our own time, Nietzsche sees this as a secularised version of Christian eschatology:\(^{196}\)

\[\ldots\text{the belief in progress towards the ideal is the only form in which a goal in history is thought of today. In summa: one has transferred the arrival of the “kingdom of God” into the future, on earth, in human form—but fundamentally one has held fast to the belief in the old ideal—}^{197}\]

Indeed, in a draft of the 1886 preface for *Daybreak*, Nietzsche applies this critique specifically to Hegel.\(^ {198}\) So, while both thinkers attempt something like a defence of existence and its divinity—perhaps in some sense a theodicy—\(^ {199}\) their way of thinking this through is very different.


\(^{194}\) Nor is it to deny that there are various important ways in which Nietzsche is closer to Schopenhauer. One, which Bazzano points to, is that Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were not academic philosophers (i.e. professionals). I wholly agree with Bazzano’s stress on the importance of this fact, as well as his general point that “the intellectual integrity needed to pursue the vocation of philosophy is at variance with the sheepishness normally required to hold a chair at a university”. See, M. Bazzano, op. cit., p. 6.

\(^{195}\) GS§357, p. 307.


\(^{198}\) See: NF-1885,2[165] (WP§253, p. 147).

\(^{199}\) NF-1887,10[21] (TLN, p. 180): “This pessimism of strength also culminates in a *theodicy*, i.e., in an absolute saying Yes to the world, but for the very reasons that used to prompt one’s No to it: and thus a Yes to the conception of this world as the actually *attained*, highest possible ideal…?” See also: R. Williams, *op. cit.*, ch. 11; and also D. Came, “The Aesthetic Justification of Existence”, in K.A. Pearson (ed.), *A Companion to Nietzsche*, Blackwell, 2006, pp. 41–57.
This is reflected also in their attitude toward history. Here, Nietzsche stands with Goethe as essentially “untimely”. Speaking of the differences between Hegel and Goethe\(^{200}\), Safranski writes:

“The Hegelian zeitgeist declared that freedom originated through society. Goethe, however, believed he needed to defend his freedom against society…”\(^{201}\)

This point can be overstressed, and we can easily point to passages that seem to qualify it. See for example the *Conversations* for April 20, 1825 where Goethe talks about the need for an “honest effort to make oneself subservient to the Whole”. But the point here is largely one of *apprenticeship*: “no one thinks to be furthered in his own way by a work of poetry, but every one will do the same thing over again”. That is, Goethe believed that the individual will develop more fully, and in a less merely ostentatious fashion, if he absorbs the great works of the tradition\(^{202}\).

It is possible that differences in their valuation of the state—and I resist here the temptation to cite those most famous passages from the *Philosophy of Right*—and its claims on the individual reflect differences in their evaluations of *nature*. Kaufmann described Hegel as attempting a synthesis of Kant and Goethe\(^{203}\). Yet on this point, Hegel appears more like the antithesis of Rousseau\(^{204}\).

Like many of the decadents that Nietzsche railed against (such as the Goncourts and Baudelaire), Hegel could not find beauty in nature\(^{205}\). Upon seeing the Alps, Hegel said:

“Reason finds in the thought of the permanence of these mountains or in the kind of sublimity that is ascribed to them nothing that impresses it, that demands


\(^{201}\) GLWA, ch. 31.

\(^{202}\) CWG, pp. 131–137.

\(^{203}\) DTMI, p. 156; c.f. p. 80 where he also describes Schopenhauer in these terms, quoting the latter as saying that “Kant’s weak side is that in which Goethe is great; and vice versa”.

\(^{204}\) This should be seen in the light of the discussion of the ‘anaemic’ tendency above. On the one hand, we can have the worship of the artificial over the natural due to an incapacity to feel the natural, and on the other, we can have a reaction against this incapacity in the worship of the natural over the artificial. On Goethe’s relationship to Rousseau, see TJIX.48–49, pp. 552–554: Nietzsche makes clear that a return to nature should not be the casting off of culture, of cultivation. This bears also on Nietzsche’s philosophy of the mask: “nature” is not reached by an unveiling, a stripping back.

wonder and admiration. Seeing these dead masses gave me nothing but the monotonous and in time boring idea: this is the way it is."206

Compare this with Goethe’s experience of time in stone, captured in his essay “On Granite”207, or with Nietzsche’s experience of time in stone—and how this triggered his recognition of the recurrence in Silvaplana.

Hegel also says that in “nature nothing new happens under the sun, and thus the play of its formations in all their variety brings with it boredom”208

While there is certainly development in nature, in what sense is their progress? Nature does not have goals outside its own fecundity, but this was not at all felt as an objection for Goethe, a man for whom morphology was practically liturgy.

Hegel’s lack of feeling for nature could be seen as typical of Nietzsche’s anaemic type, where the senses are so atrophied that only the conceptual excites. With this also comes an excessive valuation of the intellect, an overestimation of the possibilities of our knowledge.

Pippin suggests that we should understand Hegel’s “claim about ‘the rationality of the real’ to be an echo of this Greek rationalism with its claim that ‘to be is to be intelligible,’” that there is no ineffable, nothing in principle unknowable”209. Hegel isn’t necessarily saying that everything will at some time be known. Yet the fulfilment of reality is its being understood. There is clearly little feeling here for mystery, not as a problem awaiting solution but as itself divine.

In a note, Nietzsche characterises it as weakness that “craves a solution, at least a hope for a solution” in the face of the “riddle of existence”210. Elsewhere he writes that we should “not desire to divest the world of its disturbing and enigmatic character”, and describes it as a “sign of strength” to be able to maintain a “plurality of interpretations”211.

208 Quoted in Harries, op. cit., p. 249.
211 NF-1885,2[106] (WP§600, p. 326).
Nietzsche regards Hegel’s philosophy as basically moral in character (read: progressive, teleological)\textsuperscript{212}, even if it attempts to overcome the moral God\textsuperscript{213}. The world is moving toward its goal, even if, in Hegel’s case, this goal is a dynamic one: an unending period of spirit’s self-realisation and unveiling\textsuperscript{214}.

For both Goethe and for Nietzsche, there is no truth to unveil and, in some sense, the mystery is the ‘solution’\textsuperscript{215}. Thus when, in a famous fragment, Nietzsche offers us the will to power as a “solution for all riddles”, it is a “mystery world of the twofold voluptuous delight… without goal, unless the joy of the circle is itself a goal”\textsuperscript{216}. This is hardly so satisfying to the intellect.

One might say this is really no solution at all. The enigmatic character remains. But, after all, Nietzsche says that we should not “wish to divest existence of its rich ambiguity”\textsuperscript{217}. Perhaps the anaemic type needs a system, while the pagan, with his “animal vigour”, can be satisfied with something conceptually inarticulate\textsuperscript{218}. This may simply be because the latter doesn’t have the craving for that kind of clarity, or perhaps because he can see the inadequacy of all maps: that “truth” is not true, that the real is not the rational\textsuperscript{219}. In a note, Nietzsche writes that “one should value more than truth the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents”\textsuperscript{220}. We could equally say that the very perspectival richness of life, the surface, is truth.

1.5

In a note, Nietzsche wrote “My ancestors: Heraclitus, Empedocles, Spinoza, Goethe”\textsuperscript{221}. So far, we have made sense of Heraclitus and Spinoza through the lens of Goethe. I do not have as much to say about Empedocles. This is in part because published discussions of Empedocles are sparse relative to the others\textsuperscript{222}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{212} NF-1885,2[161, 165] (WP§410, p. 221; WP§253, p. 147), NF-1886,7[4] (WP§412, p. 222).
\item \textsuperscript{213} NF-1885,2[127] (WP§1, p. 7), NF-1885,2[106] (WP§416, p. 223).
\item \textsuperscript{214} NF-1885,2[165] (WP§253, p. 147).
\item \textsuperscript{215} On this, see especially GS§P.4, p. 38: “One should have more respect for the bashfulness with which nature has hidden behind riddles and iridescent uncertainties. Perhaps truth is a woman who has her reasons for not letting us see her reasons? Perhaps her name is—to speak Greek—Baubo?” C.f. GS§339, p. 271: “life is a woman”.
\item \textsuperscript{216} NF-1885,38[12] (WP§1067, p. 550).
\item \textsuperscript{217} GS§373, p. 335.
\item \textsuperscript{218} This gives us a way of interpreting the famous line from Twilight that “the will to a system is a lack of integrity” (TI§I.26, p. 470): the world has to be made whole because one is so fragmentary, one-sided.
\item \textsuperscript{219} C.f. TSZ “Before Sunrise”, p. 166: “In everything one thing is impossible: rationality”.
\item \textsuperscript{220} NF-1884,25[505] (WP§602, p. 326).
\item \textsuperscript{221} NF-1884,25[454].
\item \textsuperscript{222} It does seem to me almost indecent to treat Empedocles as a bookend like this, though there truly is not a great deal to work with. Aside from those discussed below, see also BGE§204; though brief, this passage
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The *Meditations* present Empedocles as a pessimist, sharing Schopenhauer’s evaluation of the value of existence\(^{223}\). This obviously does not help us to explain why Nietzsche would consider himself Empedocles’ heir in the mid-80s. This point is repeated in *Human All Too Human*, but there Empedocles is also presented as giving a non-moralistic understanding of procreation, and thus an interpretation of individuation unrelated to concepts of sin\(^{224}\).

If we look further back, we do not find an extensive discussion of Empedocles in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, only an outline for a chapter which Nietzsche never wrote. However, in the *Pre-Platonic Philosophers* we read: “Empedocles’ entire pathos comes back to this point, that *all living things are one* [alles Lebende eins sei]; in this respect the gods, human beings, and animals are one...”\(^{225}\)

Revising these lectures, Nietzsche added the following quote from Goethe as a footnote:

> “And so every creature is again only a tone, a nuance of a great harmony, which one has to study in general; otherwise, every individual is a dead letter [und so ist wieder jede Kreatur nur ein Ton eine Schattierung einer großen Harmonie, die man auch im ganzen und großen studieren muß sonst ist jedes Einzels ein toter Buchstabe]\(^{226}\).”

That Nietzsche associates Empedocles’ ideas with Goethe is also supported by the fact that just prior to this, Nietzsche had added another footnote citing Goethe\(^{227}\). But this passage on the “great harmony” is of particular interest to us.

Goethe writes this in a letter to Knebel in 1784, just after he finished his essay on his discovery of the intermaxillary bone in the upper jaw of humans. Goethe repudiated the work of those who attempted to distinguish humans from the apes on the basis of (the

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\(^{224}\) HH§141, p. 76: after saying that “pessimists are not unanimous in the matter” of the evaluation of procreation, he writes: “Empedocles, for example, knows nothing of shame, devil, sin in all things erotic; rather, on the great meadow of calamity, he sees one single salutary and hopeful apparition: Aphrodite. For him she is the guarantee that strife will not prevail indefinitely, but will eventually give the scepter to a gentler daemon”.

\(^{225}\) PPP, p. 109.

\(^{226}\) Ibid.

\(^{227}\) This time in a letter to Lavater of June 1781, the context of which is Goethe’s criticism of Cagliostro (under whose spell Lavater had fallen). Safranski discusses the context of this in *GLWA*, ch. 15.
absence of) a single bone and sought to demonstrate that man belongs to nature, to the whole.\footnote{228 For a history of this, see R. Feigenbaum “Toward a Nonanthropocentric Vision of Nature: Goethe’s Discovery of the Intermaxillary Bone”, in A. Daub and E. Krimmer (eds.), Goethe Yearbook: Vol. XXII, ed. A. Daub and E. Krimmer, Camden House, 2015, pp. 73–93.}

Goethe contended that the form of man only makes sense in relation to the whole—as a “nuance of a great harmony”. Immediately before the passage quoted above, Goethe writes “the accordance of the whole makes each creature into what it is, and the human is human as much through the form and nature of its upper maxilla as the human is through the form and nature of the last member of his little toe.”\footnote{229 Quoted in Ibid., p. 79.} This, again, shows Goethe’s conception of the One and many. The human belongs to the whole, but the whole does not exist apart from its parts.\footnote{230 For this reason, there is not an externally existing Urform that explains the form of man or other animals – rather, the forms of these creatures are understood only in relation to one another. This becomes clear to Goethe in his study of plant morphology on his travels in Italy when he realises there will be no literal Urpflanze.}

Goethe’s notion of a “great harmony”, and Empedocles’ thought that “all living things are one” will prove important to the rest of our discussion. In what sense are we supposed to think of the world as “one”?

In what follows, we will see that Nietzsche comes to argue that although humans belong to the nature and the universe, the One is not one—it cannot, for example, be thought of as an organism or a total sensorium. One reason for this is that Nietzsche saw such holism as giving the parts a merely instrumental value. Instead, he appeals to a reciprocal conception of part and whole such as the Goethean conception discussed above.

Furthermore, Nietzsche will contend that each individual is the whole, saying, for example, that “we are more than individuals: we are the whole chain as well…”\footnote{231 NF-1887,9[7] (WP§687, p. 366).} and that “…the concept “individual” is an error because every single creature constitutes the entire process in its entire course”, and he makes clear that he means by this that the single creature is not merely the inheritor of the process of nature, but that it is “the process itself.”\footnote{232 NF-1887,9[30] (WP§785, pp. 412–413).}

On such an understanding, “the single creature acquires a tremendously great significance.”\footnote{233 Ibid.} The ethical import of this is enormous. Far from taking the view that the individual’s identity with the whole leads to an altruistic upshot, Nietzsche undertakes a robust defence of a self-centred ethic.
In short, Nietzsche’s argument is that if each individual is the whole, he affirms this whole not by negating himself, but through the most "severe self-love"—that through his self-development and self-overcoming, he becomes a greater expression of the whole.

I explore these ethical implications in greater detail in my chapter on Nietzsche and the ego (chapter IV). But first, I take up the idea that the individual is the whole by inquiring into Nietzsche’s relationship to mysticism (chapter II) and his conception of fate (chapter III).

234 EH§Destiny.7, pp. 332–333.
Chapter II: Mysticism

In this chapter I undertake a study of Nietzsche and mysticism. This is hardly in itself anything new: already in the mid-1890s, while Nietzsche was still—in some sense of the word—alive, people were proclaiming him a mystic. This was in no doubt encouraged by the fact that the shell of Nietzsche was curated by his odious sister and exhibited to visitors, some of whom believed they were in the presence of a man whose illness was in fact the culmination of his spiritual insight, a sage ever remote from the “wicked game”.

But this is hardly the only factor. Indeed, in 1894, Salomé published Friedrich Nietzsche in seinen Werken in which she was critical what she perceived as Nietzsche’s 1882 turn to mysticism. The details of Salomé’s analysis aside, there certainly was a marked shift in Nietzsche’s thinking in this period, and one which I shall discuss shortly.

In what follows, I argue that if we may speak of Nietzsche’s mature thought as mystical, then we must understand this term in quite an unfamiliar sense. I claim that it must be understood in light of the conception of the One and many discussed in the foregoing, and demonstrate shortcomings in attempts to mediate between Nietzsche and major currents in mystical thought in both Western and Eastern philosophical traditions. But we begin—where else?—with the Birth, and there we find a mystical pathos that is much more familiar.

II.1

The Birth of Tragedy offers a good deal of stimulus for discussions about Nietzsche and mysticism. This would be true even were it not to contain such phrases as “oneness with the inmost ground of the world [Einheit mit dem innersten Grunde der Welt]”, or discussions of one’s “identity with the heart of the world [Einheit mit dem Herzen der Welt]”, or of the

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235 L. Andreas-Salomé, Nietzsche, trans. S. Mandel, University of Illinois Press, 2001. Salomé at times means something like ‘revealed’ by mystical, criticising Nietzsche’s shift from seeking a scientific basis to establish the eternal recurrence towards his assertion of it as an unquestionable reality (see p. 133f). But Salomé also speaks of the individual feeling “mystically expanded into a cosmic totality of life, so that his own decline, as well as his own tragic sense of life, no longer matters… World, God, and I merge into a single concept from which the individual may draw, just as from any metaphysics, ethics, or religion, a norm for activity and for highest worship…” (p. 137).

236 Salomé places this shift after the publication of The Gay Science—which she characterises as “the last of those works which Nietzsche grounded in positivism[!]” (Ibid., p. 8)—whereas I shall place it in the lead up to that book.

237 It should become increasingly clear in this chapter, as well as chapter III, that Nietzsche shares this conception of the One.

238 BT§2, p. 38.

239 BT§5, p. 49.
“I” as referring to “the only truly existent and eternal self resting at the basis of things [die einzige überhaupt wahrhaft seiernde und ewige, im Grunde der Dinge ruhende Ichheit]”240.

Yet Nietzsche was later quite critical of this “questionable book”241. In his 1886 “Attempt at a Self-Criticism”, Nietzsche writes that the Birth was “constructed from a lot of immature, overgreen personal experiences, all of them close to the limits of communication…”242

These “overgreen” experiences are surely of the very unitive sort discussed in that book, where the *principium individuationis* is temporarily overcome during aesthetic experience.

Indeed, Nietzsche describes the Birth as “a book for initiates, “music” for those dedicated to music, who are closely related to begin with on the basis of common and rare aesthetic experiences…”243

A key point in the Birth is that what most people are experiencing when they view art is not really aesthetic—but rather they relate only at a superficial level to its moral content, to what speaks to their intellect244. Thus they consider art as instrumental or else meaningless, for they never engage with it deeply as art.

That Schopenhauer was an initiate into such aesthetic experience is surely what drew Nietzsche to his thought245. On his dual-aspect reading of Kant, Schopenhauer believed that the limits of reason could be experientially breached:

“…on the path of *objective cognizance*, thus proceeding from *presentation*, we will never get beyond presentation, i.e., the phenomenon. We will therefore remain on the outside of things, we will never be able to penetrate into their inner being and investigate what they are in themselves, i.e., what they might be for themselves. To this extent I agree with *Kant*. But now, as the counterbalance to this truth, I have brought that other truth to the fore, that we are not merely the *cognizant subject*, but

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240 BT§5, p. 50.  
241 ASC§1, p. 17.  
242 ASC§2, p. 18.  
243 I.e., these rare experiences are held in common amongst the “initiates”. ASC§3, p. 19.  
244 Socrates is here described as “the typical *non-mystic* [Nicht-Mystiker], in whom, through a hypertrophy, the logical nature is developed as excessively as instinctive wisdom is in the mystic” (BT§13, p. 88). Nietzsche envisions the possibility of an “*artistic Socrates* [künstlerischen Sokrates]” (BT§14, p. 92; c.f. BT§15, p. 98), that is, one in whom these logical faculties co-exist with the intuitive faculties of mystic and artist. That is, it is a book about restored *wholeness* within the individual. It belongs, thus, to a tradition including Schopenhauer, Goethe and Hamann, critical of over-intellectualisation. This is Nietzsche’s debt to Kant here, too, for Kant had demonstrated the limits of intellectual inquiry in the first *Critique*.  
245 The same can hardly be said for Kant, whose lack of feeling for art was consistently ridiculed by Nietzsche. See GM§III.6, and also *Daybreak*, where Nietzsche describes Kant’s philosophy as "an involuntary biography of a *head*" (D§481, p. 198).
rather on the other hand are ourselves also among the beings to be cognized, are ourselves the thing in itself. Consequently, a path is open to us from inside to that proper self and inner essence of things to which we cannot penetrate from outside. It is, as it were, a subterranean passage, a secret alliance that, as through treachery, transports us at once into the fortress that could not be taken from outside.\footnote{A. Schopenhauer, \textit{The World as Will and Representation: Volume 2}, trans. D. Carus and R.E. Aquila, Routledge, 2016, §18, p. 221 (abbreviated from here on WWRIII).}

In the \textit{Birth}, Nietzsche writes that through “extraordinary courage and wisdom”, Kant and Schopenhauer gained “victory over the optimism concealed in the essence of logic—an optimism that is the basis of our culture”. That is, the optimism that “all the riddles of the universe could be known and fathomed”.\footnote{\textit{BT}§18, p. 112. There is an obvious indebtedness here to Kant’s first \textit{Critique}. But Kant almost always comes to Nietzsche through Schopenhauer, hence even here we have the discussion of maya. Later, Nietzsche would accuse Schopenhauer himself of attempting such unriddling (\textit{GS}§99, p. 153).}

This helps us to understand why Nietzsche employed “Schopenhauerian and Kantian formulas” in \textit{The Birth}: these thinkers gave the young Nietzsche a vocabulary not so much to express the inexpressible, but to point to what is left behind, what is left untouched by our theorising.

Nietzsche would shortly abandon this vocabulary.\footnote{Nietzsche is quite right in saying that even his use in \textit{BT} is quite at odds with “Schopenhauer’s spirit and taste” (\textit{ASC}§6). Take, for example, the basic attitude in \textit{BT} towards individuation—the Apollonian \textit{princpium individuationis} is not at all to be finally rejected, but seen as the possibility of “redemption in illusion” (\textit{BT}§16). Nietzsche hardly sides here with the Dionysian (One) over the Apollonian (many) at all, saying that it is in their “fraternal union”—where “Dionysus speaks the language of Apollo; and Apollo, finally the language of Dionysus”—that the “highest goal of tragedy and of all art is attained” (\textit{BT}§21).}

It is true that after \textit{The Birth of Tragedy}, Nietzsche does not explicitly discuss mysticism at great length. When he does mention mysticism, the term is mostly used critically, such as in the \textit{Genealogy}, where mysticism is said to be born of \textit{Weltschmerz}: so wearied of life do we become that we conceive of redemption as deep sleep.\footnote{\textit{GM}§III.17 (pp. 129–134), c.f. \textit{GM}§I.6 (p. 32): “the desire for a \textit{unio mystica} with God is the desire of the Buddhist for nothingness”. See also \textit{NF}-1883,7[108] on the varying motivations for “merger with the godhead [\textit{Die Verschmelzung mit der Gottheit}]” and \textit{NF}-1883,24[26]. As for published discussions, in \textit{The Gay Science}, he describes mystical explanations as “not even shallow” (\textit{GS}§126, p. 182). In \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, he says that mystics are “more honest and doltish [\textit{tölpelhafter}]” than philosophers who try to pass off their own
This reflects, I think, an outgrowing of the mystical pathos as evidenced in the Birth, which the mature Nietzsche associates with a romantic, and thus decadent, outlook—a seeking of “metaphysical comfort”. Nietzsche came to associate the desire for mystical union with the morality of unselfing, that is, with a flight from our individuated condition.

But there certainly are discussions of such experiences in Nietzsche’s writing after The Birth, and not only in Zarathustra where they form a prominent theme.

One place where we can almost watch the ripening of these “overgreen personal experiences” is in a remarkable notebook from 1881. A full study of this notebook is not possible here. It is a very rich source that deserves greater scholarly attention, a point that Parkes made two decades ago and that has, as far as I can tell, gone largely unheeded. To Parkes’ discussion of a selection of some of these fragments in Composing the Soul, I intend only to add a few notes of especial relevance to our current discussion.

This is the notebook in which Nietzsche first discusses the eternal recurrence of the same, in a famous fragment that bears the annotation “6000 feet above the sea and far higher above all human things”. This was obviously of great importance to Nietzsche, for he discusses this note and the experience that occasioned it many years later in Ecce Homo.

But how Nietzsche spoke about it at that very time is of great interest, too. He writes in a letter to Gast:

“Well, my dear good friend! The August sun is overhead, the year passes on, the mountains and the forests become more quiet and peaceful. On my horizon, thoughts have arisen such as I have never seen before – I will not speak of them, but will keep my unshakable peace. I really shall have to live a few more years! Ah, my friend, sometimes the idea runs through my head that I am living an extremely

views as emerging from “cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic”. While mystics acknowledge their “inspirations”, philosophers offer rationalisations for their intuitions and “prejudices which they baptize “truths”” (BGE§5, p. 12).

There are exceptions to this. For example, in one later note Nietzsche defines the mystic as “someone with enough and too much happiness” and so “wants to give it away”. NF-1884,25[258]: “Begriff des Mystikers: der an seinem eigenen Glück genug und zuviel hat und sich eine Sprache für sein Glück sucht,—er möchte davon wegschenken!”


This explains why Zarathustra has sometimes been given equally prominence to The Birth in studies of Nietzsche and mysticism, for example in G. Parkes, “Nature and the Human Redivinised”, in J. Lippitt and J. Urpeth (eds.), Nietzsche and the Divine, Clinamen Press, pp. 181–199; and also in the papers of J. Stambaugh, The Other Nietzsche, SUNY Press, 1994 (from here on TON).


NF-1881,11[141].

EH§TSZ.1, p. 295f.
dangerous life, for I am one of those machines which can explode. The intensities of my feeling make me shudder and laugh; several times I could not leave my room for the ridiculous reason that my eyes were inflamed—from what? Each time, I had wept too much on my previous day’s walk, not sentimental tears but tears of joy; I sang and talked nonsense, filled with a glimpse of things which put me in advance of all other men…”

When Nietzsche writes here of his “unshakable peace”, he does not mean to refer to some quality of these experiences. He means that his silence about them, and not his tranquillity, is unshakable. In some way, Nietzsche felt that the recurrence was not his to teach, so he would not be moved to speak. As he later writes in the Genealogy, “it behoves me only to be silent; or I shall usurp that to which… only Zarathustra has a right.”

The lead up to this ecstatic fragment on the recurrence is hardly less stimulating. For example, near the beginning of the notebook, Nietzsche writes:

“The individual is an error… We are buds on a single tree—Stop feeling oneself as this phantasmic ego! Learn gradually to cast off the supposed individual… Realise that egoism is an error! [Den Egoismus als Irrthum einsehen]”.

Nietzsche continues by saying that altruism is the same error as egoism: altruism “would be the love of other supposed individuals!” The fragment then ends emphatically:

“No! Get beyond “me” and “you”! Experience cosmically! [Nein! Über “mich” und “dich” hinaus! Kosmisch empfinden]”.

In these notes, Nietzsche writes of possibility that if we investigated the “history of the sense of the I”, we would come to see “the error of the I” and suggests that we:

“Transform the sense of the I! Weaken the personal tendency! Accustom the eye to the actuality of things! For the time being look away from persons as much as possible”.

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255 August 14th, 1881; BVN-1881,136 (SL§90, p. 178); c.f. BVN-1885,599, a much later letter to Overbeck where he speaks of a similar kind of danger: “Meine Gefahr ist in der That sehr gross, aber nicht diese Art Gefahr; wohl aber weiss ich mitunter nicht mehr, ob ich die Sphinx bin, die fragt, oder jener beruhmte Oedipus, der gefragt wird…” This letter pre-empts the beginning of Beyond Good and Evil: “Who of us is Oedipus here? Who the Sphinx?” (BGE§1, p. 9).

256 This is by no means consistent. c.f. NF-1881,11[141] and TI§X.5 (p. 563) where he speaks of himself as “the teacher of the eternal recurrence”.

257 GM§II.25, p. 96.

258 NF-1881,11[7]; translation modified from CTS, p. 300.

259 NF-1881,11[21]; trans quoted in CTS, p. 302.
It is important to note—and Parkes does not—that this discussion of a transformed sense of self happens amidst a critical engagement with the work of Herbert Spencer. Spencer was the most popular English philosopher of the period, and it has been rightly argued by Moore that Nietzsche’s critique of Darwinism must be understood as developing in this context.

Like many “Darwinians” of the time, Spencer’s conception of evolution was one of moral progress. To mention only a few theses which Nietzsche expressly disagreed with in this notebook, Spencer held that egoism is the primitive condition, but evolution is tending toward the progressive adaptation of the individual to his social environment. Such adaptation, it was believed, would eventually lead to an ideal society in which egoism and altruism are reconciled, a society that is free from internal conflict, attuned to an “Absolute Ethics.”

Nietzsche’s discussion in these fragments of the “error” of altruism and egoism needs to be read in this light. Nietzsche contrasts Spencer’s ideal of “the greatest similarity of human beings”—described throughout this notebook in terms of the “herd”—with his own ideal of “constant dissimilarity and greatest possible sovereignty of the individual.”

Against Spencer’s view that egoism precedes altruism, Nietzsche argues that egoism is in fact a fairly recent development, and that altruism is the primitive condition for a social organism like man. He thus argues that Spencer’s ideal of “the complete adaptation of all to all [die vollständige Anpassung Aller an Alles]” is “a mistake [ein Irrthum]” and “the deepest degeneration [die tiefste Verkümmerung].”

Nietzsche ridicules that “these glorifiers of selection-purposiveness (like Spencer) believe they know what the favourable circumstances are for development!” In this note, he
goes on to say how this idea leads to the individual experiencing “bad conscience” whenever he creates or does anything for himself, a point that I will pick up in my discussion of Nietzsche on nursing (chapter IV). But let us point out now simply the critique of teleology here, a theme that is prominent throughout this notebook and elsewhere, and a point that is missed when Nietzsche’s Übermensch is conceived of Darwinistically.

The Darwinistic here is the teleological. Nietzsche’s conception of the higher man—in this notebook the *Sondermensch*—is not that of a historical inevitability; moreover, it is not a coming race, not the next phase in the evolution of mankind, but something that will always be exceptional: the “lucky strokes of evolution [die Glücksfälle der Entwicklung]”. As Nietzsche repeatedly stresses, there can be no exception without the rule.

In late note entitled “Anti-Darwin”, Nietzsche writes

> “Man as a species is not progressing. Higher types are indeed attained, but they do not last. The level of the species is not raised [der Mensch als Gattung ist nicht im Fortschritt. Höhere Typen werden wohl erreicht, aber sie halten sich nicht. Das Niveau der Gattung wird nicht gehoben].”

This compares with a passage from *The Antichrist*

> “Humanity does not represent a development for the better, does not represent something stronger or higher the way people these days think it does. “Progress” is just a modern idea, which is to say a false idea. […] Success in individual cases is constantly encountered in the most widely different places and cultures: here we really do find a higher type, which is, in relation to

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268 Nietzsche expressly rejects this reading in EH§Books.1, p. 261.
269 NF-1881,11[209].
270 See for example NF-1880,6[163] on this.
271 NF-1888,14[133]. Moore himself seems to make this mistake at the very end of his paper when he claims that Nietzsche conceives “of evolution as a progression towards… the perfection of egoism” and thus “in moral terms”. See: G. Moore, op. cit., p. 19; see also p. 9 for the source of the confusion. Moore is not only labelled *Hornvieh* for his conceiving of the herd-man as ideal, but for conceiving of the ideal as something attainable by the herd, by society. Nietzsche uses this same term “oxen [*Hornvieh]*” to describe those who interpret the Übermensch in Darwinian (i.e. teleological) terms. There can be no ‘herd of exceptions’, and exceptions will always be “lucky strokes”.
272 E.g. AC§57, pp. 646–647: “A high culture is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base; its first presupposition is a strong and soundly consolidated mediocrity […] Mediocrity… is the very first necessity if there are to be exceptions: a high culture depends on it”.
273 NF-1888,14[133] (WP§684, p. 363; the WP collection has [133] combined with [123]).
mankind as a whole, a kind of Übermensch. Such fortunate accidents of great success always have been possible and will always be possible…”

These passages bear repeating for Nietzsche is often confused with the utopians of the period. Nietzsche’s ideal is not of a single type. As he tells us in Twilight: “Let us finally consider how naïve it is altogether to say: “Man ought to be such and such!” Reality shows us an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms”

Parkes cites the following passage as seeming to “derive from a less than ordinary experience of being-in-the-world”: “it is a festival to go across from this world to the “dead” world… Let us not think of the return to the inanimate as a regression! We become quite true, we perfect ourselves…”

In another fragment in the same notebook, Nietzsche speaks of being “redeemed from life” and “becoming dead again” as a “festival”. Parkes connects this with Nietzsche’s notes on seeing impersonally as “seeing objectively [sachlich]”. This certainly seems right. Nietzsche describes how the dead world is “what is actual”, and says that it is “without error [ohne Irrthum]”, for it shows things as “force against force [Kraft gegen Kraft]”.

Of the dead world it is said that there is not only “no deceit” but “no desire” and “no pain”, which suggests that “crossing over” to the dead world may well be taking the position of a disinterested perceiver—a point that seems confirmed by other notes in the sequence, such as:

274 AC§4 (TPN, p. 571); the section continues by saying that “whole families, tries, or peoples may occasionally represent such a bull’s-eye”—which might be thought to be just such a ‘herd of exceptions’. But the point here is that these are especially fertile periods in history, not that these are in any sense the goal of evolution (let alone an inevitable one).
275 TI§V.6, p. 491. This ‘lavish play and change of forms’ suggests a morphological picture with a debt to both Goethe and Herder—and a pluralism that is often overlooked in studies of Nietzsche’s thought. C.f. NF-1887,11[226] (WP§339, pp. 185–186).
276 NF-1881,11[70]; trans. quoted in CTS, p. 303.
278 NF-1881,11[10]; trans. quoted in CTS, p. 300.
279 NF-1881,11[70].
280 NF-1881,11[70].
“To procure the advantages of one who is dead… to think oneself away out of humanity, to unlearn desires of all kinds: and to employ the entire abundance of one’s powers in looking. To be the invisible onlooker.”

Nietzsche claims that “we are” and “belong to” this dead world, and that “the living is not the opposite of the dead, but a special case [Das Lebende ist kein Gegensatz des Todten, sondern ein Spezialfall].” This suggests that the distinction between dead and living is just another of set the “false opposites” which Nietzsche seeks to undermine.

He also says that we need to think of “the universe… as a whole as being as far as possible from an organism.” Again, this is not a disparagement but a rare appreciation of the “inorganic”—which is not, he says, the motionless or inert [das Bewegungslose]. His targets here are those who would conceive of the universe as an organism, thus with a total sensorium—and, we might add, with purposes. As Nietzsche says in a much later note, we have falsely moved from part to whole in inferring that the universe itself is conscious; our evaluation of consciousness is much too high, and our appreciation for the inorganic much too low.

We see this in the following year, when some of these 1881 fragments are incorporated into a single section of *The Gay Science*.

“Let us beware.—Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed? How could it grow and multiply? We have some notion of the nature of the organic; and we should not reinterpret the

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281 NF-1881,11[35]; trans. quoted in CTS, p. 303. On disinterest, c.f. 11[50].
282 NF-1881,11[70].
283 NF-1881,11[150]; c.f. NF-1881,11[207,210].
284 NF-1881,11[140].
285 NF-1881,11[201].
286 NF-1881,11[150].
287 NF-1887,10[137] (WP§707, p. 376). It is not my intention here to simply run together the idea of the organic and the conscious, and the subsequent discussion and notes will make clear difficulties for the whole notion of the organic as opposed to the inorganic.
288 In the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, we read that “all becoming conscious involves a great and thorough corruption, falsification, reduction to superficialities, and generalization…” (GS§354, pp. 299–300); but here becoming conscious means that something “takes the form of words”, which is to say it makes general what is particular for the purpose of communicability (a point seen throughout the 1881 notebook). When Nietzsche says in this same section that we “lack any organ” for knowledge, he is not really positing a world behind which we cannot access—he explicitly says that “the opposition of ‘thing-in-itself’ and appearance” is a distinction which “we do not ‘know’ nearly enough to be entitled to”. The scare-quotes indicate his meaning. If consciousness is thought of in this way, then we see its enormous power: it gives us images of existence, it suggests ways of interpreting experience. It doesn’t merely clothe experience, but shapes it. And this shaping is not a distorting, as I argue below.
289 The overvaluation of consciousness is also the point being made in the *Zarathustra* passage on the despisers of the body. On Nietzsche’s valuation of the inorganic, see: G. Parkes, “Nietzsche’s Care for Stone: The Dead, Dance, and Flying”, in H. Hutter and E. Friedland (eds.), *Nietzsche’s Therapeutic Teaching*, Bloomsbury, 2013, pp. 175–190.
exceedingly derivative, late, rare, accidental, that we perceive only on the crust of the earth and make of it something essential, universal, and eternal, which is what those people do who call the universe an organism. […] Let us beware of saying that death is opposed to life. The living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type.\textsuperscript{290}

This section of \textit{The Gay Science} is also important because it is Nietzsche’s first published reference to the eternal recurrence\textsuperscript{291}, which, as we have seen, was born in these 1881 notes. The later answer to the diet of the universe is: “it lives on itself: its excrements are its food”\textsuperscript{292}. But even here, Nietzsche is not conceiving of the universe as an organism. The recurrence is, of course, the antithesis of teleology: the world so conceived is “without goal, unless the joy of the circle is a goal; without will, unless a ring feels good will toward itself…”\textsuperscript{293}

I have been examining the content and context of some remarkable fragments from one of Nietzsche’s 1881 notebooks, fragments which give us insight into his thinking about the relationship of part to whole, of individual to world.

The relationship between the ‘dead’ world and the ‘living’ is highly relevant to this conception, so it may prove helpful for me to say a little more on the question of truth and lie in the inorganic and organic. I think that Nietzsche’s comments in the notes discussed above on the “truth” and “objectivity” of the inorganic are somewhat misleading.

\textsuperscript{290} GS§109, pp. 167–168.
\textsuperscript{291} The most famous passage is obviously in GS§341 “What if, some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness” (p. 273), but this is prefigured in GS§109 where it is said that “the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune” (p. 168).
\textsuperscript{292} NF-1888,14[188] (WP§1066, p. 548).
\textsuperscript{293} NF-1885,38[12] (WP§1067, p. 550).
That the dead world is without dissimulation and error is not to say it is true. For one thing, it is partial; the inorganic excludes the rich perspectivity that develops out of it, whose very ambiguity and multiplicity is truth. In the 1881 notebook, we also read:

“The task: to see things as they are! The means: to be able to see with a hundred eyes, from many persons! It was a mistake to emphasize the impersonal and to characterize seeing with the eye of one’s neighbor as moral. To see from many neighbors and with purely personal eyes—that is the right thing. The “impersonal” is merely the personal weakened, something feeble: it can admittedly be useful every now and then, where there is a need for dispelling the clouding of passion from one’s vision.”

To see with many eyes is to see things as they are—not because these are summed together into an overall picture, but because this perspectivity belongs to the nature of things; the ability to see something through many eyes allows us to form new interpretations.

Some of his later comments on the inorganic and organic may be helpful here. In later notes, Nietzsche repeats the claim that “in the organic world, misunderstanding is absent, and communication seems perfect. It’s in the organic world that error begins.” But this is by no means a condemnation of the organic. Nietzsche also says that the fact that dissimulation... seems to be lacking in the inorganic world” shows that it occupies a lower

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294 Nietzsche elsewhere suggests the possibility that even the inorganic is not without interpretation. See: GS§374, p. 336: “how far the perspective character of existence extends or indeed whether existence has any other character than this; whether existence without interpretation, without “sense,” does not become “nonsense”; whether, on the other hand, all existence is not actively engaged in interpretation—...” This suggests another way of arguing to the same conclusion. Indeed, this position is a clear implication of the view that everything is will to power. We might be able to understand this in terms of Nietzsche’s more frequent claims that the nature of life is will to power—but remember again that Nietzsche has told us that the living is just a form of the dead (GS§109). Thus we are told that “the will to power interprets” (NF-1885,2[148] (WP§643, p. 342), that interpretation is universal. This view is also discussed elsewhere, e.g. NF-1886,5[12]—if the inorganic perceives and recognises, then it of course does so perspectively. We might say that since it lacks a sense of self, it cannot ask the question “what is that for me?” (NF-1885,2[149], WP§556). We might say its perspective excludes interpretation—but we might equally say it guarantees a certain mode of interpretation: that it sees as “force against force” is in a sense “without error” (NF-1881,11[70]), but the world is not mere force, it is interpretable force. This interpretation is not merely decorative—it in itself has the capacity to heighten force.

295 Here I disagree with Parkes, who has argued that the way things appear “Before Sunrise” is comparable with tathātā, suchness (i.e. ultimate nature). See: G. Parkes “Nature and the Human ‘Redivinized’”, op. cit., p. 192f. I think that Parkes’ reading has a good deal more in common with Nietzsche’s conception of a “temperate zone” in HH§236, p. 113 than it does with Nietzsche’s later thought where there is a movement south, away from ‘objectivity’ (which Nietzsche comes to see as itself a mask), and towards what is Mediterranean, full, ripe (c.f. BGE§295 and CW§3).

296 NF-1881,11[65]; trans. quoted in CTS, p. 303.  
297 This is often misunderstood with respect to the similar remark in the Genealogy: “There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective “knowing”; and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes; we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be...” (GMIII.12, p. 119). Nietzsche makes clear that these perspectives are incommensurable. See: NF-1888,14[93] (WP§568, p. 306): “the sum of these is in every case quite incongruent”.

298 NF-1885,1[28] (TLN p. 56).
order of rank than the organic: that there is an “increase in “dissimulation” proportionate to the rising order of creatures”, and that the highest types are the most artistic.

Error is a condition of life, but Nietzsche’s point seems to be that a disinterested perspective “can be useful every now and again”. These ‘crossings over’ into the dead world are not somehow the goal, but form a part of the economy of the lives of what Nietzsche will later call value creators. In the 1881 fragments, these are called the artists of the “images of existence”.

Nietzsche’s discussion here of many eyes, then, has to do with his appreciation of form-giving. That if one is able to see from many perspectives, one will be able to form new “images of existence [Bilder des Daseins]” which are described as “the most important thing there has ever been—they rule over humanity”.

Such new “images” or interpretations of existence come out of what we call—with the greatest naivety—‘altered states of consciousness’. These ‘states’ are altered not from the way things are—but from the conventional (herd) interpretation, what is sometimes called ‘consensus reality’.

Once again in strict contrast to Spencer, Nietzsche claims that new interpretations are desirable, not adaptation to the Zeitgeist. As Nietzsche will later write in the Genealogy (here explicitly rebutting Spencer), adaptation is “an activity of the second rank, a mere reactivity”. What is essential are the “form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions… “adaptation” follows only after this”.

It is a naivety to think that new interpretations are required because we have yet to stumble on the “true” one. The idea that there is only one true interpretation of reality is precisely what Nietzsche was combatting in the period. This would emerge as a major theme for the first time in the published works the following year in The Gay Science, where we read statements such as:

299 NF-1887,10[159] (WP§544, pp. 292–293); this point is also made in NF-1888,14[152] (WP§515, pp. 278–279).
300 C.f. NF-1881,11[162].
301 NF-1881,11[65].
302 NF-1881,11[21]: In Parkes’ abridged translation of this passage (CTS, p. 302), he excludes Nietzsche’s claim that “our inclinations and disinclinations are arable lands” from which the “fruits” of new “images of existence” come forth. This shows some more subtlety in Nietzsche’s idea that we should “for the time being look away from persons”: this vision of “things” is not dispassionate, even if distanced from our ordinary human desires.
303 GM§II.12, p. 79.
304 E.g. as we have seen, NF-1881,11[65]: “to see things as they are” is to see from many perspectives, “to see with a hundred eyes, from many persons”. 
“The greatest advantage of polytheism.—For an individual to posit his own ideal and to derive from it his own law, joys, and rights… One god was not considered a denial of another god, nor blasphemy against him. It was here that the luxury of individuals was first permitted… In polytheism the free-spiriting and many-spiriting of man attained its first preliminary form—the strength to create for ourselves our own eyes—and ever again new eyes that are even more our own…”

Because there were many gods, there was “a plurality of norms”. This is contrasted with monotheism where “the faith in one normal god beside whom there are only pseudo gods” led to the “rigid doctrine of one normal human type” which was “perhaps the greatest danger that has yet confronted humanity”. This seems to foreshadow Nietzsche’s later notes such as:

“…the untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false”

“One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain”

Nietzsche believed that monotheism leads to nihilism because it presents us with a single world-interpretation. This is especially so in the case of the Christian worship of truth, which eventually turns upon itself (i.e. it questions its own truthfulness). When this exclusive interpretation becomes untenable, it seems that no interpretation is possible.

II.3

Just what is it that Nietzsche experienced before that pyramidal rock on Lake Silvaplana that meant he was not only 6000ft above sea level but “far higher above everything human”? Was this a “mystical experience”? Was it not ‘simply’ that “it was then that the idea [of the recurrence] came”? Was it not ‘simply’ that this “thought arose” on his “horizon”? Such questions simply raise more, such as: what does it mean for a thought

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305 GS§143, pp. 191–192.
306 Ibid.
307 NF-1885,2[127] (WP§1, p. 7).
308 NF-1886,5[71] (WP§55, p. 35).
309 EHE§TSZ.1, p. 295.
310 BVN-1881,136 (SL, p. 177).
to occur to one? What does it mean, in particular, for such an abysmal thought to occur to one?

This experience may also have been the birth of Zarathustra: it is in this very 1881 notebook that Nietzsche first utters the name\(^{311}\). And so it may also be this particular experience that Nietzsche refers to in his poem “Sils-Maria”, originally published in his *Idylls from Messina* (1882) and before being appended to the second addition of *The Gay Science*:

> “Here I sat, waiting—not for anything—
> Beyond Good and Evil, fancying
> Now light, now shadows, all a game,
> All lake, all noon, all time without all aim.
> Then, suddenly, friend, one turned into two—
> And Zarathustra walked into my view.”\(^{312}\)

Notice that these are not really descriptions of the experience. Not only might that have to do with the fact that they are beyond or “close to the limits of communication”\(^{313}\), but that the experiences are no longer the goal. While in the *Birth*, such experiences are seen as redemptive, they are now seen as simply a part of a greater economy\(^{314}\).

The possibility of an altered experiential perspective is obviously important to the recognition—let alone the affirmation—of the eternal recurrence. In the “6000 feet” note of 1881, Nietzsche writes:

> “Our striving after seriousness consists in understanding everything as becoming, denying ourselves as individuals [*uns als Individuum zu verleugnen*], looking into the world through as *many* eyes as possible…, giving oneself over to life *from time to time* so that one can later rest one’s eyes on it”\(^{315}\).

It is notable that in many of these 1881 notes there is an emphasis on the usefulness of a temporary altered sense of identity and mode of experience\(^{316}\). This again shows that these “altered states” are not the *goal* but a part of the economy of value creators. Let us now

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\(^{311}\) NF-1881,11[195].

\(^{312}\) GS, p. 371; this gives us reason to think that the many such experiences described in TSZ are relevant and personal.

\(^{313}\) ASC§2, p. 18.

\(^{314}\) This poem suggests that Zarathustra “appeared” (or that the thought of the recurrence occurred) in the emptiness of such an experience—which is to suggest the role that such experiences play in the greater economy of the artist and philosopher.

\(^{315}\) NF-1881,11[141]; trans. quoted in CTS, p. 305.

\(^{316}\) NF-1881,11[21]: “for the time being”; [65]: “every now and again”; [141]: “from time to time”.

63
move away from the 1881 notebook and consider how this relates to the concept of the Dionysian.

Nietzsche later defines the Dionysian in a note as the “temporary identification with the principle of life.” The Dionysian is characterised here as a state. Nietzsche stresses the importance of these states, but this is not at all to say that he wills their hegemony. In a late note that appears to be a draft of the discussion of The Birth of Tragedy in Ecce Homo, Nietzsche writes:

“The word “Dionysian” means: an urge to unity, a reaching out beyond personality…; an ecstatic affirmation of the total character of life as that which remains the same, just as powerful, just as blissful, through all change; the great pantheistic sharing of joy and sorrow that sanctifies and calls good even the most terrible and questionable qualities of life; the eternal will to procreation, to fruitfulness, to recurrence; the feeling of the necessary unity of creation and destruction”.

This “reaching out beyond personality” is what we have been discussing. In this note, the Apollonian is characterised as “the urge to perfect self-sufficiency, to the typical “individual,” to all that simplifies, distinguishes, makes strong, clear, unambiguous…” Nietzsche clearly affirms these boundaries: our sense of isolation is a “powerful goad” toward distant goals. Individuation is not a mistake, is not to be rejected. It is the “antagonism” between these two forces that leads to development. The need for both the Apollonian and the Dionysian to dwell within the one soul is but one instance of Nietzsche’s understanding of the fertility of tension.

In the section of Beyond Good and Evil about the Dionysian encounter, Nietzsche says that Dionysus “…silences all that is loud and self-satisfied, teaching it to listen; … smooths rough souls and lets them taste a new desire—to lie still as a mirror, that the deep sky may mirror itself in them…” Once again, the emphasis here is on a transitory state. One is temporarily brought into a passive relation to existence as a corrective. Thus, Nietzsche writes that one is humiliated, and walks away “more unsure, tenderer, more fragile, more

317 NF-1883,8[14] (WP§417, p. 224); my emphasis.
318 For yet another example, see TSZ where Zarathustra teases himself for “still stretching, sighing, falling into deep wells” (“At Noon” p. 278). We might follow the thought of Zarathustra and say, as he did of woe: “to individuation too, you say: go, but return!” (“The Drunken Song” §10, p. 323).
320 NF-1884,26[231] (WP§686, p. 365).
321 In the published version, Nietzsche again acknowledges Heraclitus as his forerunner here: EH§BT.3, p. 273.
322 BGE§295, p. 233.
broken” but also “richer in himself… full of new hopes that as yet have no name, full of new will and currents…”; that is, this experience actually leads to enriched personality, not to a will to abide permanently in the formless, selfless state. In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche describes the “essential feature” of the “Dionysian state” as “the ease of metamorphosis, the inability not to react (similar to certain hysterical types who also, upon any suggestion, enter into any role)”324. In this section, the Dionysian is being contrasted with the Apollonian, and it is very clear that Nietzsche does not think that a permanent “Dionysian” suggestibility is desirable.

Indeed, we saw earlier in the same work that “the inability not to react to a stimulus” is “merely another form of degeneration”325. The very next section tells us of the need to be “rich in internal opposition”, and that “we have spiritualized hostility”326, and so we can see that this “degenerate” current may have a place in the economy of an individual amongst very different traits.

Still in *Twilight*, we read “that is the first preliminary schooling for spirituality: not to react at once to a stimulus, but to gain control of all the inhibiting, excluding instincts. Learning to see, as I understand it, is almost what, unphilosophically speaking, is called a strong will: the essential feature is precisely not to “will”—to be able to suspend decision. All un-spirituality, all vulgar commonness, depend on the inability to resist a stimulus: one must react, one follows every impulse…”327

This suggests that the ability to “cross over” into a dead, detached mode of experience is an essentially Apollonian, strong-willed (and so able to suspend the will) capacity. It is equally obvious here that eternal resistance is not what he is praising. As he says elsewhere:

“It is nothing to be as hard as a stoic; by dint of insensibility, one has detached oneself from everything. One must have the opposite in oneself—a tender insensibility and the opposite capacity…”328

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323 As we shall see in our discussion of fate, the desire for an enduring abdication of personality betrays an incomplete understanding of one’s relationship to the whole
324 *TI*, IX.10, p. 519.
325 *TI*, V.2, p. 487.
326 *TI*, V.3, p. 488.
327 *TI*, What the Germans Lack, §6, p. 511.
In a note from 1888 which explicitly links the Dionysian with *amor fati*, Nietzsche writes:

“Such an experimental philosophy as I live anticipates even the possibilities of the most fundamental nihilism; but this does not mean that it must halt at… a No, a will to negation. It wants rather to cross over to the opposite of this—to a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection—it wants the eternal circulation: —the same things, the same logic and illogic of entanglements. The highest state a philosopher can attain: to stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence—my formula for this is *amor fati*…”\(^329\)

Here the Dionysian is understood in its later sense (where it is contrasted not with the Apollonian but with the Crucified), which is not a state as it was in the *Birth* and in the late discussion of this same work which we just cited. Here the Dionysian is an attitude towards life, and this is an attitude that is doubtless encouraged by those Dionysian states. This later conception of the Dionysian is one that embraces polarity, encompassing both poles of the earlier Apollonian-Dionysian duality\(^330\).

This affirmation of the world without subtraction is a plainly mystical project. But in what way is this different from other mysticisms? In chapter V, I take up the topic of the ego – explore the ways in which Nietzsche’s embrace of individuality relates to his conception of the One and many. But now I turn to Nietzsche’s concept of perfection, which helps us to understand what he means in speaking of an affirmation of the world as it is.

II.4

In Dostoyevsky’s novel *Demons*, there is a passage in which Kirilov says to Shatov:

“There are seconds, they come only five or six at a time, and you suddenly feel the presence of eternal harmony, fully achieved. It is nothing earthly; not that it’s heavenly, but man cannot endure it in his earthly state. One must change physically or die. The feeling is clear and indisputable. As if you suddenly sense the whole of nature and suddenly say: yes, this is true. God, when he was creating the world, said at the end of each day of creation: ‘Yes, this is true, this is good.’ This is not tender-heartedness, but simply joy. You don’t forgive anything, because there’s no longer anything to forgive. You don’t really love—oh, what is here is higher than love! What’s most frightening is that it’s so terribly clear, and there’s such joy. If it were longer than five

\(^329\) NF-1888,16[32] (WP§1041, p. 536).

\(^330\) See chapter V for a discussion of the later concept of the Dionysian.
seconds—the soul couldn’t endure it and would vanish. In those five seconds I live my life through, and for them I would give my whole life, because it’s worth it. To endure ten seconds one would have to change physically. I think man should stop giving birth. Why children, why development, if the goal has been achieved?”

Nietzsche transcribed this passage in a late notebook entry. As a result, some have falsely attributed this to Nietzsche himself, including Haar in “Metamorphosis of the Divine” and Gillespie in “Nietzsche’s Musical Politics”. Haar says that he finds the text “surprising”—as one surely would if one thought Nietzsche wrote it. It is not that such rare moments are foreign to Nietzsche—he was surely familiar with these “great moments of grand harmony”, those “timeless moments that fall into one’s life as if from the moon”. Rather, aside from the style, it is the attitude towards completion and development that jars with Nietzsche’s thought. Take for example the crucial discussion of the Dionysian in Twilight:

“It is only in the Dionysian mysteries, in the psychology of the Dionysian state, that the basic fact of the Hellenic instinct finds expression—its “will to life.” What was it that the Hellene guaranteed himself by means of these mysteries? Eternal life, the eternal return of life; the future promised and hallowed in the past; the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change; true life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality. For the Greeks the sexual symbol was therefore the venerable symbol par excellence, the real profundity in the whole of ancient piety. Every single element in the act of procreation, of pregnancy, and of birth aroused the highest and most solemn feelings. In the doctrine of the mysteries, pain is pronounced holy: the pangs of the woman giving birth hallow all pain; all becoming and growing—all that guarantees a future—involves pain. That there may be the eternal joy of creating, that the will to life

332 NF-1887,11[337]; though Nietzsche does not give a reference, the surrounding notes make the attribution very clear.
333 N&M, p. 144.
335 NF-1884,26[119] (WP§259, p. 150).
337 C.f. TSZ “The Drunken Song” §9, p. 322.
may eternally affirm itself, the agony of the woman giving birth must also be there eternally.”  

For Nietzsche, becoming is perfection. Perfection is not static—and thus it cannot exclude ‘imperfection’; “imperfection…still belongs to this perfection”\(^339\). So, what is this life “beyond change” that Nietzsche discusses? It is not permanence per se, but permanence in impermanence\(^340\)—the only thing that endures is the flux itself. The “Dionysian state” is one of “identification with the principle of life”\(^341\)—that is, identification with the flux, with the becoming of what becomes\(^342\).

In another note, Nietzsche describes perfection as “necessarily overflowing all limits”\(^343\). That is, perfection is creative, generative. Perfection is not something that excludes change, and thus excludes the pains of growth and decay; rather, it is something that hallows those very pains. Nietzsche writes that outside of the reign of the ascetic ideal, “the act of procreation is… a sort of symbol of perfection”\(^344\). This valuation of becoming is at the heart of the Dionysian ‘faith’\(^345\)—and the contrast with Dostoyevsky is not unhelpful in seeing the contrast that Nietzsche intended to draw between his own philosophy and the Christian worldview\(^346\).

I have come across one fragment in the notebooks which I think is especially helpful for understanding Nietzsche’s relationship to mysticism\(^347\) – and also to understanding his conception of fate (which I explore in detail in chapter III). To this fragment we shall now turn.

**II.5**

In a note from 1884 titled “the German mystic”, Nietzsche writes:

\(^{338}\) TI§X.4, pp. 561–562.

\(^{339}\) AC§57 (TPN p.645): “The world is perfect”—thus says the instinct of the most spiritual, the Yes-saying instinct; “imperfection, whatever is beneath us, the pathos of distance—even the chandala still belongs to this perfection”…” C.f. NF-1887,7[62] (WP§331, p. 180) and NF-1888,11[30] (WP §1004, p. 520).


\(^{341}\) NF-1883,8[14] (WP§417, p. 224).

\(^{342}\) I expand on this in my discussion of fate in chapter III.

\(^{343}\) NF-1887,9[102] (WP§801, p. 422).

\(^{344}\) NF-1887,8[3] (WP§148, p. 94).

\(^{345}\) Though its embrace of becoming is not its only major feature. For one thing, the ‘this-worldliness’ of Nietzsche’s ‘mysticism’ in itself fails to differentiate it from, say, evolutionary panentheistic conceptions (common to, for example, Hegel and Teilhard, as well as the Up from Edenists of our own time). I take up a brief characterisation of the Dionysian in chapter V.

\(^{346}\) This is not to say, of course, that Christianity necessarily entails a preference of being to becoming – but this is the distinction as Nietzsche drew it between Dionysos and the Crucified. See: NF-1888,14[89] (WP§1052, pp. 542–543).

\(^{347}\) I initially encountered the note in Stambaugh’s paper “Amor Dei and Amor Fati”, where she quotes the final line of the fragment. See TON, p. 93.
“Great self-admiration and self-contempt belong together: the mystic feels now like God, now like worm. What is lacking here is self-esteem. It seems that modesty and pride are closely related to each other and are merely judgements according to where one looks. Common to both is the cold, sure look of valuation. Moreover, it is a good diet not to live amongst those with whom one cannot compare, whether from modesty or pride. This is an aristocratic diet. Selected company—living and dead.—Fate is an elevating thought for one who understands that he belongs to it.


Before going any further, I should say one thing about my translation here. The remark about the absence of “Selbst-Gefühl” could be understood as saying that they lack a “sense of self” (a literal interpretation of self-feeling), however this is plainly not what Nietzsche means here, as it is precisely these mystics’ convoluted pride that Nietzsche is commenting upon. I think that “self-esteem” is more commonly “Selbstwert” (self-worth), but Nietzsche never uses this term. “Selbstgefühl”, on the other hand, is used over a dozen times. For example, see the second essay of the Genealogy, where Nietzsche says that guilt first occurred in the relationship between creditor an debtor, and then says:

“Here likewise, we may suppose, did human pride, the feeling of superiority in relation to other animals, have its first beginnings. Perhaps our word “man” (manas) still expresses something of precisely this feeling of self-satisfaction: man

348 The root of the German and English is the Greek diaita, which means way of living, lifestyle; c.f. the use in BGE§47.

349 NF-1884,26[442]. Earlier in the same notebook, Nietzsche speaks of the “deep dreamy seriousness [tiefen träumerischen Ernst]” and “childishness [Kinderei]” of the German mystics. See: NF-1884,26[341].

350 NF-1887,11[325]—a criticism of “the good man”—speaks of “selbst Wert”, but in the sense of intrinsic value: “the question is whether these qualities [i.e. “integrity, dignity, sense of duty, justice, humanity, straightforwardness, good conscience”] are supposed to have value on account of their consequences, either for the bearer of these qualities or for the environment, for society, for “humanity”: or whether they have value in themselves” (WP§353, pp. 193–194).
designated himself as the creature that measures values, evaluates and measures, as the “valuating animal as such”…”\textsuperscript{351}

In this fragment, then, Nietzsche is saying that the mystic feeling godlike is the other side of their feeling wormlike—indeed, that they are proud of their wretchedness\textsuperscript{352}. Seeing the ego as something wretched, such a person cannot have simple, straight-forward self-esteem. Their pride is forced into convoluted forms, and so it turns against itself.

Nietzsche here mentions another way of conceiving the relationship of part to whole, an understanding of oneself as belonging to fate. That such a conception allows the possibility of a mysticism with self-esteem is a theme that I will develop in what follows. But before we get to that, let us look a little more into this fragment.

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It’s not clear to whom Nietzsche refers when he speaks of “the German mystics”. Does he mean Hildegard, Eckhart, Suso, Tauler, Mechtild, and Böhme? Of these, to my knowledge Nietzsche only refers to Eckhart and Böhme. Böhme is mentioned just once, in a notebook fragment criticising Novalis\textsuperscript{353}. Eckhart, on the other hand, is quoted in the Untimely Meditations and The Gay Science, and is also mentioned in the notebooks.

It seems quite clear that Schopenhauer is the main—but perhaps not the only—point of contact for Nietzsche with Eckhart. In the first volume of The World as Will, Schopenhauer speaks of “the German mystics, which is to say Meister Eckhart [\textit{der Deutschen Mystiker, also des Meister Eckhard}]”\textsuperscript{354}, and in the second volume, he refers to Eckhart as “the father of German mysticism [\textit{dem Vater der Deutschen Mystik}]”\textsuperscript{355}.

In “Schopenhauer as Educator”, Nietzsche writes of “the truthful man” that “he knows what Meister Eckhart also knows: ‘The beast that bears you fastest to perfection is suffering’…”\textsuperscript{356}. This is a line that Schopenhauer himself quoted in the second volume of World as Will\textsuperscript{357}.

\textsuperscript{351} GM§II.8, p. 70; see also BGE§201, p. 113 about the herd undermining the “self-confidence of the community”, and GS§3, p. 77 on the commoners’ “wisdom and pride [self-esteem]”.

\textsuperscript{352} This is a fairly common observation made of the ‘spiritual type’, where one finds those who make a great point of acknowledging their sinful nature, while harbouring the secret comfort that they, unlike the rest of us, are aware that they are sinners. These are the “pious prigs” decried by Hafez, which I discuss in chapter VI.

\textsuperscript{353} NF-1888,16[36]; in R.D. Gray’s Goethe as Alchemist, he makes rather a large deal of the relationship of Goethe to Bohme, despite a paucity of evidence.

\textsuperscript{354} WWRI§68, p. 414.

\textsuperscript{355} WWRII§48, p. 682.

\textsuperscript{356} UM§III.4, p. 153.

\textsuperscript{357} WWRH§48, p. 708.
In *The Gay Science*, we read “Hasn’t the time come to say of morality what Meister Eckhart said: “I ask God to rid me of God!””\(^{358}\). I have not found this line quoted in Schopenhauer, and it’s not clear where else Nietzsche may have encountered it. It is not known to what extent Nietzsche was familiar with Meister Eckhart. To my knowledge, he did not own the Pfeiffer edition of his works lauded by Schopenhauer\(^{359}\). We cannot discount the possibility that Nietzsche encountered this phrase through Wagner, for whom Eckhart was important in the mid-70s\(^{360}\).

Finally\(^{361}\), in a fragment we read that “Christianity has on its conscience corrupting many full people, e.g. Pascal, and earlier Meister Eckhart [Das Christenthum hat es auf dem Gewissen, viele volle Menschen verdorben zu haben z.B. Pascal und früher den Meister Eckart]”\(^{362}\).

The strongest indication that it is Eckhart that Nietzsche has in mind when speaking of “the German mystics” is that the analysis of guilt and pride in that fragment is similar to his discussion of Pascal: that he was a strong individual but lacked self-esteem, and so his pride had to affirm itself in self-denial. That is, his pride lacked good conscience. On Nietzsche’s reading, Pascal was Christianity’s “most instructive victim”\(^{363}\) in being seduced into the idea that there is only one desirable type—the selfless; and, being a strong individual, his attempt to imitate this led to the worst self-loathing: *the moi is always hateful*\(^{364}\).

Indeed, Pascal himself is another likely source of Nietzsche’s encounter with Christian mysticism. In *Zarathustra* we read:

> In every Now, being begins; round every Here rolls the sphere There. The center is everywhere. Bent is the path of eternity [In jedem Nu beginnt das Sein; um jedes Hier rollt sich die Kugel Dort. Die Mitte ist überall. Krumm ist der Pfad der Ewigkeit]”\(^{365}\)

Pascal says of “the reality of things [la réalité des choses]” that “it is an infinite sphere whose centre is everywhere and its circumference nowhere [c’est une sphère infinie dont le centre est

\(^{358}\) GS§292, p. 235 [TM].

\(^{359}\) E.g. WWRI§68, p. 408 and p. 414.


\(^{361}\) I say ‘finally’, however there *is* another mention of Eckhart in NF-1883,15[8], but this is a mere list and I do not think that much can be made of it (c.f. [60] in the same notebook).

\(^{362}\) NF-1884,26[3].


\(^{364}\) Quoted in CW.Epilogue, p. 191; I discuss this again in chapter IV.

\(^{365}\) TSZ, pp. 217–218.
partout, la circonférence nulle part]366. It is not entirely clear where Pascal encountered this saying367. But as for Nietzsche, it seems most likely that he encountered it in the *Pensées* rather than similar expressions in Eckhart, let alone the *Liber XXIV philosophorum*.

Let me note that it is altogether possible that Nietzsche means to refer to others when he speaks of “the German mystics”. Perhaps he means, for example, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, and Schleiermacher—who are described earlier in the very same notebook as “all theologians”368.

In a later note, Nietzsche writes that “nothing has happened since Pascal; the German philosophers aren’t to be considered against him”369. By this he means that they share Pascal’s evaluation of the *moi*370. This might at first seem confusing, given that these “romantics” seem to celebrate individuality. But this, Nietzsche is saying, is only superficial difference. They aren’t to be thought of in opposition to Pascal because there isn’t really self-esteem here. The self that is celebrated is a higher self. That is a point to which we shall return in our discussion of Nietzsche’s defence of egoism in chapter IV.

II.6

If we take Nietzsche’s comment on the German mystics and their lack of self-esteem to refer in part to Meister Eckhart, then we will benefit from a brief inquiry into the latter’s thought371. Even if the comment does not refer to Eckhart, such an inquiry will be helpful in clarifying Nietzsche’s position by contrast with a thinker to whom he has sometimes been compared.

In his commentary on the Gospel of John, Meister Eckhart writes

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368 NF-1884,26[8]; c.f. three notes after the “Selbst-Gefühl” fragment, Nietzsche writes “Schleiermacher: die deutschen Philosophen” NF-1884,26[445]. What is common to these thinkers if not an attitude towards Zerissenheit? C.f. my discussions in chapters IV and V.

369 NF-1885,44[2]; c.f. NF-1887,9[182] (WP§83, pp. 51–52) on Schopenhauer as a continuation of Pascal.

370 Nietzsche makes this point quite clearly with respect to Schopenhauer when he describes him as “a modern Pascal, with Pascalian value judgements without Christianity. Schopenhauer was not strong enough for a new Yes” NF-1887,10[5] (WP§1017, p. 525).

371 I by no means lay claim to having a comprehensive understanding of Eckhart’s writing. In particular, my acquaintance with the Latin works is quite poor. But I do have enough of a grasp of his thought to point out some major differences from Nietzsche—differences which have been overlooked by various “mediators” (GS§228, p. 212).
“To depart from the One is to fall from the True, from the Good, from God… Multitude, the opponent and adversary of the One, is always a sin, either of nature or of morality… Every sin in itself is “many”, even if it happens only once, because the many is a fall from the One and therefore from the Good, which is interchangeable with it…”372

Here we can see the Neoplatonism that runs through much of the Christian tradition. Differentiation is the fall. Eckhart concludes another sermon as follows:

“Dear children, I beg you to note one thing: I pray you for God’s sake, I beg you to do this for my sake and carefully mark my words. All those who are thus in unity, as I have described it, must not suppose that because they are free from ‘forms,’ such forms would be better for them than not departing from unity. To do so would be wrong and might even be called heresy: for you should know that there, in the unity, there is neither Conrad nor Henry. I will tell you how I think of people: I try to forget myself and everyone and merge myself, for them, in unity. May we abide in unity, so help us God. Amen”373

That is, the One is not many. To return to the One is, then, to retreat from the many.374

In his Commentary on The Book of Wisdom, Eckhart writes

“By the very fact of being created, a thing is differentiated, and because it is differentiated, it is unequal and multiple. For the created, by the fact that it is descended from the one and undifferentiated, falls away from the one and falls into differentiation and, consequently, into inequality. Conversely, the uncreated, since it has not fallen or descended from anything, remains in the fountainhead of unity, equality and nondistinction […]

Here again it is to be noted that from the very fact that creatures are many, differentiated, and unequal, it follows that God is undifferentiated, not many, and not unequal. It also follows that every created thing is in some way one, equal, and undifferentiated. The reason for all that has been said is that the higher by its nature always affects what is subject to it, but is in no way affected in turn by it, as is made

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clear in the treatise On the Nature of the Higher. Therefore God the creator affects all creation with His unity, equality, and undifferentiation.*375

Eckhart then quotes Proclus “all multiplicity shares somehow in the One”376. But how are we to understand this participation?

Eckhart and Proclus are both expressing what we would now call a panentheistic view, which has been defined as follows: “The Being of God includes and penetrates the whole universe, so that every part exists in Him, but His Being is more than, and not exhausted by, the universe”377. That the universe does not exhaust God means, in crude terms, that there is a “part” of God that lies “outside” of manifestation, as the ground of being378.

The similarity to Nietzsche’s view is evident: the One is wholly in each individual part, it is not divided amongst them: “the One descends totally into all things which are beneath it, which are many and which are enumerated”379. There are yet decisive differences: for Eckhart, the One is not exhausted by the totality of its parts, but exists also beyond the many. That is, the relationship between One and many is not entirely reciprocal. And in some sense, that undifferentiated, uncreated “part” is more essentially God:

“God’s house is the unity of His being. What is one is best all alone. Therefore unity stands by God and keeps God together, adding nothing. There He sits in His best part, His esse, all within Himself, nowhere outside…”380

This is certainly not to say to be confused with the view that the One is a one, a potential object of perception: “Some simple folk imagine they will see God as if He were standing there and they here. That is not so”381. Eckhart’s view is that God can be seen equally in everything—but never in his essence. To “see” God as he is in himself, one must withdraw entirely from manifestation. One must become nothing. When one is no longer a one,
there is only God: “… seize Him naked in his robing room, where He is uncovered and bare in Himself. Then you will “abide in Him.”…”

Nishitani claimed that there are affinities between Eckhart’s admonition to live “without why” and Nietzsche’s philosophy. But this is actually perhaps the clearest point of their disagreement. Eckhart’s movement is away from valuation, Nietzsche’s is toward it. Both deny anything ultimately purposive, but for Eckhart this is not a denial of an ultimate or absolute.

For Eckhart, all reasons and valuations are relational. Truth is found where there are no purposes or motives, in the “the ground that is groundless [den grunt, der gruntlos ist].” This is surely not Nietzsche’s view. For Nietzsche, there is not even the absence of a ground “beneath” the relative. There is only the relative—though just as the apparent world ceases to exist when we get rid of the real world, the relative loses its relativity when it loses its contrast with the ultimate.

In a much discussed late note, Nietzsche says that Nihilism means that “the goal is lacking; an answer to the ‘Why?’ is lacking…” He also tells us that nihilism is “ambiguous”, by which he means that there are different ways in which we might respond to this absence of an ultimate meaning.

Do we infer from this “that there is no meaning at all”? This is Nietzsche’s “pathological intermediate state”. This is based on our frustrated expectation that there is a single value to reality. Nietzsche discusses this in his analysis of why he felt Christianity ends in nihilism:

“The end of Christianity—at the hands of its own morality… The sense of truthfulness, developed highly by Christianity, is nauseated by the falseness and

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382 CMW sermon 63, pp. 318–319. C.f. sermon 53, p. 283. Note that this unveiling is simply not possible on Nietzsche’s conception of the One and many: the veils are indispensable, they are truth (see BGE§P). For Eckhart, subject/object considerations mean that we cannot unveil the One: we cannot experience God, but we can become so poor, so empty, that God experiences himself: “poverty of spirit means being so free of God and all His works, that God, if He wishes to work in the soul, is Himself the place where He works—and this He gladly does… So we say that a man should be so poor that he neither is nor has any place for God to work in. To preserve a place is to preserve distinction. Therefore I pray to God to make me free of God…” See: CMW sermon 87, esp. pp. 423–424.

383 Eckhart repeatedly uses both the phrase “sunder warumbe” and “obne warum”. See for example CMW sermon 13b, p. 110 and sermon 16, p. 125.


385 CMW sermon 80, p. 400.

386 TI§IV, pp. 485–486.

387 NF-1887,9[35] (TLN, pp. 146–147 [TM]; this note is divided up into several sections in WP—see Kaufmann’s footnote to WP§2, p. 9).
mendaciousness of all Christian interpretations of the world and of history; rebound from “God is truth” to the fanatical faith “All is false”. […] The untenability of one interpretation of the world, upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that all interpretations of the world are false”388

“One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain”389

But Nietzsche says that nihilism can also be “a sign of strength: the force of the spirit may have grown so much that the goals it has had so far (‘convictions’, articles of faith) are no longer appropriate”. One thus has the strength to “productively posit for oneself a new goal, a ‘Why?’, a faith”390

To adapt what Nietzsche says elsewhere: with the notion of perspectivity (by which I mean here: interpretation as a pre-condition of truth, not a veil over it), the whole idea of ultimate meaning loses its meaning—and so the lack of ultimate meaning “is no longer any reason for devaluing the universe”391 If we see that the notion of ultimate meaning doesn’t make sense, then we are not disappointed in its absence. We could say that the absence of ultimate meaning leads to the affirmation of relative meaning. However, we have to be careful not to understand the “relative” as a lesser substitute for the absolute. Nietzsche sees not only the necessity of the relative, but its divinity392.

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It is very easy to be beguiled by phrases in Eckhart like “the unity is the distinction, and the distinction is the unity”393 into thinking his conception of the One and the many is the same as the one we have been discussing. But comparative studies must be wary of paradoxical formulations, for they can all too easily lead to false agreement.

Both Eckhart and Nietzsche certainly attempt an affirmation of the whole. But the way that whole is conceived is quite different. The basic contrast between their views could

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388 NF-1885,2[127] (WP$1, p. 7).
389 NF-1886,5[71] (WP$55, p. 35).
390 NF-1887,9[35] (TLN, pp. 146–147 [TM]).
391 NF-1887,11[99] (WP$12, p. 13).
392 This may become clearer later in the present chapter when I briefly discuss Nietzsche’s relationship to the existentialists.
393 CMW sermon 66, p. 338.
incautiously be described as a contrast between panentheism and pantheism\textsuperscript{394}. The holograph can be used as a symbol for pantheism: the One exists \textit{in and only in} the many. But it cannot truly be used for panentheism, where the One exists \textit{as} the many, but also \textit{beneath} or \textit{beyond} the many.

Eckhart’s understanding of the part and whole is not wholly reciprocal. In the Commentary on the Book of Wisdom, Eckhart writes that “the parts, which are many, are secondary, to the extent that the perfection of the one universe requires them”\textsuperscript{395}. The parts have their value and being in terms of the whole, but—typical of Neoplatonic forms of panentheism\textsuperscript{396}—Eckhart explicitly denies the reciprocal of this.

This might begin to give us a sense of why Nietzsche thought Eckhart, like Pascal, had been “corrupted” by Christianity. If self-esteem requires the intrinsic value of individuals (i.e. the many), then we see that self-esteem is an impossibility for Eckhart.

For Eckhart, nothing has value in itself, except for the thing which is no-thing, God. In his Commentary on the Book of Divine Comfort, we read that “whatever comes with God is good, and is good only because it comes from God”\textsuperscript{397} and that “the goodness of this world is despicable and worthless: God alone is of value”\textsuperscript{398}

All things are equally devoid of intrinsic value. All things are to be loved equally because they equally contain God. As Eckhart puts it in a sermon:

“…we must take Him equally in all things, in one not more than in another, for He is alike in all things… If you want to take God properly, you should take Him equally in all things, in hardship as in comfort, in weeping as in joy, it should be all the same to you”\textsuperscript{399}

This also leads Eckhart to an un-self-centric morality:

“…it is necessary that you should make no distinction in the family of men, not being closer to yourself than to another. You must love all men equally, respect and regard them equally, and whatever happens to another, whether good or bad, must be the same as if it happened to you”\textsuperscript{400}

\textsuperscript{394} On Nietzsche’s understanding of pantheism, see NF-1886,5[71] (WP§35, p. 36).
\textsuperscript{395} Ibid., p. 472.
\textsuperscript{396} See J.W. Cooper, op. cit., p. 44; and on Eckhart specifically pp. 50–52.
\textsuperscript{397} CMW p. 547.
\textsuperscript{398} Ibid. p. 550.
\textsuperscript{399} CMW sermon 13a, p. 106.
\textsuperscript{400} Ibid., p. 105.
There is no self-privileging because the self has value only as the Self, in its ultimate identity with “the ground that is groundless”:

“...God is unseparated from all things, for God is in all things and is more inwardly in them than they are in themselves. That is how God is unseparated from all things. And man too should be unseparated from all things, which means that a man should be nothing in himself and wholly detached from self: in that way he is unseparated from all things and is all things. For, as far as you are nothing in yourself, insofar you are all things and unseparated from all things. And therefore, as far as you are unseparated from all things, insofar you are God and all things, for God’s divinity depends on His being unseparated from all things. And so the man who is unseparated from all things receives the Godhead from where God himself receives it”401

In a late note, Nietzsche writes

“Some sort of unity, some form of “monism”: this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity…”402

Eckhart’s view of the merely derivative value of the many can be seen in this. Individuals are expressions of God—“every creature is full of God and a book” and a “by-word [ein bîwort]”403. To say that every creature is a “by-word” might sound pantheistic, for the creature’s nature is the nature of the Word404. But the Word is only itself outside of all creatures, and thus we are told to return to the One, to the source that alone has value:

“...where creature stops, God begins to be. Now all God wants of you is for you to go out of yourself in the way of creatureliness and let God be within you. ... God desires you to go out of yourself (as creature) as much as if all His blessedness depended on it. My dear friend, what harm can it do you to do God the favor of letting Him be God in you? Go right out of yourself for God’s sake, and God will go right out of Himself for your sake! When these two have gone out, what is left is one and simple. In this One the Father bears His Son in the inmost source”405

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401 CMW sermon 49, p. 263.
402 NF-1887,11[99] [WP§12, p. 12].
403 CMW sermon 67, p. 345.
404 Indeed, each by-word is “His only-begotten Son”. CMW sermon 18, p. 134.
405 CMW sermon 13b, p. 110.
In this we can see the lack of self-esteem: one needs to derive one’s value _from the whole_, while in themselves, “all creatures are worthless”\(^{406}\). For Nietzsche, since the whole does not exist apart from the parts, the whole cannot be affirmed except in the expression of the parts. This is why “fate is an elevating thought to one who realises he belongs to it”. There is nothing “beneath” manifestation, hence the affirmation of the “ground” is ultimately the affirmation _of nothing_\(^{407}\). So far Eckhart might agree. But for Nietzsche, this is not “a nothing” that is “a something”\(^{408}\) —it is simply _nothing_.

Thus, Nietzsche is led to the affirmation of the relative world of valuations. But we must understand that relative valuation is not a substitute for absolute value. We can put this point in various ways, but one is to say: rather than seeing the relative as dependent on the absolute, the absolute and relative are reciprocally related—the absolute does not exist outside of the relative. Hence, the relative takes on an absolute value. Valuation becomes divine: “to this extent, nihilism, as the denial of a truthful world, of being, might be _a divine way of thinking_ [eine göttliche Denkweise sein]”\(^{409}\)

Unlike some Existential thinkers, the value of valuation for Nietzsche is not the defiant overlaying of meaning on a meaningless world\(^{410}\). Rather, our valuations _are_ the meaning of the world\(^{411}\).

In becoming value creators, we are participating in the essential character of the world:

“When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values; life itself values through us when we posit values”\(^{412}\)

Nietzsche would have us become value creators, whereas Eckhart asks us to shift away from relative valuation, to live “without why”:

“The just man… has no _why_ for which he does anything, just as God acts without why and has no why. In the same way as God acts, so the just man acts without

\(^{406}\) CMW sermon 49, p. 263.  
\(^{407}\) As Nietzsche writes in the _Genealogy_, “the desire for a _unio mystica_ with God is the desire of the Buddhist for _nothingness_” (GM§I.6, p. 32) and that man “rather will _nothingness_ than _not_ will” (GM§III.1, p. 97).  
\(^{408}\) CMW sermon 19, p. 140.  
\(^{409}\) NF-1887,9[41] (WP§15, p. 15).  
\(^{410}\) For Sartre, it is bad faith to believe in ultimate value, in something unchanging. We must acknowledge the relativity and contingency of our values. The debt, but also the difference, here should be clear.  
\(^{411}\) c.f. GS§374, p. 336.  
\(^{412}\) TI§V.5, p. 490.
why; and just as life lives for its own sake and asks no why for which to live, so the just man has no why for which to act.*413

Eckhart’s yes to everything is a form of detached indifference414: “it should be all the same to you”415. It is a yes-without-no416, mocked by Nietzsche in *Zarathustra* with the “Yea-Yuh” braying ass417. We are to act without why because we are to move toward the divine “spark” in us, and God is not motivated by *reasons*. God’s creation is “without why”. Thus Eckhart writes

“I will never pray to God for His gifts, nor will I ever thank Him for His gifts, for if I were worthy to receive His gifts He would have to give them to me whether He would or not. Therefore I will not pray to Him for His gifts, since He *must* give: but I will surely pray to Him to make me worthy to receive His gifts, and I will thank Him for being such that He has to give. Therefore I say, “God is Love,” for He loves me with the love with which He loves Himself: and if anyone deprived Him of that, they would deprive Him of His entire Godhead. Though it is true that He loves me with His love, yet I cannot become blessed through that: but I would be blessed by loving Him and be blessed in His love”418

The One *entails* the many: it has to overflow into creation, it cannot remain unmanifest. This view is common amongst Neoplatonists, though it is explained in various ways. It could be said that God did not *choose* to create a world, but rather this is in his *nature*. However, there is equally a concern to say that God was not *compelled* to create a world (for obvious reasons to do with omnipotence). Dionysius the Areopagite said that God created the world not from necessity or compulsion but from “*overabundance* [*huperplerei*]”419. But

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413 CMW sermon 43, p. 239.
414 See also CMW “On Detachment”, pp. 566–575.
415 CMW sermon 13a, p. 106.
416 Eckhart strikes me as quite singularly lacking in *resentiment*. But we might ask why this is. Is it not born of detachment (*abgeschiedenheit* and *gelassenheit*), based on a panentheistic understanding that one can stand outside of manifestation, that one can be released of all things? That is, is Eckhart’s equanimity not based on what would appear to Nietzsche as an “escape” from the “wicked game”, and thus a false understanding of one’s relation to that game (BGE§205, p. 125)? I do not mean to suggest that Eckhart was utterly remote from worldly concern (as, say, Nietzsche in his final years of illness—the seer and sage paraded by his sister). One need only look at Eckhart’s engagement with the Beguines to see why he is taken by some modern writers as a champion of ‘sacred activism’ (yes—so odious does our time find otium that it would compel even our mystics to be ‘activists’). But one can seem to have a foot on either side of the “wicked game”. This is suggested by an anecdote about Ignatius Loyola: it was suspected that the next pope would outlaw the Jesuits, and someone asked Ignatius what he should do were this to happen. Ignatius is said to have responded “give me fifteen minutes in the oratory and I shall be at peace with it”.
418 CMW sermon 77, p. 390.
Dionysius also speaks of this abundance as creating a “yearning” which “moved Him to exert the abundance of His powers in the production of the universe”\textsuperscript{420}.

In all of this suffering from overfullness, and needing outstretched hands, we see possibility of reading Nietzsche’s gift-bestowing virtue in kenotic terms—not to mention its involuntary, “useless” nature\textsuperscript{421}. But where there is not a One behind the many, from which it emanates, this simply does not make sense.

For Eckhart, the many are manifestations of the One. While for Nietzsche, the One only exists in the many. To live “without why” is to negate the basically perspectival, interpretive character of existence\textsuperscript{422}. It is actually to deprive the world of its divinity, which is in nothing but its multiplicity.

II.7

This differing attitude toward valuation proves important beyond the confines of a comparison of Nietzsche and Eckhart. Indeed, Davis points to something very similar in his “confrontation” between Nietzsche and Buddhist thought. For example, Davis writes in “Zen after Zarathustra”:

> “Ueda Shizuteru, Nishitani’s successor in the tradition of the Kyoto School, suggests rather that nihilism can be left behind, not when a new value or goal is willed, but when we are able to let ourselves be emptied of this demand for an

\textsuperscript{420} Ibid., p. 102. In a footnote to this, Rolt quotes Lady Julian of Norwich as saying: “There is a property in God of thirst and longing.”

\textsuperscript{421} This image of the self-emptying of the overfull recurs in the Dithyrambs, where we read “You are too rich / […] You want to give, to give away your overflow, / but you yourself are this overflow! / Be wise, you rich one! / First give yourself away, O Zarathustra! [Zu reich bist du / […] Du müßtest schonken, wegschenken deinen Überfluß, / aber du selber bist der Überflußigste! / Sei klug, du Reicher! / Verschenke dich selber erst, o Zarathustra]”. It also connects us with another note where Nietzsche writes that “the highest love of I, when it expresses itself as heroism, has beside itself a desire for self-destruction [Die höchste Liebe zum Ich, wenn sie als Heroismus sich äußert, hat Last zum Selbst-Untergange neben sich…]” (NF-1882,1[73]). Translating Selbst-Untergange as self-destruction means we miss the resonance with the prologue to Zarathustra: “Behold, this cup wants to become empty again, and Zarathustra wants to become man again” Thus Zarathustra began to go under [Also begann Zarathustra’s Untergang]\textsuperscript{421} (TSZ, Prologue §1, p. 10). In The Gay Science, Nietzsche speaks of the possibility of “a happiness that, like the sun in the evening, continually bestows its inexhaustible riches, pouring them into the sea, feeling richest, as the sun does, only when even the poorest fisherman is still rowing with golden oars!” (GS§337, pp. 268–269). In Zarathustra, this is described as a personal experience: “From the sun I learned this: when he goes down, overrich; he pours gold into the sea out of inexhaustible riches, so that even the poorest fisherman still rows with golden oars. For this I once saw and I did not tire of my tears as I watched it” (TSZ “Old and New Tablets”, §3, p. 198). But none of this demands a reading in terms of kenosis or emanation. As we have seen, on Nietzsche’s view, the One cannot empty into the many. It is not antecedent to them.

\textsuperscript{422} This point is made many times with respect to truth and appearance, for example BGE§34, p. 46.
answer to the “why,” that is, when we learn to live “without why” (ohne _Warum_)...”

“Nietzsche defines nihilism as a devaluation of our highest values that results from decadence and weakness of will. Accordingly, he argues that “overcoming nihilism” demands a revaluation of all values out of a revitalized strength of will. This is not, however, either the first or the last possible understanding of “nihilism” and its “overcoming.” According to Heidegger, thinking in terms of “values” is itself a symptom of nihilism, insofar as it centers the world on the perspective of the subject and his evaluating will [...] the very attempt to “overcome” nihilism is misguided, “not because it is insuperable, but because all willing-to-overcome is inappropriate to its essence.” Attempting to willfully overcome nihilism by means of positing new values would, then, be like trying to put out a fire with kerosene...”

In what sense does Nietzsche attempt to “overcome nihilism”? As we saw above, he does not attempt to enforce meaning upon a meaningless world. Rather, he overcomes the whole movement of thought that led to the idea that the world _is_ meaningless: “what is pathological is the tremendous generalisation, the inference that there is no meaning at all”

Nihilism is “a pathological intermediate state” between the belief in ultimate value and the affirmation of valuation. In the intermediate state, there is the sense that the world _should_ have ultimate meaning—and this expectation is frustrated. Nihilism is overcome by understanding that ultimate meaning is incoherent, and so that life lacks this ultimate meaning “is no longer any reason for devaluing” life: rather than taking us back to a world of ultimate meaning, he shows us that ultimate meaning is not consistent with the perspectival character of life, and so its absence is not an objection to existence. There are many existentialist attempts to patch over ultimate meaning with relative or constructed meaning, and this approach may well simply fan the flames of nihilism—but offering such substitutes is not Nietzsche’s point.

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N.B.: in what follows, I do not dispute the interpretation of Buddhism that seems broadly shared by Parkes and Davis. To do so would undoubtedly be possible, but is not my intention.
426 NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 13).
But is Davis not right in seeing that Nietzsche’s philosophy “centers the world on the perspective of the subject”? This might be so even if—as Davis acknowledges—Nietzsche breaks with the “ontology of the “subject””, and conceives of the individual as multiplicity.

Perhaps a brief look into the debate of Parkes and Davis on Nietzsche’s relationship to Buddhist thought will bring this point out more clearly. Davis writes:

“...ultimately the Auseinandersetzung comes down to the question of the will, that is to say, to a confrontation between Nietzsche’s radical affirmation and Buddhism’s radical negation of the will”\textsuperscript{427}

Davis appeals to what he sees as common ground between Buddhism and Heidegger: that releasement from will is the only way to overcome nihilism, while the creation of new values is only an aggravation.

Further, while “the “ego” as a given substantial entity... exists for Nietzsche no more than it does for Buddhism”\textsuperscript{428}, Davis claims that there is a basic difference in the response to this situation:

“...while for Nietzsche there is no ego as a given, there is the task of constructing an ego, of organizing the plurality of disparate impulses by submitting them to the rule of a commanding will to power. Buddhism, on the other hand, speaks directly against the willful construction of an ego, and indeed sees the task to be that of uprooting the ruling will behind this construction...”\textsuperscript{429}

In Parkes’ response to Davis, he questions Davis’ “ruling will refrain”\textsuperscript{430}. I believe Parkes is right to do so. That is, Davis is unconvincing in claiming that Nietzsche finds desirable a single commanding will to power—rather than, say, a political structure. Indeed, the rich multiplicity of the “individual” in Nietzsche’s philosophy is something that Parkes had done a great deal to enrich our understanding of a decade earlier in his book \textit{Composing the Soul}.

Parkes summarises the confrontation as it is put forward by Davis “while Nietzsche is intensely concerned with “the task of constructing an ego,” Buddhism is dead against such a project”. But, Parkes asks, “where do you get this idea about Nietzsche?” , claiming that

\textsuperscript{427} B.W. Davis, “Zen After Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 90.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid., p. 112.
\textsuperscript{429} Ibid., p. 112.
Nietzsche “never talks about the task of constructing an ego”\textsuperscript{431}. On Parkes’ understanding, the will is not ego driven. The “ego” is not—and should not be—a single “ruling will”, but a multiplicity of wills that we confuse for a unity.

Responding to Parkes, Davis acknowledges that “the ego itself is a composite of multiple drives, but each of these is a force of will to power that can well be characterized as egoistic in the sense of self-centered and self-assertive over others: “every drive is a kind of lust to rule […] each one has its perspective that it would like to compel all the other drives to accept as a norm”…”\textsuperscript{432}

This understanding of egoism-as-self-centredness is important, and points to what I take to be the real source of the confrontation here. To see this, we might look at an earlier section of Davis’ response in which he discusses Nishitani:

“The standpoint of play reached by Heraclitus and Nietzsche, Nishitani says, falls short of what Zen calls the “samādhi of play” (yuge-zammai), insofar as “it does not include the other-centeredness in which the self becomes ‘empty’ and makes all others its master,” and therefore does not “attain to the true self-centeredness of an absolute emptiness that, in supporting all things, becomes [as Zen master Linji says] a master wherever it may be and makes true wherever it may stand. However one looks at it, the standpoint of Heraclitus and Nietzsche remains a standpoint of ‘will,’ not the standpoint of emptiness”…”

Davis continues:

“According to Mahāyāna Buddhism, there are two heterogeneous kinds of forces that can unify the life stream of an individual: egoistic craving or altruistic vow; blinding passions or liberating wisdom; selfish karma or selfless compassion. Here we are confronted with an either/or, one that indeed defines the basic teachings of Buddhism…”\textsuperscript{433}

The difference that Davis is pointing to here relates to the path of “liberation”: “can we get all the way to a Buddhist nonegoism by way of affirming egoism?”\textsuperscript{434}. Davis wonders whether the Bodhisattva ideal can be reached “by way of self-overcoming as will to power”\textsuperscript{431}. G. Parkes, “Open Letter”, op. cit., p. 43; This raises difficult questions about the notion of “self-creation” in Nietzsche which I have not got the space to deal with here, but about which I shall have much to say on another occasion.


\textsuperscript{433} Ibid., p. 69.

\textsuperscript{434} Ibid., p. 74.
or whether one has to “twist free of the will to power”. He writes that “for Buddhism, in order to attain true wisdom and compassion, a radical negation is required, a break with, an overturning of willful, karmic existence”.

Parkes points out that it is surely an impossibility to “twist free of the will to power” if—as Nietzsche claims—everything is will to power. Further, Parkes writes “Yes, the ego is a composite of drives, but what’s the point of calling them “egoistic” when Nietzsche doesn’t, and when he consistently distinguishes between the ego and the drives?”

Parkes is right here, but perhaps we may understand Davis’ point as being simply that the ego—as a composite of drives—is, in Nietzsche’s thinking, right in being preferentially concerned with itself. Thus Davis quotes the line from The Gay Science:

“Egoism is the law of perspective applied to feelings: what is closest appears large and weighty, and as one moves farther away size and weight decrease.”

Davis writes that

“The “non-ego” that appears after this disintegration of the willful ego is not a matter of sheer extinction, but is, in Nishitani’s words, “the self that is not a self.” Such a non-ego would no longer be centered on its self-interests, but would be capable of compassionate altruism, of giving without return.”

This attitude toward self-centeredness is, I believe, the major source of the confrontation between Buddhism and Nietzsche. While Parkes will show—and there is much to be said for this point—that this “giving without return” is essential to Nietzsche’s idea of the Übermensch, I think that this must not be understood as altruism. In fact, this is a point which Nietzsche stresses. Nietzsche thinks that we always misunderstand our benefactors in considering them to have made sacrifices for us, when in fact their giving comes of their

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435 Ibid., p. 70.
439 Ibid., p. 112.
441 I discuss this at much greater length with regards to whole and holy selfishness and nursing in chapter IV.
pursuit of their individual tasks; their intentions are not charitable, the pressure of overfullness creates a need for outstretched hands.

I think this is a point at which Parkes’ interpretation struggles. Parkes speaks of Nietzsche “consistently” drawing a “distinction between ego and Self”. But Self gains a capital where ego doesn’t, suggesting a self/Self (or lower/higher, relative/absolute) distinction that simply is not there in the original.

Similarly, Parkes writes that “Nietzsche advocates a “whole and holy” selfishness that is opposed to one that is egocentric and “sick”...” This suggests that that the self-centric is essentially sick, while the Self-centric is whole and holy. But in the original, “whole and holy” and “sick” are both forms of selfishness —the sick one is not an egoism and the other a selfishness.

Indeed, even the ego/self distinction to which Parkes appeals is by no means consistently made by Nietzsche. For example, Nietzsche’s persistent fight against the “morality of unselfing” is a rejection of the loss of ego, personality. When he says it is a “selfless” morality, he means that it entails “the loss of a center of gravity, “depersonalization” and “neighbor love”...

It strikes me as rather funny to find myself in a position of arguing for the claim that Nietzsche was a defender of egoism, this being one of the few parts of the popular image of Nietzsche that is not wildly inaccurate.

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442 TII.IX.44, p. 548.
444 Ibid., p. 88.
445 I discuss the self/Self distinction in greater detail with respect to Bucke later in the present chapter.
446 The most famous place where such a distinction could be thought to be made is in “On the Despisers of the Body” in Zarathustra (pp. 34–35), where it is said that the body “does not say “I”, but does “Ich” [die sagt nicht Ich, aber ich Ich]. He goes on to name the body the self, and describes the self as “saying” to the I (the conscious “instrument” or organ of the organism) what to feel. (If we are finicky, the distinction here is actually one of I/self, not ego/self—though all three terms are used interchangeably in other contexts, in accord with our everyday speech). Selfishness, then, on such a definition, would be especial concern for one’s organism, or, rather, the organism which is “doing” one. One could speak of a yet “greater reason”, the whole environment (or Self), which could be thought of as “doing” one’s self (body/organism). One could speak of the need to privilege that one’s self, while the self could be conceived as a mere “instrument” of this Self. I say one could—but Nietzsche does not. Whether such a position is broadly consistent with Nietzsche’s thought is not something I can take up in detail here. However, reasons for doubting this may emerge in considering his denial that the universe can be thought of as a whole or as an organism—a point which I discuss in chapter III.
448 EH§Destiny.7, p. 333.
449 In fairness to Parkes, he explicitly says that he does not deny an egoistic current in Nietzsche’s thought, but that his intention is to correct an imbalance by pointing out an aspect of Nietzsche’s thought which “most commentators overlook”. G. Parkes, “Final Words”, op. cit., p. 83.
In an unpublished note, Nietzsche writes: “I fight the thought that egoism is harmful and reprehensible: I want to give egoism a good conscience [Ich bekämpfe den Gedanken, daß der Egoismus schädlich und verwerflich ist: ich will dem Egoismus das gute Gewissen schaffen]”\(^{450}\)

Nietzsche disparages the conception of the ego “taken in an atomistic sense” and where it is “pried out of becoming, as something that is a being”\(^{451}\). But this is not at all the same as disparaging egoism, self-privileging, perspective optics\(^{452}\). The place Nietzsche makes this clearest is, I think, in section five of “Why I Write Such Good Books” in Ecce Homo, where he writes “there are neither egoistic nor unegoistic acts: both concepts are psychological absurdities” before immediately saying:

“The Circe of humanity, morality, has falsified all psychologica through and through—moralizing them—down to that gruesome nonsense that love is supposed to be something “unegoistic.”—One has to sit firmly upon oneself, one must stand bravely on one's own two legs, otherwise one is simply incapable of loving”\(^{453}\)

From what we have seen above, it seems that we should understand egoism as self-centeredness. That is, as preferential concern for oneself—oneself not as a metaphysical entity, but as a composite of drives that is ultimately incapable of being disentangled from the whole, but is still relatively isolable\(^{454}\).

This allows us to make sense of what Davis refers to as a “great and finally unresolved tension”\(^{455}\) in Nietzsche’s thought: on such an understanding, Nietzsche is indeed an

\(^{450}\) NF-1882,16[15]. C.f. NF-1888,15[98] (WP§918, p. 486): “For what does one have to atone most? For one's modesty; for having failed to listen to one's most personal requirements; for having mistaken oneself; for having underestimated oneself; for having lost a good ear for one's instincts: this lack of reverence for oneself revenges itself through every kind of deprivation: health, friendship, well-being, pride, cheerfulness, freedom, firmness, courage. One never afterward forgives oneself for this lack of genuine egoism: one takes it for an objection, for a doubt about a real ego”.

\(^{451}\) NF-1887,10[57] (WP§786, p. 413).

\(^{452}\) C.f. NF-1881,11[14]: “The I—not to be confused with the organic feeling of unity [Das Ich—nicht zu verwechseln mit dem organischen Einheitsgefühl]”. We might say of this sense of unity that “instinct speaks quite correctly here. Where this instinct weakens—where the individual seeks a value for himself only in the service of others, one can be certain that exhaustion and degeneration are present”. NF-1887,9[30] (WP§785, p. 413).

\(^{453}\) EH.Books§5, p. 266. This is also very clear in NF-1887,10[136] (WP§682) where he moves from discussing the illusory nature of the ego to a statement about the ultimate value of the individual; I discuss this fragment below.

\(^{454}\) C.f. NF-1888,14[80] (TLN, p. 247; WP§693, p. 369 excludes this line): “If A exerts an effect on B, then only as localised [lokalisiert] is A separated from B”; i.e. cause and effect are conventionally separated parts of a single process. C.f. BGE§21, p. 29: “One should use “cause” and “effect” only as pure concepts, that is to say, as conventional fictions [konventioneller Fiktionen] for the purpose of designation and communication—not for explanation…”

\(^{455}\) B.W. Davis, “Reply to Graham Parkes”, op. cit., p. 65.
egoist—and yet there is no conflict here with his denial of the existence of a substantial ego.

II.8

Writing of Nietzsche’s affirmation of everything, Richardson acknowledges the similarity to mystical thought. However, he writes, “mysticisms commonly promote a ‘not-willing’ and selflessness, so how can the value monism be consistent with Nietzsche’s advocacy of willing and selfishness?”456 We are now in a position to begin our own answer to this question457.

Nietzsche writes in a note: “I may become the Buddha of Europe, which would of course be the opposite of the Indian one”458. Without denying that Nietzsche’s understanding of Buddhism was very limited, there is still something here. Indeed, I think this holds even when one considers Mahayana Buddhism, which is typically considered the most fertile place for comparative study459.

The interpretation of “Nietzsche as advocate of the Bodhisattva ideal”460 does not sit comfortably for me. Before I make clear why, let me give a very rough gloss of what is meant by the term Bodhisattva.

In Theravada Buddhism, the term connoted a person who was on the path of liberation, prior to becoming an enlightened Arhat. But in Mahayana Buddhism, the Bodhisattva became the ideal. This is often explained in mythological terms as the enlightened being’s compassionate refusal to dwell in Nirvana and decision to instead return to Samsara in order to save other beings from suffering.

The popular conception of the Bodhisattva is akin that of a martyr, sacrificing his own eternal bliss in order to work for the salvation of others. But does the Bodhisattva “sacrifice” Nirvana, or is this simply how such compassionate action inevitably appears to the unenlightened? Such a commitment may reflect the realisation that there is no block between this world and the world to come. This is of course the “this-worldly” aspect of

457 I say more about this later with respect to antipathy and the Dionysian in chapter V.
458 NF-1882,4[2]: “Ich könnte der Buddha Europas werden: was freilich ein Gegenstück zum indischen wäre”.
459 Though I haven’t seen this undertaken in any detail, fertile comparison could also be undertaken with Vajrayana, where the Buddha sheds his peasant clothes and takes up royal robes (c.f. Nietzsche’s philosophy of mask), and where the ‘middle way’ doesn’t seem to be about moderation—meden agan—but both extremes in series.
Mahayana Buddhism, which is expressed in various ways, including Nagarjuna’s remark in the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* that there is “not the slightest difference whatsoever” between Samsara and Nirvana\(^{461}\) and the final lines of Hakuin’s “Song of Meditation”:

> “This very earth is the Lotus Land of Purity,  
> And this body is the body of the Buddha”\(^{462}\)

One can see why this offers a place of comparison with Nietzsche\(^{463}\), especially with sentiments such as Zarathustra’s beseeching us to “remain faithful to the earth”\(^{464}\). However, there are important differences. Even with this “this-worldly” reading, the emphasis is upon saving others. Disciples in certain traditions will routinely recite the Bodhisattva vows, including the vow to “save” sentient beings, innumerable though they may be. This salvific work can take many forms. It can be direct proselytising, attempting to enlighten others and thus relieve them of their suffering from a mistaken sense of identity. Or it can be action that helps to reduce more crude forms of suffering. Indeed, the Bodhisattva is often taken as a model for social and environmental activism.

There is a marked difference here to what Nietzsche calls the “masters of ceremony of existence [*den Festordnern des Daseins*]” who, far from awakening others, seek to “preserve the universality of dreaming”\(^{465}\). If there is a Nietzschean or Dionysian mysticism, then it is certainly not to be conceived along the lines of “mystic warriors” or “sacred activists”\(^{466}\). Rather, it is a mysticism that is firmly self-centric.

This might seem to us a contradiction in terms. Isn’t mysticism the recognition that one, as a separately existing self, doesn’t exist? Doesn’t it lead to a recognition of the others’ suffering as my suffering, a recognition of the other as “not not-I, but… I once more”?\(^{467}\) Doesn’t this jettison the very possibility of the privileging of self? It is just this that I hope to challenge in what follows.

**II.9**

Sometimes there are very positive things said about self by mystics—but ordinarily this is a so-called ‘higher self’ (or ‘absolute self’, ‘Self’) praised by the ‘lower self’ (or ‘relative self’),

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\(^{461}\) This is Inada’s translation, quoted in B.W. Davis, “Zen after Zarathustra”, op. cit., p. 98.


\(^{463}\) Salomé already associated this idea with Nietzsche in the 1890s. See: L. Andreas-Salomé, op. cit., p. 136.

\(^{464}\) TSZ Prologue §3, p. 13.

\(^{465}\) GS§54, p. 116.

\(^{466}\) To borrow from the titles of recent works by pop-mystics Matthew Fox and Andrew Harvey. I take up the topic of the relationship between mysticism and activism in Appendix B.

or an appreciation of the lower from the perspective of the higher. Let us take for example Bucke’s discussion of this theme in *Cosmic Consciousness*, where he quotes Shakespeare’s 62nd sonnet:

“Sin of self love possesseth all mine eye,
And all my soul, and all my every part;
And for this sin there is no remedy,
It is so grounded inward in my heart.
Methinks no face so gracious is as mine,
No shape so true, no truth of such account;
And for myself my own worth do define,
As I all other in all worth surmount.
But when my glass shows me myself indeed,
Beated and chopp’d with tann’d antiquity,
Mine own self love quite contrary I read;
Self so self loving were iniquity.
’Tis thee (myself) that for myself I praise,
Painting my age with beauty of thy days”468

Bucke comments on this sonnet that “the duality of the person writing is brought out very strongly” in this poem. He continues:

“When he dwells on his Cosmic Conscious self he is, as it were, lost in admiration of himself. When he turns to the physical and self conscious self he is inclined, on the contrary, to despise himself. He is at the same time very much and very little of an egotist”469

That is, Bucke describes “the author”—he doesn’t name Shakespeare, because he has Baconian sympathies—as lacking self-esteem but having Self-esteem. Bucke then relates this to Whitman, whom he knew personally and saw as his “most perfect” example of cosmic consciousness470:

“Whitman’s admiration for the Cosmic Conscious Whitman and his works (the “Leaves”) was just such as pictured in this sonnet, while he was absolutely devoid of egotism in the ordinary way of the self conscious individual. It is believed that

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469 Ibid.
470 Ibid., p. 186.
the above remarks would remain true if applied to Paul, Mohammed or Balzac. Reduced to last analysis, the matter seems to stand about as follows: The Cosmic Conscious self, from all points of view, appears superb, divine. From the point of view of the Cosmic Conscious self, the body and the self conscious self appear equally divine. But from the point of view of the ordinary self consciousness, and so compared with the Cosmic Conscious self, the self conscious self and the body seem insignificant and even, as well shown in Paul’s case, contemptible.\footnote{Ibid., p. 145.}

This thickens the description somewhat. Here Whitman is said to not only have Self-esteem but to esteem the self from the perspective of the Self. But there is still no self-esteem here: that is, “he was absolutely devoid of egotism in the ordinary way.”\footnote{Compare Smullyan’s comment on this same passage in Bucke: “the Superior Self respects both the Superior Self and the Inferior Self, whereas the latter respects only the former...” See: R. Smullyan, “Cosmic Consciousness”, in \textit{Who Knows?: A Study of Religious Consciousness}, Indiana University Press, 2003, pp. 118–119.}

Is this really common to all mystics—to all who, as Nietzsche put it, “experience cosmically”?\footnote{NF-1881,11[7].} Why can’t the individual esteem his individuality outside of those moments of “identification with the principle of life”?\footnote{NF-1883,8[14] (WP§417, p. 224).}

This is just what is suggested by Nietzsche’s discussion of the German mystics’ lack of self-esteem when he writes that “Fate is an elevating thought for one who understands that he belongs to it”. That is, one overcomes the worm-god dualism that Nietzsche considers typical of these mystics by realising that even in one’s individuality, one is an expression of the whole.\footnote{I do not mean to imply here that the One/many relationship discussed is required to have a ‘relative’ appreciation of the ‘relative’ self. Also, the term ‘expression’ is chosen carefully, so as not to imply something existing antecedently that manifests itself in the part (that is what Nietzsche means by \textit{mode} in what follows).} On Nietzsche’s understanding of the One and the many, there is nothing \textit{wormlike} about individuation.\footnote{Indeed, the ‘inferior self’ might realise that there is no whole apart from the parts—no ‘superior self’ independent of the ‘inferior’, that is, no “whole that is infinitely superior” and of which he is a “mode” or manifestation.\footnote{We might wonder whether Nietzsche’s conception of One and many undercuts the distinction between self and Self. Would it not follow that self \textit{is} Self? Is this not common to mystical views? Is this not, for example, the Upanishadic identification of Atman and Brahman? Let us be a little careful here not to lose sight of all differentiation in our enthusiasm.\footnote{NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 12).}}}
Sometimes Nietzsche is thought to be taking a view akin to Bucke’s, where it is the \textit{Self} that is esteemed and not the \textit{self}\textsuperscript{478}. I think this is quite mistaken, however finding the right vocabulary for disambiguating positions on this point is quite difficult. This is also the case with the Romantics who often use terminology very close to Nietzsche’s own. For example, in Schlegel’s \textit{Fragments}, we find the following:

\begin{quote}
“IIndividuality is precisely what is original and eternal in man; personality doesn’t matter so much. To pursue the cultivation and development of this individuality as one’s highest calling would be a divine egoism [\textit{ein göttlicher Egoismus]}”\textsuperscript{479}
\end{quote}

Commenting on this fragment, Izenberg writes

\begin{quote}
“[This egoism] was not mere narcissism because it transcended the particular self even while constituting it. Fichte’s “absolute I” was the inescapable human structuring of the world of experience, a general principle. Nevertheless, Schlegel believed the transcendental ego was also and just as inescapably the foundation of the unique and concrete self. Whether or not Fichte understood the absolute I as a psychological concept\textsuperscript{480}, something inhering in each individual, Schlegel came explicitly to understand it this way…”\textsuperscript{481}
\end{quote}

Superficially, Schlegel’s “divine egoism” sounds similar to Nietzsche’s “whole and holy selfishness”. Indeed, Nietzsche comes even closer to Schlegel’s vocabulary when he speaks of “divine selfhood [\textit{göttliche Selbstitigkeit}]}” in a note slated for the “main chapter” of his \textit{Revaluation}:

\begin{quote}
“How, under the impress of the ascetic \textit{morality of unselfing [der asketischen Entselbstungs-Moral]}, it was precisely the affects of love, goodness, pity, even those of justice, magnanimity, heroism, that were necessarily misunderstood: It is richness in personality, abundance in oneself, overflowing and bestowing, instinctive good health and affirmation of oneself, that produce great sacrifice and great love: it is strong and godlike selfhood from which these affects grow, just as
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{478} For example, we saw above that Parkes attributes such a view to Nietzsche in his debate with Davis.


\textsuperscript{480} For Fichte, the self is what is original—it is what creates the non-self (what Fichte calls the world), and so does not exclude the non-self. But, as Cooper says, Fichte “strongly distinguishes finite egos from Absolute Ego even though he locates all finite entities within Absolute Ego” (J.W. Cooper, op. cit., p. 94). For discussion of Fichte’s position here, see: M. Bykova, “The Self as the World Into Itself: Towards Fichte’s Conception of Subjectivity”, in D. Breazeale (ed.), \textit{Fichte, German Idealism, and Early Romanticism}, Brill, 2010, pp. 131–147; and also: D. Breazeale, “Check or Checkmate? On the Finitude of the Fichtean Self”, in K. Ameriks and D. Sturma (eds.), \textit{The Modern Subject: Conceptions of the Self in Classical German Philosophy}, SUNY Press, 1995, pp. 87–114.

surely as do the desire to become master, encroachment, the inner certainty of having a right to everything.\textsuperscript{482}

The contrast between Nietzsche’s position and Schlegel’s should be obvious when these phrases are read in their context. To begin with, Schlegel’s egoism is one in which “personality doesn’t matter much [\emph{der Personalität ist so viel nicht gelegen}]”\textsuperscript{483}, while the Nietzsche means by egoism precisely the “richness of personality [\emph{der Reichthum an Person}]”. Schlegel is evidently talking about the identification of self with Self; thus it is an egoism that is truly “godlike”; we might say it is Self-centric. Nietzsche’s position is self-centric: he wants “to give egoism a good conscience”\textsuperscript{484}; he wants the individual to feel that he has a “right to everything” in becoming himself, in pursuing his tasks.

In a letter to Zelter, Goethe describes the Schlegel brothers’ art as “egoism coupled with weakness [\emph{Egoismus, mit Schwäche verbunden}]” and says of Friedrich Schlegel that he “suffocated from his rumination of ethical and religious absurdities\textsuperscript{485}. Nietzsche later drew on this letter in his critique of Wagner\textsuperscript{486}. We might think of Schlegel’s attitude here as typical of \emph{romanticism}, recalling Goethe’s expression that “what is classical is healthy; romantic, sick [\emph{Klassisch ist das Gesunde, romantisch das Krankel}]”\textsuperscript{487}. It is romantic not only because it perceives a problem in man’s relationship to nature, because it is acutely aware of the torn-apartness of reality\textsuperscript{488}; but also because it places this wholeness \emph{outside} of the parts. This is its weakness. That it then identifies the part \emph{with} this higher whole—that is its egoism.

\textsuperscript{482} NF-1887,10[128] (WP§388, pp. 208–209).
\textsuperscript{483} Another literal translation would be: the individual isn’t very important/opportune.
\textsuperscript{484} NF-1882,16[15]. Cf. NF-1888,15[98] (WP§918, p. 486): “For what does one have to atone most? For one’s modesty; for having failed to listen to one’s most personal requirements; for having mistaken oneself; for having underestimated oneself; for having lost a good ear for one’s instincts: this lack of reverence for oneself revenge itself through every kind of deprivation: health, friendship, well-being, pride, cheerfulness, freedom, firmness, courage. One never afterward forgives oneself for this lack of genuine egoism: one takes it for an objection, for a doubt about a real ego”.
\textsuperscript{485} “so erstickte doch Friedrich Schlegel am Wiederkäuen sittlicher und religiöser Absurditäten”. October 20, 1831. Kaufmann’s translation, from NPPA, p. 380.
\textsuperscript{486} See CW§3.
\textsuperscript{487} M&R§1031; but Goethe also spoke of overcoming the division between the two: “\textit{Es ist Zeit, daß der leidenschaftliche Zwiespalt zwischen Classikern und Romantikern sich endlich versöhne}”.\textsuperscript{488} Speight writes “For Schlegel, a fragment as a particular has a certain unity ([\emph{a}] fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog,” \textit{Athenaeumsfragment 206}, but remains nonetheless fragmentary in the perspective it opens up and in its opposition to other fragments. Its “unity” thus reflects Schlegel’s view of the whole of things not as a totality but rather as a “chaotic universality” of infinite opposing stances”. See: A. Speight, “Friedrich Schlegel", in E.N. Zalta (ed.), \textit{The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy} (Winter 2016 edn), <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2016/entries/schlegel/>.\textsuperscript{489} J.F. Dienstag, \textit{Pessimism: Philosophy, Ethic, Spirit}, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2009, p. 278f. How the idea of Nietzsche’s One and many is reflected in his aphoristic style is an important topic, and a contrast with Schlegel—but also with Dienstag’s ‘pessimists’—on this point would be very interesting.
Schlegel’s transcendental ego is a true self *behind appearances*. So, the idea of “divine egoism” is vastly different from the egoism of Goethe and of Nietzsche. I explore Nietzsche’s views on egoism at more length in chapter IV.

In the *Conversations*, Goethe says of Schlegel’s criticisms and admirations of the great writers that “Schlegel’s own person [*eigenes Persönchen*] is not lofty enough to comprehend such lofty natures”—Schlegel for whom the person did not matter! Goethe also says of Schlegel that “of course, he is not a man in many respects” before going on to praise his scholarly achievements. This reminds me of the discussion in *Beyond Good and Evil* of the scholar as a selfless man, where he is described as “only an instrument; ... he is no “end in himself”...”; he is "no goal, no conclusion and sunrise, no complementary man [*complementärer Mensch*] in whom the rest of existence is justified". I take up this theme of the complementary man in my discussion of polarity and the Dionysian in chapter V.

In chapter III, I inquire into Nietzsche’s conception of *fate*, which allows me to further develop many of the ideas first articulated in the present chapter. It is perhaps indeed in these writings on *fate*—and not writings explicitly about mysticism—that Nietzsche’s conception of the relationship between part and whole takes its clearest form.

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489 Indeed, Goethe was critical of such a search for a true self. See for example CWG for April 10 1829: “Altogether, man is a darkened being; he knows not whence he comes, nor whither he goes; he knows little of the world, and least of himself. I know not myself, and God forbid I should!” C.f. M&R§442, M&R§657, and also the following poem: “Know myself?—what profit could that bring? / I’d shudder at myself and flap my wing, / And fly ten leagues away from such a hateful thing [Erkenne dich! — Was soll das heißen? / Es heißt: sei nur und sei auch nicht! / Es ist eben ein Spruch der lieben Weisen, / Der sich in Kürze widerspricht]” (Blackie’s trans.; see J.S. Blackie, *The Wisdom of Goethe*, William Blackwood and Sons, 1883, p. 29).

This is also, no doubt, a critique of the intellectual emphasis of a lot of these thinkers. Let us recall that is just what Nietzsche was pointing to in speaking of Goethe and bodily skill (TI§IX.49). Romanticism is an intellectual return to nature—it is ‘anaemic’, sick. See my discussion of this in chapter I, perhaps especially the footnote on Hegel and Rousseau and the opposite directions that such an evaluation can take.

490 CWG March 28, 1827.

491 CWG April 24, 1827.

492 BGE§207, p. 128.
Chapter III: Fate

III.1

In his discussion of Nietzsche’s fatalism, Leiter offers an analysis of “several related concepts that may seem to be in play”: classical determinism, classical fatalism, and causal essentialism. Leiter defines classical determinism as the view that “for any event $p$ at a time $t$, $p$ is necessary given the totality of facts prior to $t$, together with the laws of nature”. Then he defines classical fatalism as the view that “whatever happens had to happen”, a view which “involves some sort of non-deterministic, perhaps even non-causal, necessity”. Finally, Leiter defines causal essentialism as the view that each living organism has “essential properties” which “non-trivially determine the space of possible trajectories” for that organism.

Leiter writes that “Nietzsche’s fatalism… involves only causal essentialism. Nietzsche is neither a classical determinist nor a classical fatalist”. On Leiter’s view, then, Nietzsche’s belief in fate is in a restriction in the range one’s possibilities, and not in the determination of any one possibility.

In a criticism of Leiter’s analysis, Solomon writes that Nietzsche’s fatalism “consists almost entirely of his intimate and enthusiastic engagement with what Leiter calls “classical fatalism”…”. Solomon gives the following analysis of classical fatalism:

“The view here is that one’s fate is fixed—but the path taken to arrive there is not necessarily. If one tries, like Oedipus, to avoid one’s fate, one will find that whatever path one takes leads inexorably to this very fate.

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494 Ibid., p. 213.
496 Ibid., p. 66.
Both of these views conceive of fate as something outside oneself. On Leiter’s reading, fate is something which constrains one’s possibilities. On Solomon’s, fate is an end toward which one is lured.

I do not think that either of these are promising readings. It is my contention that we think of the individual’s relationship to fate in terms of the Goethean conception of One and many discussed above. I believe that this helps us to make sense of a good deal of textual evidence that has to be set aside in more cautious interpretations, such as those just mentioned 497.

I shall turn to that evidence shortly, but I should first like to pause to clarify some of the terminology used in Nietzsche’s writings about fate.

Nietzsche uses many different terms in his discussion of fate which often require disambiguation, including fatum, Schicksal, Verhängnis, Fatalität, Fluch, and Zufall. I do not mean to claim that these are all technical terms, applied with rigor and precision, but they can give quite different resonances 498. Let us take the very beginning of Ecce Homo as an example: “The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality… [Das Glück meines Daseins, seine Einzigkeit vielleicht, liegt in seinem Verhängniss…]” 499.

In his commentary on this section, Leiter writes:

“Though Nietzsche, indeed, thinks himself wise, clever, and the author of good books, there is nothing, in fact, self-congratulatory about his answer to the question why he is so wise, so clever, and the rest. This is because the argument of Ecce Homo is imbued with the fatalism we have seen Nietzsche embraced elsewhere.”

Leiter then quotes the line under discussion and says:

“…the answer to the apparently self-congratulatory ‘why’ questions is roughly this: ‘It was a lucky fact of nature that I, Nietzsche, was a healthy organism, that is, the

497 For example, neither Leiter nor Solomon so much as mention Russian or Turkish fatalism (which I discuss briefly below).
498 I had originally followed this with a discussion at some length of these terms and their uses, but this proved excessively microscopic and distracting from our larger discussion. I hope that this single example will demonstrate the importance of sensitivity to this nuance. I owe my appreciation of this point to Stambaugh, especially in her discussions of Zufall (cited below).
499 EH§Wise.1, p. 222.
type of creature that instinctively does the right things to facilitate its flourishing’…”500

There is more to bemoan here than the torturous nature of Leiter’s paraphrase. In this passage, *Verhängnis* clearly has the sense of misfortune. The term is often translated into English as *doom*, *curse*, or *calamity*; and *Unglück* is given as a synonym. Kaufmann’s translation here as *fatality* gets at this ‘negative’ sense501.

Nietzsche is not saying here what Leiter awkwardly puts into his mouth, but simply: “my good fortune lies in my misfortune”. The context makes this very clear: the passage is discussing Nietzsche’s life as a “double man” whose ascent and descent are bound together, whose poor health and decadence have been the very preconditions of his self-overcoming and his philosophy. This is, of course, a point Nietzsche emphasises elsewhere:

“That I have often asked myself whether I am not more heavily indebted [verpflichtet] to the hardest years of my life than to any others… As for my long sickness, do I not owe it indescribably more than I owe my health? I owe it a higher health… I also owe my philosophy to it”502

We also see this ‘negative’ sense of *Verhängnis* quite clearly elsewhere503. Consider the discussion in *Ecce Homo* of how Zarathustra deals with that “most abysmal idea” of the eternal recurrence:

“The psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how… the spirit who bears the heaviest fate, a fatality of a task, can nevertheless be the lightest and most transcendent—Zarathustra is a dancer… [Das psychologische Problem im Typus des Zarathustra ist, wie der… das Schwerste von Schicksal, ein Verhängniss von Aufgabe tragende Geist trotzdem der leichteste und jenseitigste sein kann — Zarathustra ist ein Tänzer…]”504

Kaufmann’s translation here (as above) picks up on the sense of the fatal as the calamitous: “the quality of causing death or disaster”505. This is not fate in some neutral sense, but *doom*.

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501 Compare this with the more neutral sense of *Schicksal* and *fatum*. *Fluch* in German can have a more ‘negative’ resonance than ‘fluke’ tends to have in English. Thus, it is that in *Zarathustra* we hear “Just now my world became perfect; midnight too is noon; pain too is a joy; curses too are a blessing [Fluch ist auch ein Segen]; night too is a sun...” (TSZ “The Drunken Song” §10, p. 323). These are also the terms used in *Ecce Homo* when Nietzsche speaks of his earlier denial of an “intelligible world” and says that it is unclear “whether this will prove more of a blessing or a curse for humanity [ob mehr zum Segen oder zum Fluche der Menschheit]” (EH§HAH.6, p. 289).
502 NCW§E.1, p. 680; translation modified.
503 Another clear example is GS§324.
504 EH.TSZ.6; GM&EH, p. 306.
505 OED definition 3.
So we understand here that Zarathustra’s fate as teacher of the eternal recurrence is heavy—it is a calamitous task. Nietzsche certainly saw this “fatality of a task” as being his own. It is in this spirit, I think, that—upon sending the final sections of *Zarathustra*—he wrote to Malwida von Meysenbug:

“…this is the agony of every great teacher of mankind; he knows that under certain circumstances and accidents he can become a calamity [*Verhängnis*] for humanity as well as a blessing…”

Sensitivity to such nuance will help us in what follows, as we move on to consider some of Nietzsche’s most difficult passages on the individual’s relationship to fate.

### III.2

In a note from the mid-80s, Nietzsche writes

“To show the enormously chance character of all combinations: from this it follows that every action of a human being has an infinitely great influence on everything to come. The same veneration that one, looking backward, dedicates to the whole of fate, he has to dedicate to himself as well. *Ego fatum*.”

On the basis of notes such as this—and following the work of Nishitani—some scholars have sought to make sense of the idea of fate as identity.

Stambaugh has argued that Nietzsche develops a “conception of fate, destiny, and necessity not as something outside or above us to which we are subject, but as something within us, as our innermost being.”

A similar interpretation has also been sketched by Haar. For example, in “The Critique and Subversion of Subjectivity”, Haar writes

“The ego that is capable of seizing upon, and living through, the diversity of conditions and philosophies is also the most apt at feeling “the cosmic link,” i.e.,

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506 Against the idea that this is “the doctrine of Zarathustra” (EH§BT.3) and not Nietzsche’s own, see: TI§X.5. In fact, this is already stated in the famous “6000ft” note: “What will we do with the rest of our lives? ... We teach the teaching” (NF-1881,11[141]). For a related discussion, see Loeb, *The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra*, Cambridge University Press, 2010, p. 12.

507 BVN-1884,498; quoted in NPPA, p. 448.


509 Nishitani says the following of “Nietzsche’s idea that “self is fate” (*ego fatum*): “Every action of the self in this context is influenced by all things and in turn influences all things. All things become the fate of the self, and the self becomes the fate of all things. At such a fundamental level the world moves at one with the self, and the self moves at one with the world. This idea is close to the Buddhist idea of *karma*...” (See: K. Nishitani, op. cit., pp. 49–50).

not only experiencing itself in its inseparable connection with the chain of all living beings and will all historical ascendancy, but also understanding that it is part of the universal fatum, that it is this fatum. *Ego fatum.*"\(^{511}\)

In another paper by Haar, “Life and Natural Totality”, we read:

“In formulas such as *ego fatum* or *amor fati*, who is the subject? Is it not, just as much, *fatum*? For “love” in *amor fati* is not, contrary to what Heidegger thinks, the supreme effort of the will in willing the “highest object”, the totality of beings in their continual return. This “desire of destiny” does not have merely the sense of an “objective” genitive, but also of a subjective one, inasmuch as it is the totality itself, the “fatum,” that takes this desire or this will upon itself… The unreserved affirmation of the *fatum* means the *fatum* affirms itself through “me”.

[...]

In the formula *ego fatum* it is impossible to separate what belongs to the “subject ego” and what belongs to the *fatum*, which is no “object,” but more intimately the “subject” than the subject"\(^{512}\)

I think that Stambaugh and Haar are right that *ego fatum* means that the ego is not something fated, but that the ego *is fate*. I will try to make sense of this position below, taking into account textual evidence that has not been considered before.

But I will also raise concerns for their interpretation of fate as “innermost being” and “more intimately the “subject” than the subject”. In brief, I suggest that we think of fate as *identity* without thinking of it as *ultimate* identity.

●

*Ego fatum.*

The phrase is dark—darker even than Heraclitus’ *ethos anthropoi daimon*.\(^{513}\) It is not a phrase Nietzsche uses often\(^{514}\), however we do find a number of similar expressions in the drafts of *Zarathustra*. In one note, we find the phrase “I as fatum [*Ich als fatum*]”\(^{515}\). In a plan for

\(^{511}\) M. Haar, “Critique and Subversion of Subjectivity”, N&M, p. 87; the thought here that the part is the whole is highly suggestive and is something I will try to make sense of below.


\(^{513}\) CXIV. Kahn (A&TH, pp. 80–81) translates this as “Man’s character is his fate”. See also Kahn’s commentary, pp. 260–261. It would be easy enough to interpret these as synonymous, but my suggestion is that they are quite different indeed.


\(^{515}\) NF-1883,16[83], c.f. [64].
the third part of *Zarathustra*, we read: “hymn to the primordial nature. “I as fatum” [Hymnus auf die urbestimmte Natur, „ich als fatum”]"516. The meaning here perhaps becomes clearer when Nietzsche writes in another plan517: “praise the primordial nature as fatum [Lob der urbestimmten Natur als fatum]”518. Considering fate as “primordial nature” perhaps suggests that it is the “principle of life” with which one temporarily identifies in the Dionysian state519. In these notes, we also find “I am the fatum [Ich bin das Fatum]” twice520, the latter of these in the same notebook as the ego fatum fragment.

The very next notebook is the one in which Nietzsche speaks of the lack of self-esteem of the German mystics and concludes that “fate is an elevating thought for one who understands that he belongs to it”521.

In that same notebook522, Nietzsche also writes the three stages on the way to wisdom (the overcoming of morality): worship and assimilation, iconoclasm and independence, and the great responsibility and innocence. These of course are familiar to us as the three metamorphoses of spirit in *Zarathustra*: the camel, the lion, and the child. Nietzsche says of the man of the third and final stage that “he… doesn’t feel humiliated by fate: he is fate [er… fühlt sich nicht gedemüthigt unter dem Schicksal: er ist Schicksal]”523. Fate becomes uplifting when one no longer feels under [unter] it, or subjected to it, but realises that one is it.

III.3

Throughout Nietzsche’s discussions of fate, two different interpretations recur. We might call these interconnection and interpenetration. These can be illustrated using two passages from *Twilight*:

“The single one is a piece of fatum from the front and from the rear, one more law, one more necessity for all that is yet to come and to be. To say to him, “Change yourself!” is to demand that everything be changed, even retroactively”524

“The single one, the “individual,” as hitherto understood by the people and the philosophers alike, is an error after all: he is nothing by himself, no atom, no “link in

516 NF-1883,20[3].
517 In both of these plans, as in NF-1883,16[83] and NF-1883,17[69], this hymn is slated to end the third part of *Zarathustra*, as the “Yea and Amen Song” does in the published version.
518 NF-1883,22[2].
520 NF-1883,21[1] and NF-1884,25[249].
521 NF-1884,26[442]. I have discussed this note at some length in the foregoing.
522 In this notebook see also [181] where Nietzsche titles a “Hymn to fate and the happiness of irresponsibility [Hymnus auf das fatum und das Glück der Unverantwortlichkeit]”.
523 NF-1884,26[47–48].
524 TF§V.6, p. 491.
the chain,” nothing merely inherited from former times; he is the whole single line of humanity up to himself.\footnote{TI\S IX.33, p. 534 [TM: WK gave “the single human being” here for \textit{der Einzelne}, and “the single one” in the next passage; I have standardised it here to make the contrast clearer].}

That one is a \textit{piece} of fate suggests that one is a link in the chain (interconnection). But then we hear that one is no link but that one \textit{is} the chain (interpenetration).

As I say, both interpretations can be found throughout Nietzsche’s discussion of fate. The interconnection interpretation is suggested by the Zarathustra’s “Drunken Song”:

\begin{quote}
  “Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes too to \textit{all} woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if ever you said, “You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!” then you wanted \textit{all} back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored—oh, then you \textit{loved} the world…”\footnote{TSZ “The Drunken Song” \S 10, p. 323.}
\end{quote}

All things are “\textit{verkettet}”—enchained, chained together. This sounds like links in a chain, like the assertion of the \textit{inseparability} of distinct things: if you lift one, then the rest follow\footnote{This is how the recurrence has typically been interpreted. I discuss this briefly with respect to Ansell-Pearson below. Another passage that suggests a similar reading is NF-1886,7[38] (WP\S 1032, pp. 532): “nothing is self-sufficient, neither in us ourselves nor in things; and if our soul trembled with happiness and sounded like a harp string just once, all eternity was needed to produce this one event—and in this single moment of affirmation all eternity was called good, redeemed, justified, and affirmed” (c.f. EH\S BT.2, p. 272: “Nothing in existence may be subtracted, nothing is dispensable”).}. The \textit{ego fatum} fragment can also be read in this way, since it says that “every action of a human being has an \textit{infinitely great} influence on everything to come”\footnote{NF-1884,25[158].}. This view is articulated quite clearly in a note which reads:

\begin{quote}
  “Very few are clear as to what the standpoint of \textit{desirability}, every “thus it should be but is not” or even “thus it should have been,” comprises: a condemnation of the total course of things. For in this course nothing exists in isolation: the smallest things bear the greatest… Every critique of the smallest thing also condemns the whole…”\footnote{NF-1886,7[62] (WP\S 331, p.180). Yet in that same notebook, we find a note similar to those I will discuss below. NF-1886,7[2] (WP\S 678, p.359): “Man is not only a single individual but one particular line of the total living organic world [\textit{Der Mensch ist nicht nur ein Individuum, sondern das Fortlebende Gesammt-Organische in Einer bestimmten Linie}].”}
\end{quote}

The word rendered “bears” here is \textit{trägt}, which is related to the English \textit{drags}. Nietzsche is saying that the smallest “part” (he simply says \textit{das Kleinste}, the smallest) \textit{drags} the whole
along with it—as link does chain. This isn’t interpenetration (the part contains the whole) but interconnection (the part affects the whole).

The interpenetration interpretation seen in the *Twilight* statement that the individual is “no link in the chain” can be found even more explicitly in a series of notes from that period:

“The ego is a hundred times more than merely a unit in the chain of members; it is this chain itself, entirely *[Das ego ist hundert Mal mehr als bloß eine Einheit in der Kette von Gliedern; es ist die Kette selbst, ganz und gar]*”\(^{530}\)

“We are *more* than individuals: we are the whole chain as well… *[Wir sind mehr als das Individuum, wir sind die ganze Kette]*”\(^{531}\)

“Correction of the concept “egoism.”— When one has grasped to what extent the concept “individual” is an error because every single creature constitutes the entire process in its entire course (not merely as “inherited,” but the process itself\(^{532}\)—), then the single creature acquires a tremendously great significance… *[Hat man begriffen, inwiefern „individuum“ ein Irrthum ist, sondern jedes Einzelwesen eben der ganze Prozeß in gerader Linie ist (nicht bloß „vererbt“, sondern er selbst…), so hat dies Einzelwesen eine ungeheuer große Bedeutung]*”\(^{533}\)

This idea that one *is* the whole process, and not merely a *piece* of it or a *phase* in it, is what Stambaugh and Haar are picking up on in interpreting fate as identity.

This goes a long way back in Nietzsche’s thought. For example, in *The Wanderer*, we read that every man is “a piece of fatum *[ein Stück Fatum]*” and that our very resistance to fate *just is fate*.

“The fear most people feel in face of the theory of the unfreedom of the will is fear in face of Turkish fatalism: they think that man will stand before the future feeble, resigned and with hands clasped because he is incapable of effecting any change in it: or that he will give free rein to all his impulses and caprices because these too cannot make any worse what has already been determined. The follies of mankind are just as much a piece of fate as are its acts of intelligence: that fear in face of a belief in fate is also fate. You yourself, poor fearful man, are the implacable *moira* enthroned even above the gods that governs all that happens; you are the blessing

\(^{530}\) NF-1887,10[136] (WP§682, p. 361); it is worth noting that Nietzsche is again engaging with Spencer here


\(^{532}\) I.e. the individual is not merely the inheritor of the whole process, but *is* the whole process

or the curse and in any event the fetters in which the strongest lies captive; in you
the whole future of the world of man is predetermined: it is of no use for you to
shudder when you look upon yourself”\textsuperscript{534}

The thought that “you yourself… are the implacable moira [Du selber… bist die unbezwingliche
Moira]” makes clear that the individual is not something fated, but fate itself. That the
individual is spoken of here as a \textit{piece} of fate might help us to interpret the later \textit{Twilight}
passages.

In one place, we are told that “the fatality [die Fatalität] of man’s essence is not to be
disentangled from the fatality of all that has been or will be… One is necessary, one is a
piece of fatefulness [ein Stück Verhängnis], one belongs to the whole, one \textit{is} in the whole
[man ist im Ganzen]”\textsuperscript{535}

The emphasis shows us something about what it means to belong to the whole, and thus to
belong to fate: the whole is not somewhere else, the part \textit{is} in the whole. This becomes
clearer when we read

“A condemnation of life by the living remains in the end a mere symptom of a
certain kind of life… When we speak of values, we speak with the inspiration, with
the way of looking at things, which is part of life: life itself forces us to posit values;
life itself values through us when we posit values…”\textsuperscript{536}

This is helpful for interpreting the immediately following section (discussed above) where
Nietzsche writes that “the single one is a piece of \textit{fatum}”\textsuperscript{537}. We do not get confused here as
we might with fate and consider ourselves life’s \textit{puppets}.\textsuperscript{538} Expressions of life \textit{just are life}.
Life is not apart from the living. Similarly, fate is not something foreign, acting through us.

\textsuperscript{534} WS§61 (HH, p. 325) [TM: Turkish fatalism for “Türkenfatalismus”, instead of Hollingdale’s “Mohammedan
fatalism”].

\textsuperscript{535} TI§VI.8, p. 500 [TM: italics modified to match the original, which shows that the emphasis isn’t on one
being in the whole but that the whole is not somewhere else – it is the place of our \textit{isness}; my comments on
the translation on \textit{Verhängnis} above should be kept in mind here, though in this case, it does seem quite
neutral.

\textsuperscript{536} TI§V.5, p. 490.

\textsuperscript{537} TI§V.6, p. 491.

\textsuperscript{538} While we are not \textit{puppets} of fate, we could say that we are \textit{masks} of fate. But we must understand
Nietzsche’s conception of masks: they are not dispensable (see for example, GS.P§4, p. 38). This is one of the
differences from Eckhart, who would have us become “freedom itself” by getting away from what is
created—by moving back into the bareness of the Godhead (Sec: CMW sermon 17, p. 130).
How this bears on the question of free will has been discussed by Stambaugh who writes “As for Spinoza,
necessity for Nietzsche is \textit{inner} necessity as opposed to being compelled from without and is therefore
freedom in the true sense…” (TON, “The Innocence of Becoming, p. 117). Similarly, Bazzano remarks that
“In the Nietzschean formula \textit{ego fatum… determinism and free will become one and the same}” (Buddha is Dead, op. cit.,
§90, p. 108).
Fate is as intimate to us as the tree is to the leaf. The leaf is nothing other than the tree.\(^{539}\)

The leaf is the tree, but it is also a piece or a part of the tree. This example helps because we do not feel the same temptation to put a tree behind leaf and branch. Notice that this is just the discussion of the relationship of part and whole, One and many, discussed earlier: the whole is One, but it is not one. It is not behind the many, which are its manifestations. Rather, it is in the many, which are its expressions.

We will shortly return to consider these two readings in more complexity. But let us first briefly look at further discussions of this relationship of part and whole that occur in Nietzsche’s works between the *Wanderer* and *Twilight*.

In a draft for *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche writes:

“You speak falsely of incidents and accidents. Nothing will ever happen to you but your own selves. And as for what you call ‘accident,’ you yourselves are what falls to you and falls upon you!\(^{540}\) [Ihr redet falsch von Ereignissen und Zufällen! Es wird sich euch nie Etwas Andres ereignen, als ihr euch selber! Und was ihr Zufall heißt — ihr selber seid das, was euch zufällt und auf euch fällt!]\(^{541}\)

This sounds a great deal like the *Wanderer* passage. The individual is not subject to chance, but chance is the subject. In “On the Great Longing” of the published text, Zarathustra says to his soul:

“O my soul, I took from you all obeying, knee-bending and “Lord”-saying; I myself gave you the name “turning of need” and “fate”.

O my soul, I gave you new names and colorful toys; I called you “fate” and “circumference of circumferences” and “umbilical cord of time” and “azure

\(^{539}\) C.f. NF-1881,11[7]: “We are buds on a single tree”, but that tree doesn’t exist apart from its buds. Each bud is the tree. Issues with ultimate identification are briefly taken up below.

\(^{540}\) Stambaugh notes: “If we look for a moment to the etymology of the English “chance”, we find that it is related to *cadere*, to fall, whence also come the words accident, decadence, cadence, causality. This corresponds quite precisely to the German *Zufall*, literally to fall to. Thus, chance for Nietzsche initially has the quite neutral meaning of what falls to us, what befalls us”. See: J. Stambaugh, “Zufall”, op. cit., p. 95

\(^{541}\) NF-1883,22[1] [TM from Stambaugh, TON p. 117]. Compare in the published version, TSZ “The Wanderer”, p. 152: “In the end, one experiences only oneself. The time is gone when mere accidents could still happen to me; and what could still come to me now that was not mine already?” On this basis of a note like these, it is not difficult to see why Nishitani saw ego fatum as “close to the Buddhist idea of *karma*…” (Nishitani, op. cit., p. 50). They also bear comparison with Hegel: “whatever it is that the individual does, and whatever happens to him, that he has done himself, and he is that himself…” (G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, 1977, p. 242).
These names have been discussed at some length by other authors\textsuperscript{543}, but let me just say something briefly about the first two. The soul isn’t \textit{determined}, but rather is called \textit{Wende der Not}, a play on the German for necessity—\textit{Notwendigkeit}\textsuperscript{544}. The soul doesn’t bend its knees in \textit{obedience to fate}, isn’t \textit{larded over} by fate, isn’t \textit{fated} but rather the soul is \textit{named} fate, \textit{is} fate\textsuperscript{545}.

In “At Noon”, Zarathustra falls into a “well of eternity”—where time stands still and the world appears perfect, and where he affirms a \textit{via negativa}: “it is \textit{little} that makes the \textit{best} happiness”. Emerging from this well, Zarathustra says

“Get up! You little thief, you lazy thief of time! What? Still stretching, yawning, sighing, falling into deep wells? Who are you? O my soul!”\textsuperscript{546}

Zarathustra then addresses the sky:

“O heaven over me! You are looking on? You are listening to my strange soul? When will you drink this drop of dew which has fallen upon all earthly things? When will you drink this strange soul? When, well of eternity? Cheerful, dreadful abyss of noon! When will you drink my soul back into yourself?”

This may sound like a discussion of ultimate identity: as if the relative self (the soul) had fallen from the heavens as a dew drop, and would at some point be absorbed back into that whole. That is, it may sound as if the heaven from which this dew drop of individuation had fallen was more intimately Zarathustra than Zarathustra himself, as if the dew drop was a \textit{manifestation} of the whole rather than an \textit{expression} of it\textsuperscript{547}. I am not certain of this

\textsuperscript{542} TSZ “On the Great Longing”, pp. 221–222. [TM: WK had “cessation of need” for “\textit{Wende der Not}” and “destiny” for “\textit{Schicksal}”].

\textsuperscript{543} Stambaugh discusses these names in “Amor Dei and Amor Fati” and “The Other Nietzsche”, expanding on Nishitani’s discussion in §4.3 of \textit{The Self-Overcoming of Nihilism}.

\textsuperscript{544} This term is also used in “On the Gift-Giving Virtue” and “On Old and New Tablets”. See TON p. 141: “Turning of need (\textit{Wende der Not})… is a play on the word for necessity (\textit{Notwendigkeit}) that distances necessity from any kind of determinism and freshly reinterprets it as turning a need (\textit{Not}) around to work for you. It is a conception of fate, destiny, and necessity not as something outside or above us to which we are subject, but as something \textit{within} us, as our innermost being”.

\textsuperscript{545} To put it clumsily, one identifies with the determination of what is determined. This is clumsy because \textit{what is} determined is nothing other than that determination—is not a \textit{thing} that is pushed around. Our discussion of fate allows us to describe two types of error: to conceive of oneself as \textit{fated} (determined), and as \textit{fating} (determining). Both construe the self as an agent outside of fate, one as its subject, the other as its lord.

\textsuperscript{546} C.f. my discussion in the foregoing about the temporary value of submersions.

\textsuperscript{547} It might be felt that the very fact that Zarathustra \textit{talks to his soul} makes it sound as though there is some kind of relative/ultimate identification going on, that the \textit{self} is talking to the Self. I think we should be quite cautious in what we make of this. Zarathustra frequently addresses what such a reading would take to be his \textit{relative} self, such as in the very admonishment of himself for falling into those deep wells.

A similar tension exists in the personification and dialogue with \textit{life} in “The Other Dancing Soul”. If life is not apart from the living, then there is an othering of what is not apart from oneself, so that one might turn toward it and address it as a Thou.
interpretation. Indeed, on Loeb’s important reading of the sequence of *Zarathustra*, this section (in Part IV) comes chronologically before “On the Great Longing” (Part III). In the latter passage, the soul *itself* is named “azure bell”, that is, the heaven that it is said to have emanated from in the former. My own tendency is to read this, then, as the “perfectly reciprocal determination” of Goethe’s conception of the relationship between One and many — where the One *only is* in the many, where the whole is not apart from the parts.

III.4

The passages we have considered above suggest that the interpenetration interpretation is stronger than the interconnection one. This has implications for how we understand many of Nietzsche’s ideas. For example, due to Nietzsche’s belief in the eternal recurrence of the same, Ansell-Pearson writes that Nietzsche is committed to “the conception of matter as made up of discrete and persistent entities”:

“It is only on the basis of such entities (as opposed to events), which are finite in number, that an eternal recurrence is possible, in which a finite number of combinations of these entities infinitely recur

As to the question of entities versus events, one could easily point to places in the notes where Nietzsche denies just this, speaking for example of beings as “complexes of events” and of “processes as “entities”.

Beyond a relative sense, the discreteness of “entities” cannot be maintained when they are conceived not as merely enchained but interpenetrant. I do not think this causes insoluble problems for the notion of the recurrence, but I cannot hope to deal with that here. Let me just say that it follows that the eternal recurrence of the same cannot be eternal recurrence.

It also occurs in “Old and New Tablets” (§30) where we read “O thou my will! Thou turning of all need, my own necessity! … Thou fate [Schicksal] of my soul, which I call fate [Schicksal]! Thou in-me! Over-me!” That this *thou* (will) is both in and over him may sound like it is ultimate identity once more. However, he calls that will the fate of his soul, yet he calls his soul fate. This sounds to me like it may be an attempt to express that reciprocity of Goethe’s One/many.

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551 NF-1887,9[91] (WP§552, p. 298).
of the same things. Things for Nietzsche are conventional, and we shouldn’t let noun-sense seduce us to nonsense.

Having said this, the interpenetration reading is not without apparent tensions. It is worth noting is that in the fragments discussed above, the apparent individual is the whole lineage, not the whole simpliciter, the whole enchilada… That is, the continuity of part and whole suggested is vertical but not horizontal. Indeed, while the individual is not a link but the chain, Nietzsche speaks of the “multiplicity of these chains.” So, while there is an identification between part and whole, it seems like this is a circumscribed whole: a whole line. There are rare exceptions to this. For example, one note in the drafts for Zarathustra says:

“Narrowness of the moral viewpoint—each individual acts with the entire cosmic being—whether we know it or not!—whether we want it or not! [Beschränktheit des moral Gesichtspunkts — jedes Individuum wirkt am ganzen kosmischen Wesen mit — ob wir es wissen oder nicht — ob wir es wollen oder nicht!]

This seems to suggest that that which “flows on underneath individuals” also flows between lines. This note is, as I say, quite exceptional. The notion of a “cosmic being” is quite clearly rejected in Nietzsche’s later denial that the whole is an organism:

“. . . a total process (considered as a system—) does not exist at all; that there is no “totality”; that no evaluation of human existence, of human aims, can be made in regard to something that does not exist;

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553 GS§109 (p. 168) is the first place the E.R. is mentioned: “the whole musical box repeats eternally its tune”. This section is very important for it contains a denial of things (and of matter itself), and says “let us beware of thinking that the world eternally creates new things”. We should also beware of thinking that it eternally creates the same things. It is processes that recur, patterns of force.

554 Nietzsche’s conceives of a thingless Relations-Welt, a world of becoming—where there are no beings, but we can speak of “degrees of being” (NF-1887,10[18] (WP§485, p. 268))—those things with a “slower tempo of becoming” (NF-1887,9[62] (WP§580, p. 312)). Similarly, we can speak of “atoms and monads in a relative sense” (NF-1887,11[73] (WP§715, p. 380)). This last note is in the same notebook from which two notes below denying the whole as organism were taken.

555 NF-1887,10[136] (WP§682, p. 361).

556 The discreteness of this line perhaps immediately sounds problematical given the conventional character of things (a line sounds decidedly like a thing, insofar as it excludes other lines). I hope what I say below offers some suggestion as to how this might be resolved.

557 NF-1883,15[55].


559 I.e. not only is the isolation of links in chains deceptive, but the isolation of chains is, too.

560 This is not only a later idea. Indeed, this thought goes back in Nietzsche to the 1881 notebook discussed earlier, where he says that we need to think of “the universe… as a whole as being as far as possible from an organism” NF-1881,11[201]; C.f. also GS§109 (p. 167): “Let us beware of thinking that the world is a living being. Where should it expand? On what should it feed?” (Nietzsche would later offer ‘on itself’ as an answer the last question: “its excrements are its food” NF-1888,14[188] (WP§1066, p. 548)).
that the world is not an organism at all, but chaos…"

“Some sort of unity, some form of “monism”: this faith suffices to give man a deep feeling of standing in the context of, and being dependent on, some whole that is infinitely superior to him, and he sees himself as a mode of the deity.— “The well-being of the universal demands the devotion of the individual”—but behold, there is no such universal! At bottom, man has lost the faith in his own value when no infinitely valuable whole works through him; i.e., he conceived such a whole in order to be able to believe in his own value…”

What does Nietzsche mean in saying that there is no whole? This view of a world without a multiplicity of “discrete and persistent entities”, but also without a coherent whole, has been discussed by Richardson, who writes that “Nietzsche even (thinks he) has reason to say that everything is in fact one thing: that the only one thing is the sum of all”. But this “one thing” isn’t a unity, so it isn’t really one or a thing. Elsewhere, Richardson says “Even this sum of all things isn’t unambiguously whole… Whereas the parts lack self-sufficiency or ‘in-itselfness’, the whole lacks the unity we demand of a single thing. Its parts pull in opposite directions; the one is also a many.”

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Another important aspect of Nietzsche’s denial of a whole is in his denial of a “great sensorium” or a “total sensorium”. This can be found in Twilight, where he writes: “The world does not form a unity either as a sensorium or as “spirit”…” (TI, Four Errors §8, p. 501 TPN), and also in the notes: “It seems to me important that one should get rid of the all, the unity, some force, something unconditioned; otherwise one will never cease regarding it as the highest court of appeal and baptizing it “God.” One must shatter the all; unlearn respect for the all; take what we have given to the unknown and the whole and give it back to what is nearest, what is ours. […] Therefore: there is no all, there is no great sensorium or inventarium or storehouse of force” (NF-1886,7[62] (WP§331, p. 181)). “The fundamental mistake is simply that, instead of understanding consciousness as a tool and particular aspect of the total life, we posit it as the standard and the condition of life that is of supreme value: it is the erroneous perspective of a parte ad totum—which is why all philosophers are instinctively trying to imagine a total consciousness, a consciousness involved in all life and will, in all that occurs, a “spirit,” “God”…” (NF-1887,10[137] (WP§707, p. 376)) The sensorium is the place where sensory information is unified, the common sense. Nietzsche is clearly speaking here denying a transpersonal sensorium, but this is not unrelated to his discussion of the role of consciousness in the individual (and note the similar language to the previous fragment): “Usually, one takes consciousness itself as the general sensorium and supreme court; nonetheless, it is only a means of communication…” (NF-1887,11[145] (WP§524, p. 284)). All of this relates to Nietzsche’s conception that “the living is merely a type of what is dead, and a very rare type” (GS§109, pp. 167–168)—to our overestimation of the role of consciousness. How this differentiates Nietzsche’s position from those of other thinkers is worthy of consideration, but cannot be done briefly given the complexity of ideas like Will in Schopenhauer or Spirit in Hegel.

562 NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 12).

563 J. Richardson, “Nietzsche’s Value Monism”, op. cit., p. 90.

564 J. Richardson, Nietzsche’s System, op. cit., p. 106. This means that we could read the claim that there is no whole—and that the world is not an organism—as entailing a denial not only of Purusha (or the world-person of the BT period), but also of what Spinoza called Nature.
This is helpful in clarifying the oddity of Nietzsche’s part whole relationship: the parts are not *parts*, not discrete; the whole is not a *whole*, not unified\textsuperscript{565}. When we see the individual as *fate*, we do not mean to say, then, that the individual is a *mode* of fate. Fate is not something singular that manifests as the many. The whole is not apart from the parts. Briefly, I think this is an issue for the interpretations of both Haar and Stambaugh, in considering fate as something like “ultimate identity”. For Stambaugh, fate is one’s “innermost being”\textsuperscript{566}, and for Haar, fate is “more intimately the “subject” than the subject”\textsuperscript{567}.

Haar’s line in particular echoes Eckhart’s “God is closer to me than I am to myself”\textsuperscript{568}. My concern is that this leads to a preference for the One over the many, that it is based on a conception of the One as beyond the many. To say that the part is more the whole than it is the part suggests that the whole is apart from the parts. But there is no whole apart from the parts. The value of the parts is not that they are *modes* or *manifestations* of the whole\textsuperscript{569}, rather, the parts are the whole.

### III.5

In discussing Nietzsche’s conception of fate, Stambaugh draws a contrast between what Nietzsche calls “Turkish fatalism” and “Russian fatalism”\textsuperscript{570}. A brief discussion of these ideas should help to differentiate my reading of Nietzsche from Stambaugh’s.

But before I start, I must make clear that Nietzsche himself never contrasts these positions: the former is discussed in *The Wanderer and his Shadow*, and the latter is discussed much later in the *Genealogy of Morals* and *Ecce Homo*.

Of Turkish fatalism, Nietzsche says that it “embodies the fundamental error of setting man and fate over against one another as two separate things”. The Turkish fatalist sees fate as something external to himself, and he tries to “resist fate and seek to frustrate it”. Ultimately, however, the Turkish fatalist finds that fate “always carries off the victory” and so comes to appreciate that “the most reasonable thing to do is resign oneself or to live just

\textsuperscript{565} Richardson says (Ibid, pp. 106–107): “Nietzsche assumes two criteria for ‘being a being’ that are also found in our everyday view: first, being complete, an ‘in-itself’; second, being unified, a ‘one’. On that contextual view of parts in wholes, however, nothing satisfies both conditions; the parts are ruled out by the first, the wholes by the second criterion…”

\textsuperscript{566} J. Stambaugh, “The Other Nietzsche”, TON p. 141.


\textsuperscript{568} CMW sermon 69, p. 352.

\textsuperscript{569} NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 12).

\textsuperscript{570} See J. Stambaugh, “Amor Dei and Amor Fati”, TON, pp. 75–93.
as one pleases”. Nietzsche’s response is worth quoting at some length, even though we
have already seen a passage from it above:

“In reality every man is himself a piece of fate; when he thinks to resist fate in the
way suggested, it is precisely fate that is here fulfilling itself; the struggle is
imaginary, but so is the proposed resignation to fate; all these imaginings are
enclosed within fate.—The fear most people feel in face of the theory of the
unfreedom of the will is fear in face of Turkish fatalism: they think that man will
stand before the future feeble, resigned and with hands clasped because he is
incapable of effecting any change in it: or that he will give free rein to all his
impulses and caprices because these too cannot make any worse what has already
been determined. The follies of mankind are just as much a piece of fate as are its
acts of intelligence: that fear in face of a belief in fate is also fate. You yourself,
poor fearful man, are the implacable moira enthroned even above the gods that
governs all that happens; you are the blessing or the curse and in any event the
fetters in which the strongest lies captive; in you the whole future of the world of
man is predetermined: it is of no use for you to shudder when you look upon
yourself”.

The Turkish fatalist feels lorded over by fate, as if it pushes him around and as if the only
sensible thing to do is to resign to it. Nietzsche’s claim is that this is itself futile: the Turkish
fatalist cannot resign himself to fate, for this implies that he is something separate from
fate. The feeling of determinacy rests on a mistaken understanding of agency, of identity.
That one is “enclosed within fate” is just to say what Nietzsche means later when he says
that one “belongs to” fate. When one apprehends this, fate loses its fearful character: one
ought not be afraid of that which one is.

In the Genealogy, Nietzsche speaks of “That stout-hearted fatalism without rebellion
through which the Russians, for example, still have an advantage over us Westerners in
dealing with life”. Russian fatalism is given a greater treatment in Ecce Homo, where
Nietzsche is discussing the relationship between sickness and ressentiment:

“…the sick person has only one great remedy: I call it Russian fatalism, that fatalism
without revolt which is exemplified by a Russian soldier who, finding a campaign

571 WS§61 (HH, p. 325) [TM: Hollingdale gave us “Mohammedan fatalism” for “Türkenfatalismus”—this is not
wrong, since the term Turk, as in English, has often historically been used to denote Muslims of a certain
region irrespective of ethnicity].
572 NF-1884,26[442].
573 GM§II.15, p. 83.
too strenuous, finally lies down in the snow. No longer to accept anything at all, no longer to take anything, no longer to absorb anything—to cease reacting altogether. This fatalism is not always merely the courage to die; it can also preserve life under the most perilous conditions by reducing the metabolism, slowing it down, as a kind of will to hibernate.\(^{574}\)

The basic thought is that one who is sick will, through futile resistance of one’s illness, “use oneself up too quickly if one reacted in any way”. The sense that the situation could be otherwise produces a futile rebellion, and the inevitable failure generates resentment. In turn, this resentment will consume the sufferer, being toxic for such an organism. As Nietzsche says, “resentment is what is forbidden par excellence for the sick—it is their specific evil—unfortunately also their most natural inclination”.\(^{575}\) This resentment generated by one’s futile resistance will ultimately amplify the sick person’s morbidity. If one apprehends this, one may cease all resistance and therein lies the possibility of recovery. Nietzsche saw this as a useful strategy during his own illness, writing that “Accepting oneself as if fated, not wishing oneself “different”—that is in such cases great reason itself”.\(^{576}\)

In her essay “Amor Dei and Amor Fati?”, Stambaugh writes:

“If we now make the linguistic distinction that Nietzsche did not make and call this Turkish fatalism fatalism as opposed to what he describes under the term Russian fatalism, which we shall henceforth call fate. Fate is his own positive concept; fatalism is his polemical target. He loved fate, not fatalism”.\(^{577}\)

I believe that Stambaugh is right to claim that “Nietzsche’s own conception of fate… lies in understanding oneself as fate”\(^{578}\), but where she errs is in construing this as equivalent with Russian fatalism.

Nietzsche’s emphasis on the aptness of Russian fatalism “in such cases” of illness is important here. This is, I think, an example of Zarathustra’s dictum that “you should love peace as a means to new wars”.\(^{579}\) We might compare it with the discussion of the Eleatic conception of stable being as a “winter doctrine, a good thing for sterile times, a fine comfort for hibernators and hearth-squatters”.\(^{580}\) It is a notion that allows one to cope, to

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\(^{574}\) EH\$Wisc.6, p. 230.

\(^{575}\) Ibid.

\(^{576}\) Ibid, p. 231.

\(^{577}\) TON, p. 81.

\(^{578}\) TON, p. 82.


survive. But survival is an appropriate aim only for periods of distress\(^{581}\), and so we must enquire into what follows when warmth returns—what is the convalescent’s philosophy carried by the “thawing wind”?

Nietzsche writes that during periods of sickness, he forbade himself feelings of resentment as “harmful”, and upon recuperation “forbade myself such feelings as beneath me”\(^{582}\). When one lacks the strength, attempting to resist will wear one out. When one is strong, one can overcome\(^{583}\), and in such cases, resistance generates health, not resentment\(^{584}\).

The sick must see themselves “as if fated”, whereas the healthy must see themselves as fate. What does this entail? As Stambaugh asks, “What does it mean to understand oneself as fate?”\(^{585}\) This is really the heart of the matter, and raises the question of the relation of part to whole, of many to One.

For the Russian fatalist, fate is something to which one submits. The whole is something outside of the parts to which the parts must conform\(^{586}\). In speaking of identification with fate, Stambaugh suggests an identification with the whole as opposed to the part. The stress on non-resistance in Russian fatalism demonstrates this point very well, and shows that it cannot be Nietzsche’s position\(^{587}\).

The individual who understands his belonging to the whole does not hold back, he is capable of the self-squandering that full expression demands—an overflowing that seeks not to be

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\(^{581}\) C.f. GS\S 349, pp. 291–292.

\(^{582}\) EH\$Wise.6, p. 231.

\(^{583}\) See the discussion of the dynamics of this in B. Reginster, The Affirmation of Life: Nietzsche on Overcoming Nihilism, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2009, pp. 133–139.

\(^{584}\) C.f. GM\S I.13, p. 45, AC\S 2, p. 570.

\(^{585}\) TON, p. 82.

\(^{586}\) To be able to “accept” fate—that is, to not resist it—we must distinguish ourselves from fate. As we have seen, such a misconception is perhaps invaluable for one who is sick, for he cannot trust his own organism and so entrusts it to the whole—not seeing that his illness just is an expression of that whole.

\(^{587}\) Some of this will become clearer in our discussion of egoism in what follows, for Russian fatalism is clearly linked with Tolstoy’s reading of non-resistance as Jesus’ central teaching, as well as Dostoevsky’s notion of the idiot. Nietzsche follows these readings in The Antichrist (AC\S 29, pp. 600–601). Insofar as the Redeemer type, as discussed in The Antichrist, fails to articulate Nietzsche’s ideal, so too does Russian fatalism. This is by no means to deny that there are some passages in Nietzsche’s works that sound like “Russian fatalism” and so seem to support Stambaugh’s interpretation. For example, EH\$Clever.9, p. 255: “…no trace of struggle can be demonstrated in my life; I am the opposite of a heroic nature”. Also, a draft for TI\S IX.49 reads: “In Goethe a kind of almost joyous and trusting fatalism that does not revolt, that does not flag, that seeks to form a totality out of himself, in the faith that only in the totality everything redeems itself and appears good and justified” (WP\S 95, p. 60, emphasis mine). But Goethe’s own claims clarify Nietzsche’s meaning. Goethe spoke of accepting fate “without caprice or resistance [ohne Willktir und Widerstreben]” (Letter 6 October 1815; quoted in W. Wetzels, “Goethe’s Belief in Himself”, Literature and Belief, vol. 20, no. 2, 2000, p. 35), and what is meant by this is shown in his expression that “our whole artistry consists in ceasing to cling to existence so that we may exist” (M&R\S 302). That is, it has to do with not seeking self-preservation. C.f. Goethe’s great poem “Blessed Longing” where he says that if one doesn’t die and be reborn, one remains “a dreary guest / on our gloomy earth” (Hamburger trans., GSP, pp. 206–207).
spared. This is not self-sacrifice, but the necessary eventuality of unreserved self-expression. This is not one sacrificing oneself to the whole, but rather one squandering oneself as the whole.

Immediately after describing Russian fatalism, Nietzsche writes:

“War is another matter… Being able to be an enemy, being an enemy—perhaps that presupposes a strong nature; in any case, it belongs to every strong nature. It needs objects of resistance; hence it looks for what resists”.

Here we see that unlike those in distress, resistance is appropriate to the strong. Individuality involves resistance. So the question is immediately raised: how can an individual successfully resist fate if they are fate?

What one resists is not fate as a whole, but rather those other “pieces of fate” that are seen as separate organisms. The thought of the other as enemy, and the praise of the warlike as an expression of health, may suggest all of the most pernicious interpretations of will to power. But one has to understand the conception of antipathy that is at play here. Nietzsche writes:

“The strength of those who attack can be measured in a way by the opposition they require: every growth is indicated by the search for a mighty opponent—or problem; for a warlike philosopher challenges problems, too, to single combat. The task is not simply to master what happens to resist, but what requires us to stake all our strength, suppleness, and fighting skill—opponents that are our equals. Equality before the enemy: the first presupposition of an honest duel. Where one feels contempt, one cannot wage war; where one commands, where one sees something being beneath oneself, one has no business waging war”.

The idea of war considered here is that of the agon. It is in these struggles or contests that one expands oneself, overcomes oneself. One’s enemy is, in a sense, a partner. It is against their resistance that one flourishes. There is no contempt here; on the contrary, Nietzsche writes that “attack is in my case a proof of good will, sometimes even of gratitude.”

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588 TI§IX.44, pp. 547–548.
589 EH§Wise.7, pp. 231–232.
590 To use the language of NF-1881,11[7], other “supposed individuals”. But once again, I caution against seeming this as the mere semblance of individuality, as if their being the whole were somehow more true.
592 Ibid.
It thus becomes possible to conceive of this war as a form of collaboration, and so it is possible to see how this is beneficial to the whole: organisms (pieces of fate) intertwining with each other in ever more elaborate patterns, expressing the whole with ever greater fecundity (for, remember, the whole is not apart from the parts).

What seemed very gravely adversarial is thus understood as something sportive—a kind of play, which is not to say that it is not taken seriously. Indeed, as Nietzsche says, it is here in the realm of play that “great seriousness really begins”\textsuperscript{593}.

In \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, Nietzsche discusses our time’s misconception of the philosopher, which it praises as a man who knows ways of “getting well out of a wicked game”, to find himself a sanitised, “desensualised” clime where he can live “prudently and apart”, dwelling in comfort and peace. Contrary to this, Nietzsche sees the truly philosophical as heightening one’s engagement with life, and one’s risking of oneself:

> “The genuine philosopher… lives “unphilosophically” and “unwisely,” above all \textit{imprudently}, and “he feels the burden and the duty of a hundred attempts and temptations of life—he risks \textit{himself} constantly, he plays the wicked game”\textsuperscript{594}.

In \textit{Ecce Homo}, Nietzsche describes himself as “the first \textit{tragic} philosopher” and that before him, the “transposition of the Dionysian into a philosophical pathos did not exist: \textit{tragic wisdom} was lacking”\textsuperscript{595}

By this, Nietzsche is pointing to his affirmation of becoming without end, and to a more than “one-sided” embrace of life. We could also say that his wisdom led him further into life, into involvement, entanglement, and danger, rather than to a secure life of detachment or unworldliness\textsuperscript{596}. I think the main point here, however, is that Nietzsche saw there is no aside. This “tragic wisdom” gets rid of any distance between self and life, any sense that one could escape the “wicked game”. I think that this is why Nietzsche describes Heraclitus in this passage as his only potential philosophical precursor:

> “The affirmation of passing away \textit{and destroying}, which is the decisive feature of a Dionysian philosophy; saying Yes to opposition and war; \textit{becoming}, along with a

\textsuperscript{593} GS§382, p. 347.
\textsuperscript{594} BGE§205, pp. 124–125.
\textsuperscript{595} EH§BT.3, p. 273; Nietzsche has here just quoted the section from \textit{Twilight} where he describes himself as the “last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus” (TI§X.5, p. 563).
\textsuperscript{596} C.f. TI§IX.49 on Goethe and entering the midst of life, taking things upon and into oneself.
radical repudiation of the very concept of being—all this is clearly more closely related to me than anything else thought to date”\textsuperscript{597}

Nietzsche here says that he felt “warmer” in Heraclitus’ proximity than anywhere else. What could this possibly mean? Heraclitus is famously cool, remote. In the sense of his unflinching character, this is quite correct. But what Nietzsche is describing here is, I think, Heraclitus’ character as a “thaw wind”.

In \textit{Zarathustra}, the thaw wind is described as a “raging bull, a destroyer that with wrathful horns breaks the ice”\textsuperscript{598}. It is contrasted with the “winter doctrine” of the Parmenidean notion that “at its ground all stands still”. The idea of being or permanence is described as “a fine thing for an unfruitful time”, but the thaw wind shows us that there is nothing over the river. The bridge was mere ice, appearing permanent in winter, but the thaw has melted and set in flux.

Warmness is here to be understood as unsettling as opposed to rigidifying. All valuations and concepts, all firmness, has been enlivened, made flexible, by the thaw wind; all that seemed final has been broken open\textsuperscript{599}. In this sense, it is obvious how Heraclitus may be conceived of as warmest—there is nothing rigid in his philosophy whatever. This comes out also in the note where Nietzsche writes:

“\textquote{That the world is divine play [\textit{göttliches Spiel}] beyond good and evil—for this, my predecessors are the philosophy of Vedanta and Heraclitus}”\textsuperscript{600}.

Here again we have tragic wisdom, with both describing endless cycles of manifestation and dissolution. Heraclitus put it thus:

“\textquote{The \textit{kosmos}, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire ever living, kindled in measures and in measures going out}”\textsuperscript{601}.

For Nietzsche, the will to self-preservation betrays a lack of wisdom: to seek security, peace, being, shows one has not understood life, nor one’s relationship to it; one thus lives with bridles and reservations, without the boldness to risk oneself, to let oneself \textit{flow}. In the section of \textit{Beyond Good and Evil} immediately following the discussion of the true

\textsuperscript{597} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{598} TSZ “Old and New Tablets” §8, p. 201. This notion of the thaw wind is also discussed elsewhere, including HAH§P.5 and BGE§295.
\textsuperscript{599} C.f. the description of the encounter with Dionysus in BGE§295, where the “thaw wind” is also discussed, leaving one with new possibilities (i.e. unsettled). Another place that the thaw wind is mentioned is §5 of the ‘87 preface to HAH.
\textsuperscript{600} NF-1884,26[193].
\textsuperscript{601} XXXVII, A&TH, p. 45 [TM].
philosopher as risking himself, Nietzsche characterises letting oneself flow as the mark of genius and sharply distinguishes it from letting oneself go.\footnote{BGE\S 206, p. 126.}

Tragic wisdom is not merely the realisation that one works better when one is of the world, where one’s work is nourished by a more-than-abstract involvement. It is rather insight into one’s relationship to the whole, to fate—insight which has the effect of stopping one from seeking self-preservation, and for just this reason, one is able to undertake great tasks through which life itself is enriched.\footnote{See my discussion of whole and holy selfishness in chapter IV.}

Tragic insight is not knowledge of one’s fate (Oedipus’ insight), but rather knowledge that one is fate. One is willing to play the “wicked game” because one knows oneself to be nothing other than that game. One knows that one cannot stand aside from the whole which one “belongs to”, from that game which one is.

If we say that one is the game itself, we must understand that the whole is not manifesting itself as a part, but expressing itself in a part. While the Turkish fatalist attempts to take sides against fate,\footnote{At least in the early stages, before he realises that it is pragmatic to resign.} the Russian fatalist tries to take the side of fate. The Dionysian fatalist sees the error in treating fate as a side. The whole exists nowhere but in the parts, and so if one is to yea-say the whole, one must yea-say one’s individuality.

Nietzsche’s early ideal was to stand in an aesthetic relationship to life, as if one was always watching a play unfolding.\footnote{BT\S 8, p. 64: “At bottom, the aesthetic phenomenon is simple: let anyone have the ability to behold continually a vivid play and to live constantly surrounded by hosts of spirits, and he will be a poet”. C.f. NF-1881,11[285] for a sense of how concretely he conceived of this “divine play” in his BT period.} In his later thought, one simply cannot witness the game, one cannot spectate. Even one’s apparent non-resistance is simply a kind of participation—and it is a kind that diminishes the whole. In this we begin to perceive the possibility of what Nietzsche called a “whole and holy” selfishness, and it is towards this conception that we now turn.
Chapter IV: Ego

It is my belief that our foregoing discussion of Nietzsche’s conception of the One and many helps us considerably in making sense of his attitude toward the ego, an attitude that sits uncomfortably with previous attempts to situate Nietzsche in a mystical intellectual context. In this chapter, I will discuss Nietzsche’s robust defence of the self-centric and his conception of a whole and holy selfishness. But before we look into this further, let us first consider Nietzsche’s discussion of Christianity and the ego.

IV.1

In a late note, Nietzsche writes that for all of Christianity’s talk of altruism, “its real historical effect” has been “precisely the enhancement of egoism, of the egoism of the individual, to an extreme (—to the extreme of individual immortality)…”606 In another, Nietzsche speaks of the “absurd self inflation” of the Christian conception of the soul, which he characterises as follows:

“For each soul, the gravitational center of valuation was placed within itself: salvation or damnation! The salvation of the immortal soul! Extremest form of personalization— For every soul there was only one perfecting; only one ideal; only one way to redemption— Extremest form of equality of rights, tied to an optical magnification of one’s own importance to the point of insanity— Nothing but insanely important souls, revolving about themselves with a frightful fear—”607

This is not an unfamiliar point, and bears comparison with what Johannes Climacus writes in the Concluding Unscientific Postscript:

“…’What unsurpassed effrontery… to dare lay such stress on one’s own little self.’ … But my conscience is quite clear in this matter; it is not I who in myself have become so impudent, it is precisely Christianity that obliges me to be so. It places a quite different sort of weight on my own little ‘I’, and on every rather little ‘I’, since it wants to make him eternally happy if he is fortunate enough to enter into it”608

It has been suggested that this elevation of the importance of the individual is a—if not the—distinctive contribution of the West to world philosophy609. Whether this is so is not

607 NF-1887,11[226] (WP§339, p. 185).
609 Joseph Campbell, for example, says: “Europe had four powerful mythological traditions in full career before the introduction of Christianity. There was the Classical Greek, the Classical Italic or Roman, there was the Celtic material, and there was the Germanic. They were in full strength, and they represented
our enquiry—but that the individual is given such prominence in the West is undeniable. It is in this context that traction is gained for what Nietzsche called “the morality of unselfing [Entsébelstung]”\textsuperscript{610}.

Nietzsche’s point in the above passage is that though Christianity spoke of altruism, its focus on the immortal soul rendered this impossible. There were always egos trying to be unselfish that they might thereby gain something.

In the Antichrist, Nietzsche criticises Luther, saying that “a religious person thinks only of himself”\textsuperscript{611}. This sort of dynamic can be seen well in many places in Paul, who writes, for example, in the second letter to the Corinthians that “this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison” (2 Cor 4:17, RSV).

Paul’s abandonment of striving after this-worldly gain may be interpreted as a kind of higher self-interest: an attempt to gain an other-worldly reward that more than compensates for what has been sacrificed. It is in this sense that Nietzsche contrasts Paul with Jesus: “Paul was not an idiot at all [Paulus war ganz und gar kein Idiot!]”\textsuperscript{612}.

Arguing against Renan, Nietzsche claims that Jesus was neither hero nor genius, writing that “an entirely different word would still be more nearly fitting here—idiot”\textsuperscript{613}. In borrowing this term from Dostoevsky, Nietzsche in part means to say that Jesus was naïve, guileless. On Nietzsche’s reading, the concepts of punishment and reward are “lacking” from Jesus’ psychology, whose teachings were born of “the deep instinct for how one must live, in order to feel oneself “in heaven”…”\textsuperscript{614}.

Having read The Idiot, Nietzsche considered Dostoyevsky the psychologist who had best understood Jesus\textsuperscript{615}. Also taking a cue from Tolstoy’s My Religion\textsuperscript{616}, Nietzsche describes something that is typical in Europe and nowhere else—that is, respect for the individual and the individual path, the individual way. The Greeks had already recognized that their distinction from the world of the ancients and from what they called the Orient was in precisely this recognition of the individual. The idea that a member of a society is a citizen instead of a subject is Greek. And it’s this idea of the individual and the individual quest that is our subject…” See: J. Campbell, Transformations of Myth Through Time, Harper & Row, 1990, p. 210.

\textsuperscript{610} EH§Dawn.2; note the similarity here to my discussion of anaemia in chapter I; in particular, Rousseau and the intellectual reaction against the intellect. In this case, we find that the enlargement of the self has created a great interest in ways of liberation from those inflated selves, just as we see with the current fashion for mindfulness (utilitarian applications of Buddhism) promoted by a culture of extreme distraction.

\textsuperscript{611} AC§61, p. 654.

\textsuperscript{612} NF-1888,14[38]. This seems to be a draft for AC§29.

\textsuperscript{613} AC§29, p. 601.

\textsuperscript{614} AC§33, pp. 606–607.

\textsuperscript{615} NF-1888,15[9]. This also seems to be a draft for AC§29.

\textsuperscript{616} Nietzsche had read this book in its French translation (see the transcriptions in see transcriptions in NF-1887,11). In the second chapter, Tolstoy describes “resist not evil” as “verily the key to the whole mystery”. See: L. Tolstoy, My Religion, trans. H. Smith, Thomas Y. Crowell & Co, 1885, p. 17.
“resist not evil” (Mt. 5:39) as the Gospel’s “key”\(^{617}\). Without attending to the considerable differences in the Christianity of these two great Russian thinkers, one can get a sense for Nietzsche’s interpretation here: Jesus’ was a philosophy that deemphasises struggle, resistance (hence anti-heroic)\(^{618}\); it also not self-centric—the equal love of the neighbour de-emphasises the individual and his pursuits (hence anti-genius). It is a philosophy of radical equality, of the complete obliteration of rank and order.

When Nietzsche says that “in truth, there was only one Christian, and he died on the cross”\(^{619}\), his point is that as soon as this way of living becomes calculated and shrewd, it ceases to be idiotic, to be truly Christian. Hence Paul is characterised as “the opposite type to that of the “bringer of glad tidings””\(^{620}\).

Each interpretative point here is questionable, but not without its historical defenders: first, that Jesus was unconcerned with the afterlife and that salvation was a “state of the heart”\(^{621}\), a “state of being”\(^{622}\); second, that Jesus was a radical leveller who undermined the possibility of preference, rank and order; and third, that Jesus was an idiot. Given the focus of our investigations, the first two of these I shan’t address, but let me at least wave a hand at the third.

The interpretation of Jesus as idiot strikes me as a fairly implausible reading. Rather, he seems to be quite a wily character, and not one to be confounded with, say, a Saint Francis. As an example, consider the deft teaching in the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee (Luke 18:9-14). The self-righteous are told that the Pharisee’s prayers were full of conceit, telling God of his superiority to other men; whereas the Publican indicted himself a sinner and beat his breast. Jesus says to the self-righteous that “every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted” (Luke 18:14, RSV). Christians have long since read this in a calculating manner: I will humble myself so that I may be exalted\(^{623}\). But the effect of this parable is surely to make exactly this impossible. That is, one is behaving just like the Pharisee when one comes on like the Publican, for one’s breast-beating is one’s way of despising others, of feeling superior to those Pharisees who would tell God of their merits rather than begging for mercy.

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617 AC§29, p. 600.
618 Note the relevance of this to our earlier discussion (chapter III) of what Nietzsche called Russian fatalism.
619 AC§39, p. 512.
620 AC§42, p. 617.
621 AC§34, p. 608.
622 AC§39, p. 613.
623 Nietzsche makes this point in HH§87, p. 48.
For all of this, however, the contrast between Jesus and Paul remains striking. In Paul, there is much calculation—and struggle with calculation. It is, after all, Paul that may anticipate such thoughts as “are we to continue in sin that grace may abound?” (Romans 6:1, RSV)—even if he should answer “by no means!”

My aim here is not to point out the “clanging cymbals” in Paul. Rather, it is to illuminate the double binds that are so characteristic of the spiritual life, and to suggest this as a way of understanding what Nietzsche means when he says that “a religious person thinks only of himself”624. In this remark, we find an interesting (if familiar) twist on the Lutheran criticism of “works righteousness”625. Thinking of the false Publican above, we ask what the one who would give up his righteousness is doing. Does he not attempt to make a work of grace? Does he not betray that he is truly incurvatus in se?

One might wonder whether the Parable I’ve discussed above is really a helpful example: isn’t Jesus ensnaring us in these very double binds? My suggestion here is that this is not so. Rather, Jesus is making clear the very impossibility of winning favour at all—and that this is not what prayer is about. This follows Nietzsche’s interpretation of Jesus—not here as idiot, but as teaching “not doing”, non-resistance. The instruction is to help one to get out of one’s own way.

In a sense, both Luther and Paul attempt something similar—but there is a calculated quality to it that dooms it to failure. A contrived idiocy is the antithesis of this kind of directness, simplicity. Indeed, the very attempt to reject one’s being curved in on oneself seems to condemn one to being all the more so.

Nietzsche writes that “such a life [as Jesus'] is still possible today, for certain people even necessary: genuine, original Christianity will be possible at all times”626. Nietzsche’s emphasis here on this being for “certain people” is very important.

The notion that this or any other way of being is universally appropriate—or even universally open—is strongly rejected by Nietzsche. This belief is indeed a great seduction

624 AC§61, p. 654. Responding to Pelagius in Augustine points to Galatians 3:24 where Paul says that “the law was our pedagogue until Christ came” [TM from RSV, which had custodian forpaidagogos]. Augustine essentially argues with Paul that the law does not exist so that we can obey it (as Pelagius claimed), but rather so that we can learn from it by the impossibility of obeying it. We cannot attain salvation by works—but the futility of the attempt may be preparatory for the receipt of grace. See: Augustine, “On the Grace of Christ”, in Anti-Pelagian Writings, ed. P. Schaff, trans. P. Holmes, R.E. Wallis, and B.B. Warfield, WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1887, p. 221.

625 Luther noted that we often attempt to subvert altruism to the service of the self. That is, our works are attempts to grasp at god’s graces, attempts to earn what cannot be earned. Luther did not thereby reject works, he rejected salvation by works. We cannot save ourselves, but we can work.

626 AC§39, p. 613.
of others from *their* way—and attempting to follow a path contrary to one’s own nature will lead only to the most tortured manifestations of the path’s potential.

We’re not talking about something one-directional like a bed of Procrustes. A Chinese proverb has it that “when the wrong man uses the right means, the right means work in the wrong way”. This is not unreasonable, but we might still insist that ‘the right means—that does not exist’. There are “wrong men” only from the perspective of particular means. Each man has *his* means, and the belief that there is a single means to which all should conform is insidious.627

**IV.2**

Nietzsche writes that “the Redeemer type is preserved for us only in extensive distortion”628. One way of thinking about this is in terms of individuals who have undertaken paths that are inappropriate to their nature. As an example, we might think of Nietzsche’s discussion not of Paul or Luther, but of Pascal—whom Nietzsche regards as “the most instructive victim of Christianity”629.

Quoting Pascal as writing that “the ego is always hateful *[le moi est toujours haïssable]*”630, Nietzsche characterises the “hatred of the *moi*” as “Pascalism”631. Nietzsche regarded Christianity as the cause of Pascal’s self-loathing, but what exactly does he mean by this?

On Nietzsche’s reading, Jesus’ teaching was a “living in love, in love without subtraction and exclusion”632. Furthermore, Jesus “denied any cleavage between God and man” and “lived this unity of God and man as his “glad tidings”…”633 There is no place here for either guilt or pride—“Jesus has abolished the very concept of “guilt”…”634

Nietzsche contends that *some* constitutions instinctively exclude antipathy and hostility, speculating that this is due to their “extreme capacity for suffering and excitement which

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627 It may, nonetheless, be inevitable. That it is in the nature of certain moralities to construe themselves as universal is perhaps a part of Nietzsche’s point in teasing himself for “admonishing moralities to become moral” (BGE§221, p. 149).
628 AC§31, pp. 602–603.
629 EH§Clever.3, p. 243.
630 Nietzsche quotes this line in the epilogue to the *Case of Wagner*, and then in altered form with respect to Flaubert in the section “We Antipodes” (adapted from GS§370). As for the accuracy of the quote, I have not found any French version of the *Pensées* which has *toujours*. It is standardly printed “*Le moi est haïssable*” (Sellier #494, Lafuma #597). Thus, the comment might seem somewhat weaker, but this is not so, for he goes on to say that “I will always hate it *[Je le hais toujours]*”.
631 NF-1887,10[125].
632 AC§29, p. 601; this characterisation of course leaves open the comparison of Nietzsche’s own wantonly yea-saying Dionysian ethic with that of Jesus. I take this up directly in chapter V.
633 AC§41, p. 616.
634 Ibid.
experiences any resistance, even any compulsion to resist, as unendurable displeasure”. Such people only find pleasure in *not* resisting. For them, love is “the only, the last possible, way of life”635. For such an individual, it is not that they are denying themselves in not resisting others, but rather that this *not* resisting *is* their expression of self.

But for others who feel a strong sense of their own individuality, the command to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Matthew 22:39) can only be perverted. In a note which begins “One should never forgive Christianity for having destroyed such men as Pascal”, Nietzsche explains that the strong-willed *need* resistance. When they accept the Christian valuation that only non-resistance is moral, their dominating instinct is turned upon itself636:

> “What is it we combat in Christianity? That it wants to break the strong, that it wants to discourage their courage, exploit their bad hours and their occasional weariness, convert their proud assurance into unease and distress of conscience, that it knows how to poison and sicken the noble instincts until their strength, their will to power turns backward, against itself—until the strong perish through orgies of self-contempt and self-abuse: that gruesome way of perishing of which Pascal provides the most famous example”

It is essentially the *universal* or *unconditional* quality of such a morality that makes it insidious: in presenting the conditions of health for a particular kind of individual as the *only* way of living, it ensnares all others in an evaluation in which they cannot possibly be anything but depraved.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche speaks of the way in which Christianity “bent everything haughty, manly, conquering, domineering, all the instincts characteristic of the highest and best-turned-out type of ‘man,’ into unsureness, agony of conscience, self-destruction”637. Later in the same text he writes:

> “In a person, for example, who is called and made to command, self-denial and modest self-effacement would not be a virtue but the waste of a virtue: thus it seems to me. Every unegoistic morality that takes itself for unconditional and addresses itself to all does not only sin against taste: it is a provocation to sins of omission, one more seduction under the mask of philanthropy—and precisely a

635 AC§30, p. 602.
636 Note that the structure here is exactly that in the *Genealogy* of the slave undermining the self-confidence of the master. E.g. GM§III.14, p. 124.
637 BGE§62, p. 75.
seduction and injury for the higher, rarer, privileged. Moralties must be forced to bow first of all before the order of rank; their presumption must be brought home to their conscience—until they finally reach agreement that it is immoral to say: “what is right for one is fair for the other.”

In claiming that men such as Pascal have been “corrupted” by Christianity, Nietzsche means that the Christian teaching of selflessness is at complete odds with the nature of people with a robustly delineated self, and being so, can only manifest as self-loathing.

If one knows anything about Pascal, it is that he is a man of many angles. Nietzsche’s claim is that because of his Christianity, Pascal could not feel good conscience in this richness of character, and so his ego had nowhere to turn except against itself. That is, when one such as Pascal attempts to emulate the selfless type, they can only end up with self-denial, which is really a form of sick-selfishness.

That different types may have different ways of life, different valuations which are appropriate to them is a theme which runs through Nietzsche’s work, and marks a major contrast with Christianity which—according to Nietzsche—denies just this, claiming on the contrary that “For every soul there was only one perfecting; only one ideal; only one way to redemption...”

In this notebook alone, we find the following examples of the importance of respect for different types:

“Against John Stuart Mill.—I abhor his vulgarity, which says: “what is right for one is fair for another”...”

“...the concept of the “equal value of men before God” is extraordinarily harmful; one forbade actions and attitudes that were in themselves among the prerogatives of the strongly constituted—as if they were in themselves unworthy of men. One brought the entire tendency of the strong into disrepute when one erected the protective measures of the weakest (those who were weakest also when confronting themselves) as a norm of value”.

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638 BGE§221, p. 149.
639 NF-1884,26[3].
“That one soul is in itself just like every soul, or ought to be: that is the worst kind of optimistic enthusiasm. The reverse is what’s desirable: the greatest possible dissimilarity and consequently friction, struggle, contradiction…”

And elsewhere in Nietzsche’s work, this point is perhaps nowhere put so clearly as in *Twilight*:

“The doctrine of equality! There is no more poisonous poison anywhere: for it seems to be preached by justice itself, whereas it is really the termination of justice. “Equal to the equal, unequal to the unequal”—that would be the true slogan of justice; and also its corollary: “Never make equal what is unequal”…”

Iris Murdoch writes:

“In the moral life the enemy is the fat relentless ego. Moral philosophy is properly, and in the past has sometimes been, the discussion of this ego and of the techniques (if any) for its defeat. In this respect moral philosophy has shared some aims with religion…”

This suggests that all morality is a morality of unselfing, that a self-centred morality is essentially immoral. Nietzsche regards the consequences of such a view as dire. He argues that what follows from a belief in the unconditionality of “unegoistic morality” is the degradation of those types who make life worth living: the creators. It is to this argument that we now turn.

**IV.3**

In the third essay of the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche speaks of the danger of “great compassion” inspired in the healthy by the sick. He says that to think of the task of the healthy as “to be...

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644 TII§IX.48, p. 553.
646 Similarly, Nietzsche sometimes used the term “morality” as shorthand for “slave morality”.
647 Nietzsche writes in a note that, not only has the Christian emphasis on unselfing destroyed Pascal, but also that it “destroys the concept of the artist” (NF-1884,26[3]). Similarly, in *Twilight* we read that “a Christian who would at the same time be an artist simply does not occur” (TI§IX.9, p. 519). As we have seen, Nietzsche followed Tolstoy in regarding non-resistance as the “key” of Jesus’ teaching (AC§29). If this is so, then the mutual exclusivity of Christian and artist is clear enough: the artist is essentially one who resists, selects, ranks and orders. The ‘radical altruism’ we will discuss in the next section may well produce a redemptive “state of the heart”, but it does not produce great works of art (C.f. NF-1886,4[7]) (WP§9). Nietzsche speaks of the way the altruistic ideal endangers everything great: it means that “to do something for oneself, to set aside, to create—that would all be done with a bad conscience [Für sich etwas thun, bei Seite bringen, schaffen—das wäre alles mit bise[n Gewissen]” (NF-1881,11[43]).
nurses and physicians” is the worst imaginable “misunderstanding and denial of their task.” This bears comparison with a note in which Nietzsche writes:

“Nothing would be more costly than virtue: for one would in the end have turned the earth into a hospital: and ultimate wisdom would be “everyone as everyone else’s nurse.” To be sure, one would then possess that much desired “peace on earth!” But how little “delight in each other”! How little beauty, high spirits, daring, danger! How few “works” for the sake of which life on earth is worthwhile! And, alas, no more “deeds” whatever!”

This idea of a mutual nursing society is apparently taken from Goethe, who wrote to Frau von Stein in 1787:

“I think it true that humanity will triumph eventually, only I fear that at the same time the world will become a large hospital and each will become the other’s humane nurse”.

In such a radically levelled world, there is no possibility of great works—which require great selfishness, great selectivity and absorption in one’s task. This is the essential point for Nietzsche. Rather than alleviating suffering, giving a meaning to suffering is much more to the point. Suffering is inevitable—it is a part of growth, life. We turn against life by trying to negate suffering. To aim at the abolition of suffering is to construe life as an error and anaesthesia as the highest one can reach.

This is the dream world of the many ethical thinkers of our time, where one’s responsibilities are perfectly impartial and the demands on one are sublimely infinite. The
guilt of sheer existence obliges one to endlessly seek out and tend to ugliness, until that point where one becomes the ugliest being, and then presumably one can tend to oneself and be tended to by others.\footnote{654}

At a more banal level, this is a world where, for example, not reading the news is deemed “escapist”. This is not, then, a world with ears for the truth in Nietzsche’s humorous suggestion that we “lay the skin of at least three centuries” between ourselves and the present.\footnote{655} We should also contrast the fashionable and favourable evaluation of impartiality with the importance that Goethe placed on selected company, selective attention. Safranski writes in his biography of Goethe:

“Our times do not favor the creation of individuality. The price we pay for our universal interconnectedness is increased conformity. Although Goethe was intimately connected to the social and cultural life of his time, he also knew how to maintain his individuality. His principle was to take in only as much of the world as he could process. Whatever he could not respond to in a productive way he chose to disregard. In other words, he was an expert at ignoring things…”\footnote{656}

With respect to the sufferings of others, this is dealt with in a critical passage of The Gay Science, where Nietzsche writes:

“How is it at all possible to keep to one’s own way? Constantly, some clamor or other calls us aside; rarely does our eye behold anything that does not require us to drop our own preoccupation instantly and to help. I know, there are a hundred decent and praiseworthy ways of losing my own way, and they are truly highly “moral”! Indeed, those who now preach the morality of pity even take the view that precisely this and only this is moral—to lose one’s own way in order to come to the assistance of a neighbour”\footnote{657}

Nietzsche goes on to say that “such arousing of pity and calling for help is secretly seductive”. The point here is that we are only too willing to flee our own path—and to present this as what is right for us to do: “it is too hard and demanding and too remote

\footnote{654 “…We ought to give until we reach the level of marginal utility—that is, the level at which, by giving more, I would cause as much suffering to myself or my dependents as I would relieve by my gift. This would mean, of course, that one would reduce oneself to very near the material circumstances of a Bengali refugee”. See: P. Singer, “Famine, Affluence, and Morality”, Philosophy and Public Affairs, vol. 1, no. 3, 1972, pp. 229–243.}
\footnote{655 GS§338, p. 271.}
\footnote{656 GLWA, preface.}
\footnote{657 GS§338, p. 270.}
from the love and gratitude of others”; so we are actually seeking permission to “dodge” our goals.

Nietzsche asks: is there not “too much charm and sugar in these feelings of “for others,” “not for myself”…”\[^{658}\]? Should we not become suspicious? I want the seduction of altruism, to drawn away from my task. Only, I want precisely this abdication of task to appear as what is most strenuous: “Our vanity desires that what we do best should be considered what is hardest for us. Concerning the origin of many a morality”\[^{659}\].

Similarly, in *Zarathustra*, we read:

> “You crowd around your neighbor and have fine words for it. But I say unto you: your love of the neighbor is your bad love of yourselves. You flee to your neighbour from yourselves and would like to make a virtue out of that: but I see through your “selflessness”…”\[^{660}\]

Speaking of the rapture with which men throw themselves into war in service of the fatherland, Nietzsche says that what many really want is “a detour to suicide, but a detour with a good conscience”. Here we present ourselves as self-sacrificers when really we are serving a lower egoism, where our fear of the discomfort of going our own way draws us into the service of others—charity is, for us, a “detour with a good conscience” from ourselves, our own task.

In this section of *The Gay Science*, nearly the whole of Nietzsche’s critique of pity and compassion\[^{661}\] is condensed. Here he writes that when we see another as in pain, we “interpret superficially” that suffering, stripping away “whatever is distinctive, personal”. In trying to help you, I assume that your pain is merely pain. I do not see that it belongs to your growth, your path—I have “no thought of the personal necessity of distress, although terrors, deprivations, impoverishments, midnights, adventures, risks, and blunders are as

\[^{658}\] BGE§33, p. 45.
\[^{659}\] BGE§143, p. 89; c.f. BGE§11 on Kant, pp. 17–19.
\[^{660}\] TSZ “On the Love of the Neighbor”, p. 60.
\[^{661}\] I think it is clear in this section that, contrary to some commentators, Nietzsche does mean *Mitleid* in both senses and not merely the former.
necessary for me and for you as are their opposites”. It is in this sense that “our “benefactors” are, more than our enemies, people who make our worth and will smaller”. Rather than giving you the strength to persevere through suffering, to turn it to great health, I allow myself to believe that I have “helped most” when really I have “helped most quickly”. My concern isn’t for your path, but for removing the sight of your suffering from mine. But also, my concern is for the opportunity to “dodge” my goal.

Nietzsche goes on to say that suffering is not necessarily an objection, and that to assume this is to betray one’s belonging to “the religion of comfortableness”. Here one confuses the absence of suffering (comfort) with happiness, when really the relationship between suffering and happiness is not one of antithesis; on the contrary, they are “sisters and even twins that grow up together or… remain small together”.

By no means does Nietzsche altogether reject being helpful to others, but commends us to be selective here, especially here. The only people one can truly help, says Nietzsche, are those “whose distress you understand entirely”. This is so that one doesn’t attempt to prematurely alleviate suffering which is in fact necessary, or doesn’t offer help that truly just makes their “worth and will smaller”.

One helps not by helping make such a person more comfortable, but by making them “bolder, more persevering, simpler, gayer”662. The paradigmatic example here is a very controversial one: the labour pain of a mother. Against current mainstream obstetric practices, one could argue that anaesthetic intervention to relieve tension is not what is most needful, that it does not help most, even if it helps most quickly663. This is, of course, the example Nietzsche himself uses: “the pangs of the woman giving birth hallow all pain; all becoming and growing—all that guarantees a future—-involves pain”664.

It is this sentiment that lies behind Nietzsche’s reject of pity. In Beyond Good and Evil, we read:

“The discipline of suffering, of great suffering—do you no know that only this discipline has created all enhancements of man so far? … There are higher

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662 GS§338, p. 271.
663 It is not difficult to see that the medicalised approach can be disempowering to mothers. To begin with, the tensions are a part of the rite of passage that childbirth is, a rite that is potentially transformative to the mother’s sense of identity. That we tend towards the negation of all such rites in our culture reflects the prevailing attitude that suffering is intrinsically bad, an attitude which turns one into a “dreary guest [ein trüber Gast]” upon the earth (GSP, pp. 206–207).
664 TI§X.4, p. 562.
problems than all problems of pleasure, pain, and pity; and every philosophy that stops with them is a naivety.\footnote{BGE§225, p. 154.}

And in \textit{Zarathustra}:\footnote{TSZ “On the Pitying”, p. 90.}

“If you have a suffering friend, be a resting place for his suffering, but a hard bed as it were, a field cot: thus you will profit him best … Woe to all who love without having a height that is above their pity!”

There is a love that wants not the friend’s comfort and preservation, but his self-overcoming. In Zarathustra’s words, “all great love is above even its pity; for it still wants to create the beloved.”\footnote{M. Johnston, \textit{Saving God: Religion after Idolatry}, Princeton University Press, 2011, pp. 23–24.}

In \textit{Saving God}, Johnston contends that there is a “massive consensus” across spiritual traditions that salvation “requires overcoming the centripetal force of self-involvement, in order to orient one’s life around reality and the real needs of other human beings as such.”\footnote{Ibid., p. 86.} Johnston contends we should move away from treating oneself as something “at the centre,” “to be privileged”, “to be given premium treatment”.\footnote{Ibid., p. 90.} According to Johnston,

“The truly ethical life is a life in which you encounter yourself as one person among others, all equally real. This means that the legitimate interests of others, insofar as you can anticipate them, will figure on a par with your own legitimate interests in your practical reasoning— that is, in your reasoning as to what you should do and what you should prefer to happen. Inevitably, given that each one of the others counts the same as you in your practical reasoning, the interests of others often will swamp your interests in your own practical reasoning as to what you should do and prefer. For you will find yourself to be, the one you happen to know so much about, thanks to being him or her…”\footnote{Ibid., p. 90.}

\footnote{In denying that one is “at the centre” and “to be privileged”, Johnston may well be seen as providing a perfect expression of Nietzsche’s interpretation of Christian morality. It could—and perhaps should—be argued that this is a perversion of the Christian idea of love of the neighbour, if not an outright parody. Though that is not our concern here, let me at least hint at some sources of discussion: “If any one comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, RSV) Is this not a clear rejection of privileging, of especial concern? One might respond by saying that “hate” here is comparative, and the point of contrast is...}
Nietzsche, on the contrary, offers a resounding defence of a self-centred ethics. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes

“Egoism is the law of perspective applied to feelings: what is closest appears large and weighty, and as one moves farther away size and weight decrease”\(^{670}\)

We should doubt whether sanity consists in rejecting this law of perspective in favour of an impartial “point of view of the universe”. For Nietzsche, perspectivity is *essentially* partiality. But even without demonstrating that there can be no such “neutral” perspective, we may contend that this perspective-law is not an error. What’s nearest *should* appear largest. Still in *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche warns of the danger that one “becomes a mere neighbour”\(^{671}\) and also says:

“A weakened, thin, extinguished personality that denies itself is no longer fit for anything good… “Selflessness” has no value either in heaven or on earth. All great problems demand *great love*, and of that only strong, round, secure spirits who have a firm grip on themselves are capable”\(^{672}\)

This point is echoed also in *Ecce Homo*, from which the following three passages are taken:

“The Circe of humanity, morality, has falsified all *psychologica* through and through... down to that gruesome nonsense that love is supposed to be something “unegoistic.”—

“One has to sit firmly upon oneself, one must stand bravely on one’s own two legs, otherwise one is simply *incapable of loving*”\(^{673}\)

with one’s love of God. But that one loves God beyond far more suggests that one loves others *as children of God*, and all being such, loves all equally. When individuals are loved *because* they are creatures of God, we might think that this is not loving them for their particularity. But we might equally say that *because* they are creatures of God, we attend to their particularity—which follows from Nietzsche’s comment about believing in an infinitely valuable whole *in order to believe in one’s own value* (NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 12)).

“While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. But he replied to the man who told him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Here are my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother, and sister, and mother.”” (Matthew 12:46–50, RSV)

Here too, we might find a rejection of especial concern. Though one might also respond that the disciples are being pointed to as a ‘higher family’; and one could say that even within this circle, there are ‘favourites’, an inner circle, even the “Beloved Disciple” of the Gospel of John.

\(^{670}\) GS§162, p. 199.

\(^{671}\) GS§368, p. 326.

\(^{672}\) GS§345, p. 283.

\(^{673}\) EH§Books.5, p. 266; c.f. C.f. NF-1887,9[156] (WP§296, pp. 166–167) where Nietzsche refers to “the great crimes in psychology”, one being “that everything great in man has been reinterpreted as selflessness, as self-sacrifice for the sake of something else, someone else, that even in the man of knowledge, even in the artist, depersonalization has been presented as the cause of the greatest knowledge and ability”. He then says that “Only the most complete persons can love… one must be firmly rooted in oneself”.

130
The loss of the center of gravity, resistance to the natural instincts—in one word, “selflessness”—that is what was hitherto called morality.  

To demand that all should become “good human beings”, herd animals, blue-eyed, benevolent, “beautiful souls”—or as Mr. Herbert Spencer would have it, altruistic—would deprive existence of its great character and would castrate men…

For Nietzsche, it seems that love is essentially ranking and ordering. That is, it is essentially selective. Especial concern is not antithetical to love but its very basis. Adapting Blake, we might say that love in the general is the plea of the scoundrel, hypocrite, and flatterer.

This criticism against mystical effusions of universal love is given its classical formulation, I think, in D.H. Lawrence’s essay on Whitman in Studies in Classic American Literature. There, Lawrence says of Whitman’s aching with amorous love: “Better a belly-ache. a belly-ache is at least specific” and that “an ordinary man aches with love for Belinda…”:

“The difference between life and matter is that life, living things, living creatures, have the instinct of turning right away from some matter, and of blissfully ignoring the bulk of most matter, and of turning towards only some certain bits of specially selected matter

...
Your mainspring is broken, Walt Whitman. The mainspring of your own individuality. And so you run down with a great whirr, merging with everything.\(^{678}\)

Johnston writes that “I follow Thomas Nagel in identifying the ethical life with a life whose guiding principle is radical altruism or agape.\(^{679}\) But we might well say that agape doesn’t exclude eros, and eros is always particular. Thus, Blake writes:

> “The worship of God is, honouring His gifts in other men each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best. Those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God.”\(^{680}\)

To love others, one must be centered in oneself. The selfless are incapable of loving. Furthermore, to love another is to prefer, that is, to rank and order. When Nietzsche describes Jesus as teaching “love without subtraction and exclusion”\(^{681}\), we might wonder how this should be interpreted. Is this loving each particular thing, or is it loving nothing in particular? Perhaps we find it hard to believe that the direction of movement is one of expansion, for we are clearly much closer to loving nothing than to everything.\(^{682}\) And this is precisely why imitation here is so undesirable, for it means simply that nothing is up. The denial of privileging leads not to universal love but to universal indifference.\(^{683}\)

If one does not love oneself as oneself, then, then to love the neighbour as oneself is to love the neighbour only as “one of the others”, as a statistic, impersonally. That is, one who has given up his “mainspring” treats the other as if he is unimportant except as a bearer of states of pleasure and suffering—he is just to be pitied, tended to, not to be enabled to go his own way.\(^{684}\)

Here the levelling of concern leads to the diminution of life, not its enrichment; ultimately, it leads to a world in which there are no creators, only caretakers. This might sound ruthless, and it perhaps is. But let us consider for a moment a world in which one might be

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\(^{679}\) M. Johnston, op. cit, p. 90.

\(^{680}\) W. Blake, op. cit, p. 42. This version is from the *Marriage*, but a slightly differently worded one can be found in *Jerusalem*, see Ibid., p. 248.

\(^{681}\) AC§29, p. 601.

\(^{682}\) I sidestep here an analysis of Nietzsche’s affirmation of everything, which contains within itself the dynamic of how saying yes to everything may involve saying no to many things. I pick up that thread in chapter V.

\(^{683}\) The Jesus we encounter in the Gospels was certainly no utilitarian. This is obvious in the Anointment at Bethany, where Jesus responds to the indignant disciples who were decrying Mary’s waste and saying that the expensive ointment was better sold and the proceeds given to the poor.

\(^{684}\) I.e. the utilitarian “loves” something because it has the capacity to experience suffering.
willing to suffer. Is it not a world where there are great works to undertake and engage with? That is, a world in which one’s suffering could have a meaning.

If one rejects the Schopenhauerian notion that a painless world is an optimal world, one does not merely want to have one’s pain soothed, but rather one wants something to live for. Where the only thing to live for is to soothe others’ pain is a world of staggering flatness. What one needs is a world with values. There are no values without creators of values, and Nietzsche is clear that such value creators are “hard”: they are not going to be seduced from their path by the sight of others’ suffering. This is not mere callousness, but the recognition of a “height that is above… pity”.

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche says that that “pity makes suffering contagious” and says that pity “multiplies misery and conserves all that is miserable”. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche speaks of teaching others “to share not suffering but joy”. That Nietzsche says that this is understood “least of all by these preachers of pity” even suggests that such preachers are great sharers of suffering. This is so because they spread an interpretation of the sufferer as to be pitied, and thus they make pitiful. In their attempts to alleviate suffering, they peddle the interpretation of suffering as intrinsically bad. Just as Nietzsche claimed elsewhere that “the source of wrong is never unequal rights but the claim of “equal” rights”, we might think that the problem is not suffering, but the belief that suffering is dispensable—or, to say the same thing, the belief that one’s suffering is needless.

IV.4

In *On the Basis of Morals*, Schopenhauer argues that the “metaphysical basis of ethics” is “one individual’s immediately recognizing himself, his own true essence, in the other”. Having understood that “plurality and difference belongs solely to mere appearance”, one realises that the thing-in-itself is one—and insofar as both you and I are essentially the thing-in-itself,
you are not other than I. Thus, Schopenhauer writes that the difference between a good and bad character is that:

“The latter senses everywhere a strong dividing wall between himself and everything outside him. The world for him is an absolute not-I and his relationship to it a primordially foreign one… By contrast, the good character lives in an external world homogenous with his essence: others for him are not not-I, but are ‘I once more’…”

The momentary dissolution of the “barrier between I and not I” in the experience of compassion means that the other’s pain is felt as my own (“yet not in me but in another”).

Even if one were to agree that mystical experience is the basis of morality, one might disagree that the mystical experience must be given a moral interpretation, or at least this moral interpretation—that is, that it necessarily supports a universalist ethics, an ethics of equality, or an ethic of minimising suffering.

In fact, it seems that it is only on a particular conception of the relationship between part and whole (or equally, between phenomenon and thing-in-itself), that one is led to this interpretation.

Schopenhauer seems repeatedly to take the side of the whole. Wholeness is reality, and the principium individuationis is mere appearance, illusion. Even though for Schopenhauer we “are ourselves the thing in itself,” this is not to say that we can be driven from this centre. The individual will is always distorting, and it cannot be brought into the correct relationship with the whole. So it is better to negate the individual will altogether.

For Schopenhauer, the will is objectified as many, but in itself it is one. Furthermore, the will is completely independent of the world of representations. The world of representation is illusory—it is just how the will appears to its own objectifications [Objektivationen]. For this reason, a full understanding of our nature “acts as a tranquilizer of the will and leads to resignation, the abandonment not only of life, but of the whole will to live.”

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693 Ibid., p. 218.
694 For example, WWRI§63, pp. 378–379.
695 WWRII§18, p. 221.
696 Norman et al. render this “Objectivation”. See WWR, “Note on text and translation”, p. l.
697 WWR§51, p. 280.
But we might ask: how full is this understanding? And to what extent is it “half-Christian”? That is, to what extent is it reliant on an idea of a world behind, a “true” world? To what extent does it rely on a “dualistic conception” that allows one to take sides with one pole and reject the “doubleness” of life?

For Schopenhauer, there can be no affirmation of the manifestation—it is illusion, it is always “mere” appearance. The part is the imperfect representation of the whole. The whole is thus apart from its parts, and is merely reflected in them.

Nietzsche’s view has a very different valuation of manifestation. To begin with, Nietzsche denies that there is a true world beyond this one:

“The “true world” and the “apparent world”—that means: the mendaciously invented world and reality”

But the view is subtler than it might at first appear, for this world is neither “true” nor “apparent”—it is simply what is:

“The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one”

That there is no “true world” behind the supposedly “apparent” one means also that there is no whole behind the parts. The relationship between whole and part is reciprocal, such as in the hologram discussed in chapter I. On this view, individuation cannot be rejected in favour of unity because the whole does not exist apart from the parts.

In answering the question as to what extent Schopenhauer’s interpretation is “half Christian”, it is worth pointing out that there is great similarity between Nietzsche’s and Schopenhauer’s interpretation of Christianity—even if their evaluation is very different. They both understand Jesus, as Nietzsche put it, as laying the foundations of a “Buddhistic peace movement”. Schopenhauer, for example, writes in the second volume of the Will that in Christianity’s “cognizance of the nullity of all earthly happiness, complete contempt for it, and turning toward an existence of an entirely different, indeed opposite, kind”, it proves

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698 BGE§56, p. 68.
701 TI§IV, p. 486; c.f. TI§III.2, p. 481.
702 I.e. individuals are not modes of some whole that exists behind them; rather, the whole does not exist apart from the parts.
703 AC§42, pp. 616–617.
itself to be closer to “atheistic Buddhism” than to “optimistic Judaism, and its variation, Islam”\(^\text{704}\). Later in the same work, Schopenhauer writes:

“…that great fundamental truth contained in Christianity as well as in Brahmanism and Buddhism, the need for redemption from an existence subject to suffering and death, and its attainability through the denial of the will, hence by a decided opposition to nature, is beyond all comparison the most important that there can be”\(^\text{705}\)

Here Schopenhauer gives an interpretation of the fall and salvation in terms of individuation\(^\text{706}\): the fall of Adam is the affirmation of the will-to-live, and represents “man’s finite, animal, sinful nature”; while Jesus’ redemption is the denial of the will to live through the death of self\(^\text{707}\).

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For Schopenhauer, all selfishness is \textit{sick}, and self-renunciation is health. But insofar as one renounces oneself, one is affirming oneself; and so for Schopenhauer, renunciation is not something we \textit{do}. It is passivity, letting go, resignation, non-resistance.

This abandonment is seen as a great attainment: “resignation… is like an inherited estate: it frees its possessor from all cares forever”\(^\text{708}\). That it is desirable to be freed from all care, from all striving, reminds us of Nietzsche’s speculation in the \textit{Antichrist} as to the origins of the instinctive exclusion of antipathy and hostility of the “redeemer type”: this, Nietzsche claimed, came from their heightened capacity for suffering which “experiences any resistance, even any compulsion to resist, as unendurable displeasure”\(^\text{709}\).

However well Nietzsche’s discussion of \textit{non-resistance} meets its intended Christian target, it does seem applicable in the case of Schopenhauer. Indeed, Schopenhauer considered resistance to be the very essence of suffering: “When an obstacle is placed between it [i.e. a will] and its temporary goal, we call this inhibition suffering”\(^\text{710}\).

\(^{704}\) WWRH§38, p. 500.
\(^{705}\) WWRH§48, p. 703.
\(^{706}\) The interpretation of individuation as fall in Christianity has a lot to do with the Neoplatonic concept of successive emanations. Let us recall that the concept of original sin was thought through by Augustine on such a Neoplatonic model. Once again, “Christianity is Platonism for “the people”…” (BGE§5, p. 3). C.f. my discussion of Nietzsche and Meister Eckhart in chapter II.
\(^{707}\) WWRH§48, p. 702.
\(^{708}\) WWRH§68, p. 417.
\(^{709}\) AC§30, p. 602.
\(^{710}\) WWRH§56, p. 336.
It is well worth taking up Nietzsche’s psychological speculation here and considering Nietzsche and Schopenhauer as individuals on this point.

Nietzsche’s critique of unselfing comes from a man whose tendency was ever toward an excess of compassion, and hence the dissolution of the boundary between self and other—and thus to diversion from what he felt to be his own task. Marie von Bradke wrote of Nietzsche that:

“The inner struggle with his pathologically delicate soul, overflowing with pity, was what led him to preach “Be hard!” and to look up with admiration at those Renaissance men of violence who had walked stolidly over corpses to reach their goal”711.

Nietzsche was well aware of this himself. Consider, for example, the line in *The Gay Science*712 which he quotes in the following letter to Overbeck:

> “From my childhood, the phrase “my greatest danger is in pity” has been confirmed repeatedly… Suffice to say that the terrible experiences I have had with pity have led me to a highly interesting theoretical shift in the valuation of pity”713.

Schopenhauer, on the other hand, was a man of thicker boundaries (if not thicker skin). In a sense, he was a natural egotist, but of a particularly tortured kind. Schopenhauer obviously had a nervous disposition that made the existence of the other loathsome. But however much he pushed, he couldn’t get all otherness down the staircase. The only remedy thus was to do away with himself—to remove the barrier between self and other, so that no resistance was felt.

For Schopenhauer, dissolution seemed like salvation. This is very clearly seen in his discussion of the temporary suspension of will in the contemplation of works of art:

> “These moments, when we are released from the cruel impulses of the will and emerge from the heavy ether of the earth, are the most blissful ones we experience. We can gather from this how blissful life must be for someone whose will is not merely momentarily placated, as it is in the pleasure of the beautiful, but calmed


712 GS§271, p. 220: “Where are your greatest dangers?—In pity”.

713 BVN-1884,533. Compare this with an earlier letter to Overbeck, BVN-1883,369: “I now understand the value of misanthropy to all hermits. Unfortunately, I have the opposite nature [Ich verstehe jetzt, welchen Werth für alle Einsiedler der Menschenhass gehabt hat. Leider bin ich zum Gegenteil geartet]."
forever, indeed extinguished entirely except for the last glowing spark that sustains the body and is extinguished along with it”\textsuperscript{714}

That these states are \textit{temporary} is seen by Schopenhauer to be a shortcoming. The goal was to the \textit{permanent} collapse of the \textit{principium individuationis}. It was basically just the paradox of intention that stood in the way of an advocacy of suicide:

“Nothing can be more different from this negation than \textit{suicide}, the voluntary abolition of the individual appearance of the will. Far from being a negation of the will, this is a phenomenon of a strong affirmation of will”\textsuperscript{715}

Now, we might believe that for \textit{some types}, this dissolution \textit{is} the highest that that \textit{they} can attain. But in its failure to account for other types, Schopenhauer’s philosophy is another “involuntary and unconscious memoir”\textsuperscript{716} that generalises where it shouldn’t, that fails to acknowledge its particularity. That is, Schopenhauer mistook \textit{his} redemption for redemption \textit{as such, his} way for \textit{the} way. This is just how Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer’s appropriation and modification of Kant’s concept of disinterest, writing that Schopenhauer

“…was pleased by the beautiful from an “interested” viewpoint, even from the very strongest, most personal interest: that of a tortured man who gains relief from his torture”\textsuperscript{717}.

Since it would certainly be a mistake to read Schopenhauer as being exemplary of the “redeemer type”, we might also put the point a little differently, noting the essentially \textit{corrective} or \textit{compensatory} quality of these teachings: whereas Nietzsche saw the danger of unselfing because he was very susceptible to it, perhaps for Schopenhauer, it could remain ideal because it was so distant—and his \textit{occasional} tastes of it were so tonic. Failing to see just how personal his longing for disinterest was, Schopenhauer he failed to see that an untortured self would not find redemption there.

To put the point in more general terms: those who experience all resistance as “\textit{unendurable displeasure}”\textsuperscript{718}, \textit{then} the greatest pleasure is in non-resistance—which is not pleasure but the absence of displeasure. This is of course exactly Schopenhauer’s position, for he considers

\textsuperscript{714} WWRI§68, p. 417.
\textsuperscript{715} WWRI§69, p. 425; I say ‘basically’ because if the Will weren’t eternal (as it is for Schopenhauer), then this would just be a \textit{temporary} affirmation.
\textsuperscript{716} BGE§56, p. 13.
\textsuperscript{717} GM§III.6, pp. 105–106.
\textsuperscript{718} AC§30, p. 602. Emphasis added.
happiness to have an essentially “negative” character: pleasure is only the absence of pain, thus “living happily” is only to be understood as ‘living less unhappily’…”719

For Nietzsche, if this is what happiness means, then happiness is not what man seeks (Englishmen excepted720): “all expansion, incorporation, growth means striving against something that resists”. Since it is power that we will, “we desire displeasure”721. We might follow Nietzsche’s discussion of self-preservation by saying that the will to painlessness is a “the symptom of a condition of distress, of a limitation of the really fundamental instinct of life which aims at the expansion of power” and thus frequently wills resistances, even crushing ones, upon itself722.

IV.5

In Phenomenology of Perception, Merleau-Ponty wrote

“All knowledge is established within the horizons opened up by perception. Since perception is the “flaw” in this “great diamond,” there can be no question of describing it as one of the facts that happens in the world, for the picture of the world will always include this lacuna that we are and by which the world itself comes to exist for someone”723

Merleau-Ponty goes on to say that the individual is a “hollow” or a “fold” in being724, an invagination that allows being to become aware of itself. This has much in common with Nietzsche’s view discussed already (chapters I–III) that the individual is of the world, and sees with eyes that grew out of it725. As Nietzsche put it: “we belong to the character of the world [Wir gehören zum Charakter der Welt]”726

720 TI§I.12, p. 468.
722 GS§349, p. 291.
724 M. Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception, op. cit., p. 223.
725 Merleau-Ponty writes that “one’s own body is in the world just as the heart is in the organism” (Ibid., p. 245). Is the world an organism and individuals its organs? C.f. our discussion in chapter III.
726 NF-1885,1[89]. C.f. “life itself values through us when we posit values” (TI “Morality as Anti-Nature” §5, p. 490). See also my discussion of belonging to fate.
The image of a flaw suggests a rather different conception, and one with much affinity to Schopenhauer's view. Merleau-Ponty borrowed this phrase from Valéry's poem “The Graveyard by the Sea”, where we find the lines:

“My doubts, my strivings, my repentances,
These are the flaw in your great diamond

[ Mes repentirs, mes doutes, mes contraintes,
Sont le défaut de ton grand diamant]727

A similar thought is expressed in Valéry’s “Silhouette of a Serpent”, another poem from the same collection:

“...the universe is merely a blot
On the pure void of Non-being!

[...l'univers n'est qu'un défaut
Dans la pureté du non-être]728

Valéry here exhibits an attitude of disgust towards manifestation that was typical of the Symbolists: Mallarmé, of whom Valéry was a disciple, once wrote that we are to “exclude the real, because it is vile”729. Given his unmistakable influence on 20th century philosophy and literature, Valéry presents a very interesting case730. I simply do not have the space here to do it justice.

What we need to undertake here is a consideration of the opposite evaluation: that individuation is neither flaw nor fall but enhancement. Nietzsche writes in a note:

“The isolation of the individual ought not to deceive us: something flows on underneath individuals. That the individual feels himself isolated is itself the most powerful goad in the process towards the most distant goals: his search for his happiness is the means that holds together and moderates the form-giving forces, so they do not destroy themselves”731

The form-giving forces discussed in this fragment are the very “gestaltenden Kräfte” discussed in the Genealogy, where we are told that adaptation is an “activity of the second rank, a mere

728 Ibid., pp. 186–187.
730 In particular, a study of his essay “The Existence of Symbolism” in light of the Genealogy would be well worth undertaking.
reactivity” and that when this is placed in the foreground (as by Spencer), “the essence of life, its will to power, is ignored; one overlooks the essential priority of the spontaneous, aggressive, expansive, form-giving forces that give new interpretations and directions”\(^{732}\). (Notice that here will to power is conceived of morphologically, which may well be the most sane way of conceiving it\(^ {733}\)).

The idea seems to be held in common by Nietzsche and Goethe: the individual belongs to the whole—yet individuation is not a mistake, but a form of elaboration of that whole. This is reflected in remarks by both men on differentiation.

In *On Morphology*, Goethe writes:

“No living thing is unitary in nature; every such thing is a plurality. Even the organism which appears to us as individual exists as a collection of independent living entities.

[…] The less perfect the creation, the more its parts are alike or similar and the more they resemble the whole. The more perfect the creation the less similar its parts become. In the first instance the whole is like its parts to a degree, in the second the whole is unlike its parts. The more similar the parts, the less they will be subordinated to one another. Subordination of parts indicates a more perfect creation”\(^ {734}\)

Consider two more notes from Nietzsche:

“The weaker presses to the stronger from a need for nourishment; it wants to get under it, if possible to become one with it. The stronger, on the contrary, drives others away; it does not want to perish in this manner; it grows and in growing it splits itself into two or more parts. The greater the impulse toward unity, the more firmly may one conclude that weakness is present; the greater the impulse towards variety, differentiation, inner decay, the more force is present.”\(^ {735}\)

“Greater complexity, sharp differentiation… if that is perfection, then there is a will to power in the organic process by virtue of which dominant, shaping,

\(^{732}\) GMIII.12, p. 79.

\(^{733}\) I do not know of any study of the relationship between Goethe’s primary forces (particularly polarity and intensification) and Nietzsche’s conception of will to power. For a discussion of Goethe’s forces, see A.O. Tantillo, *The Will to Create: Goethe’s Philosophy of Nature*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002

\(^{734}\) J.W. Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, op. cit., p. 64.

\(^{735}\) NF-1885,36[21] (WP§655, p. 346).
commanding forces continually extend the bounds of their power and continually simplify within these bounds: the imperative grows736.

Differentiation is *enhancement*, expansion737. The sense of isolation is described as a *centripetal* force, which is not necessarily to say that is a *contraction* but simply that it is *cohesive*. It gives tone to form. That the sense of isolation certainly *can* become a contraction is a point to which I will return presently.

The rejection of the *moi* is a rejection of the individuating tendency of will to power. It is an attempt to *take sides with the whole*. But if we understand that the whole is not apart from the parts, then a rejection of parthood is also a rejection of the whole. Self-abnegation is *impious*: it deteriorates that which it claims to reverence.

On such a view, it seems that Freud had part of the equation correct with respect to the “oceanic feeling”. Freud claimed that the feeling of identification with the whole is *primitive* and that a “narrower and more sharply outlined ego-feeling” is something healthy, belonging to maturity738. Note that this is essentially the position of Nietzsche’s that we saw in our discussion of Spencer (chapter II): altruism is primitive to egoism, that the sense of oneself as separate is a relatively late development739.

To be in a *perpetual* state of *participation mystique* may well be pathological740. One’s development may have been arrested at a primitive stage, or have progressed beyond it before regressing to it.

I wish to take a different line here than those who have disagreed with Freud by (rightly) asserting that *participation mystique* is not the only form of unitive or mystical experience741, saying, for example, that there are experiences in which differentiation is preserved while

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737 C.f. the infamous NF-1885,38[12] (WP§1067, pp. 549–550), where multiplicity is described as *flood and unity as ebb*, as a return to “the joy of concord”.
739 It is worth noting that this discussion assumes that ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny. That is, that the development of the individual in some way mirrors the development of the species.
740 This might seem uncontroversially pathological, though I can imagine an argument to the contrary being made on the basis of other neotenous traits.
741 Schopenhauer, for instance, did not simply seek a collapse of subject/object where one understands one’s identity with all other representations—but to retreat even further, to one’s identity with the *will* which these things represent, objectify. See also: K. Wilber, “Pre/Trans Fallacy”, *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1982, pp. 5–43. For Wilber, there is a confusion in, e.g., Freud and Jung of the pre-rational and the trans-rational, Freud assimilating the latter to the former and Jung erring in the opposite direction. There is something in this line of argument that urges a citation of Hulme’s critique of the spiral: “You disguise the wheel by making it run up an inclined plane; it then becomes “Progress”…” See: T.E. Hulme, *Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art*, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1936, p. 36 (Hulme falsely imputes this view to Goethe).
the sense of integration is enhanced. In short, that transcending one’s ego is not the same as descent from ego.

Instead of this, I ask a rather simple question: is a temporary regression necessarily pathological? As we saw earlier (chapter II), Nietzsche sees the importance of unitive experiences, defining the Dionysian state as the “temporary identification with the principle of life”742. We might think of this as the identification with those form-giving forces themselves, with fate743.

Though the sense of isolation is a “powerful goad”, to “stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence” requires the sense that one belongs to the whole, that one “belongs to fate”. Understanding how one relates to the whole may enable one to better play one’s part.

There are many questions here which I have simply not addressed, and they are questions of major interest to many students in discussions about transformation of consciousness. I have said something about temporariness, but I have said nothing about frequency. Furthermore, I have said nothing about ultimacy and availability744. I believe that the more pertinent question is one of instrumentality. I have said that these Dionysian states can be useful. I do not necessarily mean to say that they are preparatory, as if one needs to ‘have’ such an experience, and then one is enabled to get to work. They could equally be deep wells, ‘useless’ abysses of perfection into which one falls after having exerted oneself in creative work. This is just Nietzsche’s description of his later aesthetic, his “art for artists”745. The point is simply that these states form an integral part of the economy of the “artist”, and my intention is not to propose any model for how or why this is the case.

It seems to me that too rigid a sense of isolation may lead to what Nietzsche calls “sick selfishness” (which I will discuss in more detail below). For one who doesn’t realise that “something flows on underneath individuals”, the centripetal force of his sense of isolation

742 NF-1883,8[14] (WP§417, p. 224).
743 I don’t mean to suggest that these form-giving forces are tools of fate, but that they might help us to understand what Nietzsche means by fate. An early note has it that necessity is the “principle of life”; NF-1875,5[166]. For other uses of this term, see NF-1886,7[9] and NF-1888,18[17].
744 Some believe that no enlightenment is ultimate in the sense of permanent, but that for the most ‘accomplished’ mystics, these states are always available. The reason that such questions are not entirely pertinent to our discussion is that I do not think that Nietzsche believed in an enlightenment. For example, while the “dead world” is without dissimulation, it is also not (uniquely) true. Nietzsche is thoroughly pluralist. See my discussion of Dionysus and multiplicity in chapter V.
745 GS§368, p. 325: “My melancholy wants to rest in the hiding places and abysses of perfection: that is why I need music”. The temporary entrance into perfection is restorative (c.f. GS§302). Such works are important for those whose tasks are heavy, which is why they are an art for artists. This is contrasted with those who have no sense of their task, and so ‘require Wagner as an opiate: they forget themselves, they are rid of themselves for a moment. What am I saying? For five or six hours!” (EH§HH.3, p. 287) This later aesthetic, and its connection with Nietzsche’s spirituality, is something that I should like to explore in greater detail on another occasion.
leads to excessive contraction: self-preservation becomes an end in itself. Nietzsche argues that self-preservation is no end, but is “a symptom of conditions of distress”. It is not the norm but the exception. It is appropriate perhaps as a “winter doctrine”, for periods when growth is not possible.

For Nietzsche, the basic impulse is not towards conservation but growth: “the really fundamental instinct of life… aims at the expansion of power and, wishing for that, frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation.” Self-preservation is maintenance, which is a means to growth, to expansion. Boundary defence is certainly sometimes necessary. But it certainly is no end. The herd, however, mistakes it for one: “the tendency of the herd is directed toward standstill and preservation. There is nothing creative in it.”

Nietzsche described Christianity as leading to “insanely important souls, revolving about themselves with a frightful fear—” This is the fear of those whose sense of isolation has lead to the extreme of self-preservation: the craving after eternal life. But this is basically defensive—and leads to a life of paranoid contraction, of quis custodiet ipsos custodes?

Once the boundaries of individuation are secure, unitive experiences may allow a little looseness in the mechanism. Not so much that the wheels fall off, but enough that they are able to turn. That is, these experiences might allow one to overcome the defensiveness that in fact strangles the organism: where one has become so concerned for boundary defence that one is incapable of living.

In a late note, Nietzsche writes:

“Morality essentially a shield, a means of defense; to this extent a sign of the immature (armored, stoical).

The mature man has, above all, weapons: he attacks.

746 GS§349, p. 291. This passage makes the same point as GM§II.12 (discussed above) in different terms. Self-preservation here is adaptation, conformation, something reactive. This critique is explicitly made of Spinoza, but see H.G. Wiesmann, “Spinoza’s Conatus and Nietzsche’s Will to Power: Self-Preservation vs. Increase of Power?”, AUC Interpretations, vol. 2, 2013, pp. 49–61.

747 C.f. TSZ “Old and New Tablets” §8, p. 201.


749 Nietzsche describes this in slightly different terms, saying that self-preservation is merely a consequence of self-enhancement. See for example: NF-1885,2[63] (WP§650, p. 344), c.f. NF-1884,26[277].

750 C.f. NF-1886,7[25] (WP§647, pp. 343–344): “a state of need can be a condition of existence, in so far as it reduces an individual to that measure of expenditure which holds it together but prevents it from squandering itself”. Again on the temporary value of contraction, defence. This notebook is important for thoughts on the process of individuation.


752 NF-1887,11[226] (WP§339, p. 185).
Instruments of war transformed into instruments of peace (from scales and armor, feathers and hair)\textsuperscript{753}

In development, one overcomes one’s defensiveness: armour becomes the freedom to move. The note continues:

“Morality is just as “immoral” as any other thing on earth; morality is itself a form of immorality”\textsuperscript{754}

The relevant point here is that morality is a developmental stage\textsuperscript{755}. It is a stage that judges life, finds it wanting. In order to do this, it must imagine life as other\textsuperscript{756}. But this very judgement—this separating oneself from the life that one is, this setting oneself apart—is a part of the tendency of life\textsuperscript{757}. For Nietzsche, this tendency is not to be rejected: “the “impersonal” is merely the personal weakened”\textsuperscript{758}. Rather, in the embrace of this individuation, there is the possibility of what Nietzsche calls a “whole and holy” selfishness, to which our attention now turns.

IV.6

In the previous chapter, I quoted the following late note:

“Correction of the concept “egoism.”— When one has grasped to what extent the concept “individual” is an error because every single creature constitutes the entire process in its entire course (not merely as “inherited,” but the process itself\textsuperscript{759}—), then the single creature acquires a tremendously great significance. Instinct speaks quite correctly here…”\textsuperscript{760}

It is now time to make sense of this in light of what in Zarathustra Nietzsche described as a “whole and holy [heil und heilig]” selfishness, and which he contrasted with “sick selfishness [die kranke Selbstsucht]”\textsuperscript{761}.

\textsuperscript{753} NF-1887,9[140] (WP§727, pp. 385–386).
\textsuperscript{754} NF-1887,9[140] (WP§308, p. 172).
\textsuperscript{756} I.e. to judge the whole, one must seem to stand outside it. C.f. TI§XI.8 (pp. 500–501) and NF-1887,11[72] (WP§708, p. 378).
\textsuperscript{757} In the same notebook, Nietzsche writes: “From the standpoint of morality, the world is false. But to the extent that morality is itself a part of this world, morality is false”. NF-1887,9[91] (WP§552, p. 298)
\textsuperscript{758} NF-1881,11[65]; c.f. GM§III.2.
\textsuperscript{759} I.e. the individual is not merely the inheritor of the whole process, but is the whole process
\textsuperscript{760} NF-1887,9[30] (WP§785, pp. 412–413).
\textsuperscript{761} TSZ “On the Gift Giving Virtue”, p. 75.
Elsewhere in Zarathustra—immediately following the passage about “great love” being higher than pity—\textsuperscript{762}—we read:

““Myself I sacrifice to my love, and my neighbour as myself”—thus runs the speech of all creators. But all creators are hard”\textsuperscript{763}

This is an extraordinary modulation of Jesus’ answer to the heart of the teachings (Mark 12, Matt. 22), and shows clearly the extent of Nietzsche’s departure from what he sees as the Christian emphasis on pity.

In the context of Zarathustra, one’s love is one’s creation. Exploring the artist’s attitude toward sacrifice and suffering is a good way of unpacking the concept of whole and holy selfishness. It also allows us to better understand what Nietzsche means in speaking of the hardness of creators.

On my reading of Nietzsche, the sense of oneself as a separate being is “an illness as pregnancy is illness”\textsuperscript{764}. Inwardness can pass through sick selfishness to that which is “whole and holy”: we might say that inwardness creates the interior world into which the world may flow that it might be “enrich[ed]… out of one’s fullness”\textsuperscript{765} and then flow out of one’s well as a gift of one’s love\textsuperscript{766}.

Here we have the potential for the affirmation of our differentiated condition, neither seeing it as irredeemably fallen, nor understanding redemption as going back to an undifferentiated state, as the ‘return to the One’. Rather than denying the individual in favour of the whole, the individual here affirms the whole as a part. Indeed, on Nietzsche’s understanding, one cannot take sides with the whole, for it does not exist apart from the parts.

In Ecce Homo, Nietzsche describes “severe self-love [der strengen Selbstsucht]” as “what is most profoundly necessary for growth”, and says that “the morality that would un-self man is the morality of decline par excellence” and that “fundamentally, it negates life”\textsuperscript{767}. Without selfishness, one does not grow; without this growth, one has nothing to give. This is a theme that goes back a long way in Nietzsche’s thought. For example, in the Dawn, Nietzsche speaks of the “ideal selfishness [die idealische Selbstsucht]” of the pregnant. Here

\textsuperscript{762} I discuss this passage above in the section on nursing.
\textsuperscript{763} TSZ “On the Pitying”, p. 90.
\textsuperscript{764} GM\textsuperscript{II}.19, p. 88.
\textsuperscript{765} TI§ IX.9, p. 518.
\textsuperscript{766} TSZ “On the Gift Giving Virtue” §1, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{767} EH§ Destiny.7, pp. 332–333.
he speaks of their selectivity, and describes this selfishness as being “for the benefit of all [für den Nutzen Aller]”768.

Some comments of Matisse that may help to illuminate Nietzsche’s point. Against the idea that great artists should be teachers, Matisse wrote in Divagations (1937):

“I once had the good fortune to receive Rodin’s advice on the subject of my drawings, which had been shown him by a friend. Yet the advice he gave in no wise suited me, and on this occasion Rodin merely showed his petty side. He could not do otherwise. For the best of what the old masters possess, that which is their raison d’être, is beyond their grasp. Having no understanding of it, they cannot teach it. [...] How distressing it is to see genuine artists devoting a portion of their efforts to the aid of those who cannot find their way alone. They merely succeed in whittling out so many white canes which will permit men whose activity might be better employed to grope their way until they have done a useless piece of work.”769

It is distressing precisely because such artists have been seduced into “sins of omission”, pulled away from their own path and task and into a pursuit far less fertile. In Jazz (1947), Matisse wrote of those who give “their lives to the development of their natural talents” as doing so “for the profit of all [au profit de tous]”770.

Once again, this is easy to misunderstand. The profiting others isn’t the end and self-development the means. To think this would be to “yield to humanitarian illusions about the origins of an aristocratic society”771. The artist’s benefit to others is not sacrifice, but flows directly out of his development which is pursued for its own sake.

We saw above that for Nietzsche, our true benefactors are not the charitable772, so who are they? One way of answering is to say: those who give us new values, and thus give our suffering meaning. That is, those who are capable of “great works”773. But aren’t such people selfish?

In a late note, Nietzsche writes:

768 D§552, p. 553.
771 BGE§257, p. 201.
772 GS§338.
“Observe the eyes of benefactors: what one sees is the antithesis of self-denial, of hatred for the moi, of “Pascalism”.”

Those who benefit us the most, it seems, are those who love themselves, who undertake their individual pursuits with a good conscience. Just a few notes later, Nietzsche writes:

“It is richness in personality, abundance in oneself, overflowing and bestowing, instinctive good health and affirmation of oneself, that produce great sacrifice and great love: it is strong and godlike selfhood [göttliche Selbstigkeit] from which these affects grow, just as surely as do the desire to become master, the inner certainty of having a right to everything. What according to common ideas are opposite dispositions are rather one disposition; and if one is not firm and brave within oneself, one has nothing to bestow and cannot stretch out one’s hands to protect and support—”

That those who give us the most are precisely those who feel like they have a right to everything tells us a good deal about Nietzsche’s thought here. It may be helpful to contrive a distinction between gift giving and gift bestowal: the former having witting and transactional qualities, while the latter is unconscious and squandering.

The greatest artists’ work was not motivated by benefiting others. They were simply developing their natural talents. Far from giving for others, Nietzsche describes the one who bestows as doing so out of a need to unburden himself of the overfullness from which he suffers: “Should not the giver be thankful that the receiver received? Is not giving a need?...”

That it is the sun which teaches Zarathustra how to bestow indicates the unconscious and spontaneous qualities of bestowal. These qualities are also suggested by the line “when your heart flows broad and full like a river, a blessing and a danger to those living near: there is the origin of your virtue”. That the gift-bestowing virtue is not calculated or instrumental

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774 NF-1887,10[125] (WP§932, p. 492).
775 NF-1887,10[128] (WP§388, p. 209).
776 I owe this distinction to Bazzano, who writes; “this form of generosity is un-self-conscious, and far removed from the “altruistic” shadow of guilt, debt and bad conscience which characterizes many of our charitable, good-intentioned forms of giving”. See. M. Bazzano, op. cit., p. 82.
777 See for e.g. GS§370, p. 328.
779 TSZ “Old and New Tablets” §3, p. 198.
may also help us to understand the sense in which this “highest virtue” is described as “useless”781.

But all of this is most clearly expressed in a passage from the Skirmishes of Twilight:

“The genius, in work and deed, is necessarily a squanderer: that he squanders himself, that is his greatness. The instinct for self-preservation is suspended, as it were; the overpowering pressure of outflowing forces forbids him any such care or caution. People call this “self-sacrifice” and praise his “heroism,” his indifference to his own well-being, his devotion to an idea, a great cause, a fatherland: without exception, misunderstandings. He flows out, he overflows, he uses himself up, he does not spare himself—and this is a calamitous, involuntary fatality, no less than a river’s flooding the land. Yet, because much is owed to such explosives, much has also been given them in return: for example, a kind of higher morality. After all, that is the way of all human gratitude: it misunderstands its benefactors782.

If we are not to misunderstand our benefactors, we must see that they are not negating themselves but fulfilling themselves783.

In a late note, Nietzsche speaks of the “ascending” individual as having an “extraordinary right to egoism”. The reason for this is that the individual “consists of the whole course of evolution”784, so if the individual is healthy and vigorous enough, this whole is able to come to a magnificent new expression. In the section of Twilight for which this note served as a draft, Nietzsche says that such an individual has extreme worth “for the sake of life as a whole, which takes a step farther through him”785.

We have to read this with some care, lest we make the mistake of “scholarly oxen” in interpreting this teleologically. “A step farther” does not mean a step toward some goal.

781 Ibid, p. 74.
782 TII§IX.44, p. 548. There is also a note from the period worth mentioning, NF-1887.11[44] (WP§949, p. 499): “that one stakes one’s life, one’s health, one’s honor, is the consequence of high spirits and an overflowing, prodigal will: not from love of man but because every great danger challenges our curiosity about the degree of our strength and our courage”.
783 That “the instinct for self-preservation is suspended” relates to the discussion of developmental stages earlier in this chapter (see IV.5). Such a person has moved beyond the moral sphere. He has become so ripe that he needs outstretched hands. Once again: squandering is not sacrifice, bestowal is not gift.
784 NF-1888.14[29] (WP§373, p. 200); c.f. our discussions in chapters II and III.
785 TII§IX.33, p. 534. Here the claim is repeated that “the single one, the “individual,” as hitherto understood by the people and the philosophers alike, is an error after all: he is nothing by himself, no atom, no “link in the chain,” nothing merely inherited from former times; he is the whole single line of humanity up to himself”.
Nietzsche’s point is that such expressions are the meaning to history, and one which we have given it. This point is already made in the Meditations: “the goal of humanity cannot lie in its end but only in its highest exemplars.”

Furthermore, to speak of “the sake of life as a whole” should not mislead us; as we have seen, Nietzsche did not believe in the existence of a whole outside of the ‘parts’. Nietzsche is saying that such an individual has a right to develop his natural talents and thus to express and extend the whole in himself.

“Egoism! But no one has yet asked: what kind of ego?”

“Enough; the question is always who he is”

A similar point can and has been put much less provocatively. Kaufmann often cited the following passage from Aristotle’s Nichomachean Ethics as analogous:

“The good person ought to be a self-lover—he will profit both himself and benefit others by doing noble things—but the corrupt person ought not to be—he will harm both himself and his neighbors, since he follows his base passions…”

That egoism is appropriate to some and not to others is a notion at which many experience revulsion. I do not deny the difficulties here. Questions such as the following are inevitably raised, for which no easy answers are forthcoming: ‘who gets to decide who these

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786 It is often missed that the following statement is anti-teleological: “the overman is the meaning of the earth. Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth!” See: TSZ Prologue §3, p. 13; c.f. TSZ “Gift Giving” §2, p. 76.

787 UM§II.9, p. 111; the view, of course, persists, as the remark about “scholarly oxen” suggests (EH§Books.1, p. 261). For example, see TI§IX.50, p. 555. See also NF-1886,7[6] (WP§269, pp. 153–154): against “the will to a perspective that seeks to make it impossible to see oneself”, Nietzsche asserts that his idea is that “goals are lacking and these must be individuals!” See also NF-1888,14[123,133] (WP§684 combines both, pp. 361–364) and my discussion of Spencer in chapter II.

788 We could also say he has a concomitant duty to the whole to do this. But we have to be careful here not to conceive of the whole as somewhere else. Such a person’s duty to the whole just is the duty to himself. This is not to mention that the whole notion of duty seems almost indecent here.

789 In this we begin to get a sense of what is meant by the highest specimen as acting as a justification of the whole.


791 BGE§221, p. 149.

792 Kaufmann cites this passage in his footnotes to BGE§287 (p. 228), WP§373 (p. 200), EH§Untimely.1 (p. 277) and also in NPPA, p. 382f.


One might question the strength of the analogy on the point of instrumentality, though I suspect that this would be to misunderstand both Aristotle and Nietzsche. Nietzsche thinks of the lower as instrumental to the higher (see for example, NF-1887,9[44] (WP§901, p. 479)); however, as we have just seen, Nietzsche does think of these higher men as ‘benefactors’ of the lower: but he thinks we misunderstand them if we take this to be their intention.

“ascending” individuals are?, ‘is this not simply rationalisation for megalomania?’ Such concerns are legitimate. Let me say, however, that I am not trying to answer the question of who has a right to egoism. I am simply trying to understand Nietzsche’s defence of egoism. This is rather difficult in a cultural context that finds the morality of unselfing plausible, that doubts the existence of great individuals, and that mocks as infantile the ‘cult of genius’ of earlier times.

Buber says that “the word “I” is the true shibboleth of humanity”. We might agree with this without agreeing that all egoic or “severed” uses of the word sound “dissonant”. Indeed, Buber himself offers Goethe as an example of one whose “full I” sounds “beautiful and legitimate”. In Goethe, we find a man who is self-centered with a good conscience—as we saw above, he felt no shame in being “an expert at ignoring things”. Let us look at this quality in a little more detail.

Goethe’s mother Katharina is quoted as having once said to a servant:

“You are not to tell me of anything horrible, afflicting, or agitating, whether it happen in my own house, in the town, or in the neighbourhood. I desire, once and for all, that I may hear nothing of the kind. If it concerns me, I shall know it soon enough; if it does not concern me, I have nothing whatever to do with it. Even if there should be a fire in the street in which I live, I am not to know of it till it is absolutely necessary…”

It has been proposed that this explains Goethe’s disposition of “shrinking from all intense impressions” as originating with his mother. We might accept the point about origination, but not the portrait of Goethe’s apparent aloofness as born of weakness. On this point, Safranski writes of Goethe:

“Precisely because he was so receptive and sensitive, so open to the world, he was careful not to allow himself to be ensnared to the point of insensibility. Goethe calls the strict egoism of self-assertion in the face of an excess of worldly intrusion the indispensable, sharp, selfish principle. If the individual is not to go under in the bustle

794 I am reminded of the following remark of Goethe to Eckermann: “The example of Napoleon has… excited a spirit of egotism; and they will not rest until a great despot once again rises up among them, in whom they may see the perfection of what they themselves wish to be. The misfortune is, that a man like Napoleon will not so soon again be born…” (Mar. 21 1831, CWG, p. 538).
796 Ibid., p. 116.
797 GLWA, preface.
799 Ibid.
and whirl of society, he must have the inner coherence that Goethe once called, with reference to minerals, *the gravitational force toward oneself*. The selfish principle gives a person something off-putting, compact, impenetrable. The analogy to the mineral world was so obvious to Goethe that in his last novel... he depicts Montan (the former Jarno)—the protagonist and embodiment of the hard, impervious aspects of the selfish principle—as a man of the mountains and stones”

Such self-centeredness is, Goethe says, “indispensable” and “blameless” when one is aiming at great works. This should surely remind us of Nietzsche’s insistence that all creators are hard:

“Why so hard?” the kitchen coal once said to the diamond. “After all, are we not close kin?”

Why so soft? O my brothers, thus I ask you: are you not after all my brothers?

Why so soft, so pliant and yielding? Why is there so much denial, self-denial, in your hearts? So little destiny in your eyes?”

This is not only the hardness of self-discipline, and thus self-sacrifice, but also the sacrifice of the neighbour. In particular, it is the hardness of the self-centred, the preparedness to turn away from the suffering of others so that one may remain focussed on one’s task.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche writes of how “depriving egoism of its good conscience” has “made selfishness stupid and ugly”, depriving it of “much spirit, much cheerfulness, much sensitivity, much beauty”. In *Beyond Good and Evil* we read that “the noble soul has reverence for itself”. When egoism is not soured by self-loathing, it is capable of generating a great deal of energy that flows outwards. This is just what Nietzsche means by a “whole and holy” selfishness. Once more, it would be a mistake to understand this in

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800 GLWA, ch. 31; a similar portrait is presented in: W. Wetzels, “Goethe’s Belief in Himself: Talent as Gift and Obligation”, *Literature and Belief*, vol. 20, no. 2, 2000, pp. 27–36. Wetzels notes in particular the especial interest that Goethe had in himself as phenomenon in accounting for the vast autobiographical material Goethe produced.

801 MA 13.1, 357; this is in an essay on Manzoni’s tragedy *Il Conte di Carmagnola*. The only English translation of this essay that I know of can be found in *The London Magazine*, Baldwin, Cradock, and Joy, vol. 3, 1821, pp. 423–426.


804 Some interpreters have stressed self-sacrifice in an attempt to counterbalance especially brutal, fascistic readings of Nietzsche. Fortunately, such readings are no longer so widespread, and such a wealth of literature exists to discredit them, that we need not attempt to correct for them in our reading here. Kaufmann is not as “gentle” as he is often characterised on these points. See for example his NPPA, p. 110 (but c.f. p. 246).

805 GS§328, p. 258.

806 BGE§287, p. 228; c.f. BGE§265, p. 215.
instrumental terms—as if the gift-giving was the purpose of creativity. That is how we misunderstand our benefactors.

After speaking of whole and holy selfishness in Zarathustra, Nietzsche writes:

“There is also another selfishness, an all-too-poor and hungry one that always wants to steal—the selfishness of the sick: sick selfishness. With the eyes of a thief it looks at everything splendid; with the greed of hunger it sizes up those who have much to eat; and it always sneaks around the table of those who give. Sickness speaks out of such craving and invisible degeneration; the thievish greed of this selfishness speaks of a diseased body”806

Sick selfishness is also described here as the “degenerate sense which says “everything for me”…”807 Nietzsche had already mentioned this kind of selfishness in the 1881 notebook in which the eternal recurrence was first formulated. There he wrote:

“Must one always have only the egoism of the robber or thief? [Muß man denn immer nur den Egoismus des Räubers oder Diebes haben?]”808

Now, what is it that makes sick selfishness thievish? Later in Zarathustra we read:

“What you abstain from too weaves at the web of all human future; your nothing too is a spider web and a spider, which lives on the blood of the future. And when you receive it is like stealing, you small men of virtue…”809

That is, they cannot receive in good conscience. They don’t simply ask for what they need, but “sneak around the table of those who give”. Perhaps they follow Aristotle in judging that to be given is dishonour, for it betrays weakness, inferiority810. But an open

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806 TSZ “Gift-Giving” §1, p. 75.
807 Ibid.
808 NF-1881,11[2], quoted in CTS, p. 300. The passage continues: “Why not that of the gardener? Joy in the tending of others, as in the care of a garden! [Warum nicht den des Gärtners? Freude an der Pflege der Andern, wie der eines Gartens!]”. In the gardener’s egoism we see the possibility of egoism in care, another example of how Nietzsche sees tending as one’s project. That is, what might look like it is altruistic—doing something to enable someone else—is one’s own undertaking and source of pride. Nietzsche is perhaps wrestling here with his own inclinations, and the discussion of “nursing” above should very much be read in that light: he described pity as his own “greatest danger” (BVN-1884,533) and was always being tempted from his own projects by the suffering of others. What we don’t see here is that whole and holy egoism of the good conscience in being concerned with one’s own growth.
809 TSZ “On the Virtue that Makes Small” §3, p. 171.
810 In the Nicomachean Ethics (4.III, op. cit., p. 78), Aristotle uses this as his reasoning for why the megalopsuchus does not remember the good deeds others have done for him (and does remember the good deeds he has done for others). This might seem to be because he is outside of a calculative or transactional mode of
acknowledgement of this inferiority is just what their conscience cannot allow. In thieving, they feel as if they have outwitted the abundant. That is, they have exalted themselves by stealing what was freely offered.

But there’s yet another sense in which they cannot receive. In a late note, Nietzsche writes

“The sober, the weary, the exhausted, the dried-up (e.g., scholars) can receive absolutely nothing from art, because they do not possess the primary artistic force, the pressure of abundance: whoever cannot give, also receives nothing”811

The point here is similar. Such people look at art with hungry eyes, out of want. But for this reason, they can receive nothing from the work. What they “steal” they do not receive, they merely possess. These are miserly, acquisitive souls who insatiably hoard whatever they can get their hands on. None of it is really there for them to use, to metabolise. What for others is nutrition is for them simply baggage, something else to drag around.

Here asceticism needs to become “natural again”812: one need not fast out of self-denial, but simply to regain sensitivity. Unfortunately, *cibi condimentum esse famem* is a lesson that cannot be heard by those that need to hear it. For, as Nietzsche says, the decadent’s impulses work against them, attracting them to what is most perilous: “ever stronger spices”813. They increase the amplitude of the stimulus and reap the diminishing returns.

Let us consider briefly self-denial, which might at first appear to be the opposite of this sick-selfishness, the one abstinent and the other corpulent. However, the two are closely related814. The self-denier abstains because he cannot receive in good conscience, and he thinking, and he wants simply to be able to give without repaying. But this isn’t what Aristotle says. This is one way in which Nietzsche’s “highest virtue”, the bestowing virtue, differs from Aristotle’s.

In a late note, Nietzsche writes: “True graciousness, nobility, greatness of soul proceed from abundance; do not give in order to receive—do not try to exalt themselves by being gracious;—prodigality as the type of true graciousness…”: NF-1888,23[4] (WP§935, p. 493) For Aristotle, prodigality is a vice of excess, where liberality is the mean and miserliness the vice of deficiency (NE, *op. cit.*, II.7, p. 36).

Their “ethical” projects are obviously attempting to do very different things, and one could easily contrive false disagreement (e.g. “On the Great Longing”, p. 223: “Which of us has to be thankful? Should not the giver be thankful that the receiver received? Is not giving a need? Is not receiving mercy?”). But it is the very difference in these projects that I think is hinted at here.

811 NF-1887,9[102] (WP§801, p. 422).
812 NF-1887,9[93] (WP§915, p. 483).
813 CW§5, p. 166.
814 My comments here are very brief and schematic, given that our interest is principally in making sense of Nietzsche’s whole and holy selfishness, while the convolutions of inversions are a well-known theme in Nietzsche, especially from the *Genealogy*. This should not appear as an exhaustive typology. For example, Nietzsche’s discussion of the Redeemer type in the *Antichrist* as *instinctively* free of “any antipathy, any hostility, any boundaries or divisions in man’s feelings” (*AC§30*, p. 602) suggests that there is no self-denial here: the Redeemer does not combat his own nature. (I mean this only as an example. As for the particular case, Nietzsche’s evaluation elsewhere differs. For example, NF-1881,11[283]: “Jesus war ein großer Egoist”).
will not steal. Again, however, this is often his convoluted way to superiority. As Nietzsche says, there is too much “charm and sugar” here for us not to become suspicious.

In the attitude of self-denial, one often sees what Nietzsche criticizes in Schopenhauer and in the Stoics: they understand that pleasure and pain are inextricably bound, and so deny the former as to avoid the latter. So where the sick-selfish attempt to hoard their pleasures, the self-deniers try to avoid all pain: one hardens oneself that not feel so much. One allows one’s hunger to consume itself.

Alternatively, the self-denier may place his reward beyond life. Thus, his asceticism is a kind of higher pragmatism. That is, he thinks by not taking now he shall receive later. As Nietzsche wrote: “Luke 18:14 improved: He that humbleth himself wants to be exalted.” This again shows a relationship to sick-selfishness, looking covetously at heaven, snatching at the table where all is freely offered.

The man who is “curved in on himself”, whether through sick-selfishness or self-denial, cannot enrich anything. The former says I will not let anything out, and the latter says I will not let anything in, but the essential condition of both is the same: constriction, blockage.

In contrast, the attitude of the man of “whole and holy” selfishness is fundamentally open: he says I will let everything through. “You force all things to and into yourself that they may flow back out of your well as the gifts of your love”: this is the whole and holy selfishness. Such a man isn’t afraid to take in: in Nietzsche’s words, he has “the inner certainty of having a right to everything.” Whatever he does take in is thereby enriched, enhanced, and is then bestowed. This bestowal is, as we have seen, not separate from his

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815 On this, see my discussion of the tangles of pride and shame in the discussion of Nietzsche and the German mystics.
816 BGE§33, p. 45.
817 Given a certain conception of morality, self-denial may also be the only way for a strong self to assert itself—against itself. I have discussed this at some length above with respect to Nietzsche on Pascal. Once again, I am not intending here to be exhaustive.
818 See for e.g. NF-1884,27[12] where Nietzsche says that nothing is easier than the Stoic’s hardness, which is mere detachment. Nietzsche says that it is necessary to have both capacities in oneself: a tender sensibility and detachment. In our context, we might say that detachment from (perhaps even indifference to) suffering needn’t be achieved through insensibility. Rather, one can take a Dionysian attitude as we have been discussing here, which is described somewhat differently by Nietzsche in the great section of Twilight on Goethe: one can have an eye to the whole that “redeems” the reprehensibility of the particular (TI§IX.49)
819 GS§12, pp. 85–86.
820 HH§87, p. 48.
821 TSZ, “Gift-Giving” §1, p. 75.
822 NF-1887,10[128] (WP§388, pp. 208–209).
Those Nietzsche commends most highly are those who “squander themselves”, those who do not seek self-preservation because they have a sense and a vision of that “total economy”—the whole of which they are expressions. They see what they are entangled in, pieces of, and wish to serve it. They “want nothing gratis”, and so they show their gratitude to life by going under, by bestowing themselves as gift. They do not have that “sick selfishness” of one who clings to his gifts, who seeks to hoard them, but rather that “whole and holy” selfishness of one who lets all things flow into and out of oneself. Such a person sees the vintner’s knife and rejoices, not shudders—and not because they wish to “suffer life” no longer, but because they are ripe:

“You vine! Why do you praise me? Did I not cut you? I am cruel, you bleed; what does your praise of my drunken cruelty mean?

“What has become perfect, all that is ripe—wants to die”—thus you speak.

Blessed, blessed be the vintager’s knife! But all that is unripe wants to live: woe!

Woe entreats: Go! Away, woe! But all that suffers wants to live, that it may become ripe and joyous…”

Having experienced the relationship between their individuality and the whole, they do not fear death; rather, like Dionysus dismembered, they see in their going under the “promise of life”—and not of some life beyond, but of this life, the very one their gratitude is directed toward. That is, they are able to give themselves fully, without holding something back for the sake of self-preservation. In this self-bestowal, they squander themselves, but they do not sacrifice themselves. Sacrifice is a goal-directed action, and is something grave; squandering, on the contrary, is self-fulfilling, and is something exuberant.

It is towards Dionysus that we now turn in chapter V.
Chapter V: Dionysus

We have seen that Nietzsche does not conceive of the whole as an organism. One would think, then, that this would mean he cannot personify the whole—the person is exactly the model of that kind of integration, “cooperation and organisation” that Nietzsche finds lacking in the whole. But Nietzsche, of course, does personify the whole in the figure of Dionysus. What is the significance of this personification? To answer this question, it will help to consider the divergence of Nietzsche’s early and late thought on the Dionysian.

In his Nietzsche, Kaufmann wrote:

“In his early work, Nietzsche tended toward a dualistic metaphysics, and the Dionysian was conceived as a flood of passion to which the Apollinian principle of individuation might give form. In the “dithyrambs” of Zarathustra this opposition of the two gods was repudiated, and the will to power was proclaimed as the one and only basic force of the universe. This fundamental principle, which Nietzsche still called “Dionysian,” is actually a union of Dionysus and Apollo: a creative striving that gives form to itself”\textsuperscript{830}

Kaufmann’s analysis seems basically right here. In the Birth, Apollo was “the “shining one” [\textit{der “Scheinende”}]\textsuperscript{831}, associated with the hallucinatory, the \textit{merely} apparent. Dionysus was the one underlying this multiplicity of appearances. Hence Nietzsche spoke there of “penetrating into the interior”\textsuperscript{832} and of Dionysian ecstasy as characterized by experiencing the world “not as individuals, but as the \textit{one} living being”\textsuperscript{833}. Even here, Nietzsche did not side against the apparent, against the \textit{principium individuationis} as Schopenhauer had done. Illusion is given a rather different evaluation, it is conceived of “as temporary redemption… the world as the succession of divine visions and redemptions in illusion”\textsuperscript{834}. This difference from Schopenhauer in Nietzsche’s early thought is seen perhaps most clearly in a note in which he writes: “My philosophy is an \textit{inverted Platonism}: the further something is from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in illusion as the goal”\textsuperscript{835}. But there is, of course, much in common between the two. In the \textit{World as Will}, Schopenhauer wrote:

\textsuperscript{830} NPPA, p. 282.
\textsuperscript{831} BT§1, p. 35.
\textsuperscript{832} BT§22, p. 130.
\textsuperscript{833} BT§17, p. 105; in BT, Nietzsche also says that when the lyrist says “I”, the one that speaks is really the “only truly existent and external self resting at the basis of things…” (BT§5, p. 50).
\textsuperscript{834} NF-1885,2[110] (TLN, p. 81); this note expressly deals with the difference between his early thought and Schopenhauer.
\textsuperscript{835} NF-1870,7[156] (TEN, p. 52).
“The eyes of the crude individual are clouded, as the Indians say, by the veil of maya: it is not the thing in itself that shows itself to the individual, but only the appearances in time and space, in the principium individuationis, and in the rest of the forms of the principle of sufficient reason: and in this form of his limited cognition, he does not see the essence of things, which is one, but rather only appearances, which are separated, disconnected, innumerable, highly dissimilar, and in fact opposed…”\textsuperscript{836}

At the time of the \textit{Birth}, Nietzsche could agree with much of this description. What differs is essentially the \textit{evaluation} of this state of affairs.

In the \textit{Birth}, the formless Dionysian is fundamental, and the Apollonian develops out of this. The Dionysian is \textit{blind}, akin to the irrationality of Schopenhauer’s \textit{Will}. In the later work, we find that there is no “reality” without appearance. For this reason, the Dionysian comes to \textit{encompass} the Apollonian, the form-giving. “The “real world,” however one has hitherto conceived it—it has always been the apparent world \textit{once again}\textsuperscript{837}. Nietzsche’s later attitude towards appearance—that, to put it in a slogan, one can be superficial “\textit{out of profundity}”\textsuperscript{838}—reflects a different understanding of the One and many. In a note from the mid-80s, Nietzsche writes:

“NB. \textit{Schein} as I understand it is the actual and sole reality of things […] I do not set ‘Schein’ in opposition to ‘reality’ but on the contrary take \textit{Schein} as the reality that resists transformation into an imaginary ‘truth-world.’ A determinative name for this world would be ‘will to power,’ namely, characterized from inside and not from its ungraspable, flowing Proteus-nature.”\textsuperscript{839}

Referring to this note, Kaufmann writes

“The will to power is the heir of Dionysus and Apollo. It is a ceaseless striving, but it has an inherent capacity to give form to itself. Because its way of manifesting itself in ever new guises is one of its most striking characteristics, Nietzsche speaks of its “Proteus nature”…”\textsuperscript{840}

Whereas in Nietzsche’s early thought, the One had \textit{primacy} (and hence was in some sense a \textit{one}, even if undifferentiated), Nietzsche’s later conception is of a One that is “at the same

\textsuperscript{836} WWRI\textsuperscript{§63}, pp. 378–379.
\textsuperscript{837} NF-1887,11[50] (WP\textsuperscript{§566}, p. 305).
\textsuperscript{838} GS.Preface\textsuperscript{§4}, p. 38.
\textsuperscript{839} NF-1885,40[53]; quoted and translated by L. Lambert, \textit{Nietzsche’s Task}, pp. 26–27.
\textsuperscript{840} NPPA, p. 238.
time one and many”\textsuperscript{841}. As the personification of this One, Dionysian is not the ground of the Apollonian. Nietzsche refers to Dionysus as “that great ambiguous one \textit{[jener grosse Zweideutige]}”\textsuperscript{842}. Dionysus is essentially ambiguous: he is the God who is not one. As Colli writes, Dionysus “concentrates all contradictions within himself”, thus Dionysus “is the same as Apollo, who is his contrary”\textsuperscript{843}. This means also that the whole is not apart from the parts, a point which has a great deal of affinity with the “perfectly reciprocal determination” which Cassirer found in Goethe’s thought, and which has already been discussed in some detail\textsuperscript{844}.

In “The E at Delphi”, Plutarch says

“Apollo the artists represent in paintings and sculpture as ever ageless and young, but Dionysus they depict in many guises and forms; and they attribute to Apollo a general uniformity, orderliness, and unadulterated seriousness, but to Dionysus a certain variability combined with playfulness, wantonness, seriousness, and frenzy…”\textsuperscript{845}

Dionysus is \textit{polyeidos} and \textit{polymorphos}. He is not represented in any particular form. This is well suited to Dionysus, who is, after all, not only the god of \textit{wine} (and so intoxication) but of \textit{fluidity} in general: semen, sap, honey, and so on. He is the god of \textit{becoming}, of flux.

That Dionysus has no particular form does not mean that Dionysus is \textit{formless}\textsuperscript{846}. He always appears in some \textit{guise}, but this guise is not a \textit{disguise}. Dionysus is not concealed beneath some particular form. This is similar to how Haar presents will to power:

“Even if the Will to Power may not be reduced to traditional \textit{essentia}—as Heidegger would have it—it still does designate the unique and privileged name, the Being of all beings: the most radical “identity” common to the world in its entirety, to the individual living beings and to ourselves.

\textsuperscript{841} NF-1885,38[12] (WP§1067, p. 549).
\textsuperscript{842} BGE§295, p. 234.
\textsuperscript{846} As we just saw, this is how Dionysus changes through Nietzsche’s writings. In the \textit{Birth}, Dionysus is opposed to Apollo—the former is formless, and hence his especial art is \textit{music}; the latter is form itself, and hence his especial art is \textit{sculpture}. In Nietzsche’s later thought, the Dionysian includes Apollonian form-giving.
But the power that produces phenomena does not hold itself “behind” the phenomena. It circulates—transpires—entirely in them, and that is why the word “appearance” is to be preferred to the word “phenomenon,” which one is inevitably tempted to understand as the appearance of something that, in part, remains hidden. “Appearances” give themselves as “reality” fully and exclusively.”

In just what sense will to power is “a determinative name for this world”, I do not here to answer. But our understanding of Dionysus as personification of the whole is helped by remarks such as these.

*Beyond Good and Evil* begins “supposing truth is a woman—what then?” and has a discussion of feminine concealment running through it. This is a book in which Nietzsche speaks of esotericism and riddle—which are not just political necessities for plausible deniability as in Plato, but rather reflect somethings about reality itself: there is no bare reality. That there is no revealing that is not also a concealing is not merely a Heideggerian point. Nietzsche tells us that the idea of the in-itself is itself a mask, and if one was to “abolish the apparent world altogether… nothing would be left of your “truth” either”

One could say that there is a “deceptive principle in “the essence of things”…” However, this seems to imply an essence that is concealed. What if the essence is not disguised but is guising? This is one reason why Dionysus is the personification of the whole. His essence is not hidden beneath appearance, his essence is appearance.

Dionysus is the god of the mask in precisely Nietzsche’s sense, and would cease to be what he is if he were stripped of his guise. As Nietzsche writes in the preface to the second edition of *The Gay Science*: “we no longer believe that truth remains truth when the veils are withdrawn.” This is why Nietzsche speaks here of the decency of not wishing “to see everything naked”—and praises the Greeks for stopping “courageously at the surface”, calling them “superficial—out of profundity.” In a note, Nietzsche writes that we should

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847 M. Haar, “The Overturning of Platonism”, in N&M, p. 57. This strikes me as altogether more plausible than Haar’s claim in the same paper that will to power “is undoubtedly a matrice [est incontestable matricielle]” (Ibid, p. 56; original can be found at M. Haar, *Nietzsche et la métaphysique*, Gallimard, 1993, p. 92), which suggests that will to power is the ground of being.

848 BGE§P, p. 2; c.f. TSZ where *life* is personified as a woman (“The Other Dancing Song”); and it is said that “wisdom… is a woman” (“On Reading and Writing”).

849 BGE§34, p. 46.

850 Ibid., p. 45.

851 Hadot discusses this idea in his *Veil of Isis*. Writing, for example, “if Isis is without veils, it is because she is entirely form, that is, entirely veil; she is inseparable from her veils and her forms”. See P. Hadot, *The Veil of Isis An Essay on the History of the Idea of Nature*, trans. M. Chase, Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 259

852 GS.P§4, p. 38.

853 Ibid.
not “deify the unknown”, saying on the contrary that “if there is anything that is to be worshiped it is the appearance… The lie—and not the truth—is divine”\(^{854}\). Dionysus is obviously just such a deification, a personification of “the character of existence” which “is not “true”, is false”\(^{855}\).

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche describes himself as “disciple and initiate of the god Dionysus”\(^{856}\). Similar claims are repeated on several occasions, and should not be taken lightly. In *Ecce Homo*, he writes “I am a disciple of the philosopher Dionysus”\(^{857}\). In *Twilight*, he says “I, the last disciple of the philosopher Dionysus—I, the teacher of the eternal recurrence”\(^{858}\).

The connection between Dionysus and the recurrence in this last passage is important, and is indeed hinted at in Plutarch’s “The E at Delphi”, connection between Dionysus and Heraclitus’ notion, picked up by the Stoics, that the universe is cyclical and recurrent\(^{859}\). Heraclitus wrote that “the kosmos, the same for all, no god nor man has made, but it ever was and is and will be: fire ever living, kindled in measures and in measures going out”\(^{860}\).

Nietzsche summarises Heraclitus’ thought in *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* as follows:

“The world is the play of Zeus, or, expressed more concretely, of the fire with itself.

It is only in this sense that the one is the same time the many”\(^{861}\)

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\(^{854}\) NF-1886,6[25] (WP§1011, p. 523).
\(^{855}\) NF-1887,11[99] (WP§12, p. 13). C.f. NF-1887,9[91] (WP§552, p. 298): “From the standpoint of morality, the world is false. But to the extent that morality is itself a part of this world, morality is false”. See also NF-1888,17[3] (WP§853, pp. 451–452), a draft of the late preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*: “There is only one world, and this is false, cruel, contradictory… We have need of lies in order to conquer this reality, this “truth,” in order to live—that lies are necessary to live is itself part of the terrifying and questionable character of existence. […] man must be a liar by nature, he must be above all an artist. And he is one: metaphysics, religion, morality, science—all of them only products of his will to art, to lie, to flight from “truth,” to negation of “truth.” This ability itself, thanks to which he violates reality by means of lies, this artistic ability of man par excellence—he has it in common with everything that is. He himself is after all a piece of reality, truth, nature: how should he not also be a piece of genius in lying!

That the character of existence is to be misunderstood—profoundest and supreme secret motive behind all that is virtue, science, piety, artistry…”

\(^{856}\) BGE§295, p. 235.
\(^{857}\) EHF,2, p. 217.
\(^{858}\) Tlx5.5, p. 563. C.f. BTASC.4, p.?: “What is Dionysian?—This book contains an answer: One “who knows” is talking, the initiate and disciple of his god. Now I should perhaps speak more cautiously…”
\(^{859}\) Plutarch, op. cit., pp. 220–221.
\(^{860}\) XXXVII, A&TH, p. 45 [TM].
\(^{861}\) PTAG§6, p. 58 [TM].
In Nietzsche’s words, we might call the world the play of Dionysus with himself, or, to use a more “determinative name”, of will to power with itself. This play is cyclical, and it is beyond good and evil.\textsuperscript{862}

Nietzsche believed that the recurrence was central to Greek spirituality. Indeed, he writes in a note:

\textit{“I have discovered the Greeks: they believed in eternal recurrence! That is the mystery-faith!”}\textsuperscript{863}

Nietzsche discusses this point again in \textit{Twilight}, in the same section where he describes himself as Dionysus’ disciple and the recurrence’s teacher.\textsuperscript{864}

In \textit{Ecce Homo}, Nietzsche writes

\begin{quote}
“The doctrine of the “eternal recurrence,” that is, of the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things—this doctrine of Zarathustra might in the end have been taught already by Heraclitus. At least the Stoa has traces of it, and the Stoics inherited almost all of their principle notions from Heraclitus.”\textsuperscript{865}
\end{quote}

Dionysus is thus intimately related to the notion of the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche interprets this in the mythological image of Dionysus (Zagreus) rent to pieces by the Titans,\textsuperscript{866} writing in a late note:

\begin{quote}
“Dionysus versus the “Crucified”: there you have the antithesis. It is \textit{not} a difference in regard to their martyrdom—it is a difference in the meaning of it. Life itself, its eternal fruitfulness and recurrence, creates torment, destruction, the will to annihilation. In the other case, suffering—the “Crucified as the innocent one”—counts as an objection to this life, as a formula for its condemnation.—One will see that the problem is that of the meaning of suffering: whether a Christian meaning or a tragic meaning. In the former case, it is supposed to be the path to a holy existence; in the latter case, being counted as \textit{holy enough} to justify even a monstrous amount of suffering. The tragic man affirms even the harshest suffering: he is sufficiently strong, rich, and capable of deifying to do so. The Christian denies even the happiest lot on earth: he is sufficiently weak, poor, disinherited to suffer from
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{862} C.f. NF-1884,26[193].
\textsuperscript{863} NF-1883,8[15]. Translation quoted in P. Loeb, \textit{The Death of Nietzsche’s Zarathustra}, op. cit., p. 39.
\textsuperscript{864} TI§IX.4, p. 561.
\textsuperscript{865} EH§BT.3, pp. 273–274.
\textsuperscript{866} C.f. BT§10, pp. 73–74.
life in whatever form he meets it. The god on the cross is a curse on life, a signpost to seek redemption from it; Dionysus cut to pieces is a promise of life: it will be eternally reborn and return again from destruction.”

Dionysus’ death is symbolical not of the redemption from life, but the affirmation of life—this life, and not any other.

In the *Twilight* passage just mentioned, Nietzsche writes of the Dionysian as “the triumphant Yes to life beyond all death and change”. This is not yes to eternal life as the immortality of the individual, but rather “true life as the over-all continuation of life through procreation, through the mysteries of sexuality.” This means that the individual embraces suffering, seeing the world as “holy enough” to justify it. “In the doctrine of the mysteries,” writes Nietzsche, “pain is pronounced holy: the pangs of the woman giving birth hallow all pain… That there may be the eternal joy of creating, that the will to life may eternally affirm itself, the agony of the woman giving birth must also be there eternally”. It is believed that initiates into the mysteries witnessed a woman giving birth. Nietzsche here offers us an interpretation of this. What does it mean “to be oneself the eternal joy in becoming”? It is to “stand in a Dionysian relationship to existence”, the “identification with the principle of life”. In the mysteries, the initiates are shown their relationship to the whole: they come to understand the cyclical, recurrent nature of existence, and that they are what recurs eternally. As Nietzsche writes in *Zarathustra*, “To be the child who is newly born, the creator must also want to be the mother who gives birth and the pangs of the birth-giver”. This identification allows the initiates to affirm “even a monstrous amount of suffering”.

It is not only the pain of their perishing as individuals that is affirmed, but also the pain of their flourishing. In Nietzsche’s early thought, individuation was a mistake: Dionysus torn to pieces was symbolic of individuation, the dismemberment of the One into the many. The
hope for the remembrance or “rebirth of Dionysus” was hope for “the end of individuation”\textsuperscript{875}.

Here we see a familiar attitude toward Zerissenheit: the world is rent and requires healing. Such an attitude was held in common by Neoplatonists as well as Hegel, Schopenhauer and many others. How such a healing would take place is what varied: do we return to a primal unity, or do we go forward towards a higher reconciliation?

In Nietzsche’s later thought, Dionysus’ dismemberment remains symbolic of individuation, but this is not an objection: it is no fall, but is indeed divine. This relates to the conception of the One and many which we have considered: the One is at the same time the many, the whole is not apart from the parts. The part becomes an expression of the whole—not a manifestation of something behind. This is the basis of the kind of selfishness which Nietzsche calls “whole and holy”.

Nietzsche writes in the \textit{Antichrist}:

“The anti-natural castration of a god, to make him a god of the good alone, would here be contrary to everything desirable. The evil god is needed no less than the good god: after all, we do not owe our own existence to tolerance and humanitarianism”\textsuperscript{876}.

Indeed, throughout the 1880s, Nietzsche tried to envision a God beyond good and evil. For example, in one note he wrote:

“You call it the self-destruction of God, but it is only his moulting—he sheds his moral skin! Soon you shall see him again beyond good and evil [\textit{Ihr nennt es die Selbstzersetzung Gottes: es ist aber nur seine Häutung: — er zieht seine moralische Haut aus! Und ihr sollt ihn bald wiedersehn, jenseits von gut und böse}]\textsuperscript{877}

In a later note, Nietzsche writes that “at bottom, it is only the moral god that has been overcome” and asks “Does it make sense to conceive of a god “beyond good and evil”?”\textsuperscript{878}. Yet later again, Nietzsche discusses the possibility of “God conceived as an emancipation from morality, taking into himself the fullness of life’s antitheses and, in a

\textsuperscript{875} BT§10, pp. 73–74; c.f. NF-1870,7[55]: “Zagreus as individuation” and NF-1870,7[61].
\textsuperscript{876} AC§16, pp. 582–583.
\textsuperscript{877} NF-1882,3[1]; given that the aphorism that precedes this in the notebooks is obviously worked into GS§371, one might consider how Nietzsche’s discussion there of how “we shed our skins every spring [\textit{wir häuten uns mit jedem Frühjahr noch}]” relates to this rebirth of God.
\textsuperscript{878} NF-1886,5[1] (WP§55, p.36); the first part of this should be compared with NF-1885,39[13].
divine torment, redeeming and justifying them879. We see this attempt to deify life’s polarity in the figure of Dionysus. Indeed, Nietzsche defines the Dionysian as “the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or halved”880.

Nietzsche writes in a note that “the wisest man would be the one richest in contradictions”881, and in another that “the highest man, if such a concept be allowed, would be the man who represented the antithetical character of existence [den Gegensatz-Charakter des Daseins] most strongly”882. It is this antithetical character that Dionysus personifies—he is polarity incarnate, he “concentrates all contradictions within himself”

In *Twilight*, Nietzsche describes Goethe as exemplary of the Dionysian:

“He did not retire from life but put himself into the midst of it; he was not fainthearted but took as much as possible upon himself, over himself, into himself. What he wanted was totality; he found the mutual extraneousness of reason, senses, feeling, and will…”883

The highest men do not reject the “doubleness” of life884, but embody it. This is a view Nietzsche seems to have developed early on. For example, in an 1872 essay entitled “Homer’s Contest”, Nietzsche speaks of man at his very best as embodying the “uncanny dual character [unheimlichen Doppelcharakter]” of life885. This attitude develops right through Nietzsche’s writings, including Zarathustra’s teaching that if one is to grow at all, one must grow simultaneously in both directions886, Nietzsche’s discussion of the “complementary man” in *Beyond Good and Evil*887, the praise in *The Genealogy* of the fertile “contradictions” and “unstable equilibrium” of men like Goethe and Hafez888, and even his discussion of himself as a “doppelgänger” in *Ecce Homo*889.

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879 NF-1887,10[203] (WP§1035, p. 533).
880 NF-1888,14[89] (WP§1052, p. 542). This idea of life halved comes up in Goethe’s poem “Generalbeichte” which was important to Nietzsche. In this poem, Goethe speaks of being weaned from the half and living resolutely in wholeness [Uns vom Halben zu entwöhnen / Und im Ganzen Guten Schönem / Resolut zu leben]. Nietzsche alludes to this poem in BT§18 (p. 113, where he drops the part about living in goodness and beauty and replaces this will “fullness”), and he and Salome (BVN-1882,234) took as their “motto”.
881 NF-1884,26[119] (WP§259, p. 150).
882 NF-1887,10[111] (WP§881, p. 470).
883 TI§IX.49, p. 554.
885 In *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 32; already in HH§107, p. 58, Nietzsche writes “Good actions are sublimated evil ones; evil actions are coarsened, brutalized good ones”.
887 See BGE§207, p. 128.
888 GM§III.2, pp. 98–99. We will return to discuss Hafez in detail in chapter VI.
889 Nietzsche describes himself as a “doppelgänger” (EH§Wise.3, p. 225) and describes his doubleness in some length, for example how he is “at the same time a decadent and a beginning” (EH§Wise.1, p. 222).
Nietzsche also speaks of this ideal of the higher type having both opposites within oneself in his rejection of Stoicism:

“For it is nothing to be as hard as a Stoic; by dint of insensibility, one has detached oneself from everything. One must have the opposite in oneself—a tender sensibility and the opposite capacity not to lose one’s cool, but of being able with plasticity to ‘make the best’ of any misfortune”.

For Nietzsche, polarity or “war” is the creative basis of existence, just as it was for Heraclitus. Failing to understand “the hidden attunement”, the way in which “a thing agrees at variance with itself”, many seek to renounce war. Heraclitus rebuked Homer for wishing that conflict would disappear, insisting on the necessity of opposites. For Heraclitus, “war is the father of all”, and so to reject strife would be to reject life. It is for this reason that Nietzsche says in *Twilight* that “we have spiritualized hostility” and that “one has renounced the *great* life when one renounces war”.

For Nietzsche, the highest wisdom is to feel “the burden and duty of a hundred attempts and temptations of life”—that is, not to attempt to escape but to play “the wicked game”. This is the highest wisdom because to understand the nature of the game is to understand that one cannot but play: one is of the game. There is no place in this theatre for spectators. Whoever takes himself for a spectator is but a duped player, so immersed in his role that he cannot imagine that he grew out of this world, and looks upon it with eyes that grew out of it, with its eyes.

One says yes, then, not by refusing to be an enemy, but by becoming one of what Nietzsche once called “the masters of ceremony of existence”—those who celebrate and elaborate “the earthly dance”, rather than attempting to awaken others, let alone to draw it to a close, to stop the show. One sees that not only is the enemy the beloved, but *enmity* is the beloved.

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892 LXXVIII, Ibid.
895 LXXXIII, Ibid.
896 T1§V.3, pp. 488–489. He also speaks here of the “profound appreciation of the value of having enemies...”—both internal and external.
897 BGE§205, p. 125.
In the *Antichrist*, we are told that the Redeemer type is characterized by “love without subtraction and exclusion”\(^899\)—and one might reasonably wonder how this differs from Nietzsche’s own “Yes-saying without reservation”, that “most wantonly extravagant Yes to life”\(^900\).

What is the difference here, not between the *Crucified* and Dionysus, but between the *Redeemer* and Dionysus? We could make a start at an answer by looking close to these passages. For example, in the latter section, Nietzsche says that his is a yes-saying “even to guilt”, while close to the former, Nietzsche says that the Redeemer “abolished the very concept of ‘guilt’…”\(^901\) This might seem like an inroad, since there is something in Nietzsche’s yes-saying that *includes* “everything that is questionable and strange in existence”. Though we must remember that the Redeemer’s love too includes the love of the questionable, a point which Nietzsche stresses in his interpretation: “to resist not even the evil one—to *love* him”\(^902\). To speak Christian, we might get a little closer by asking what of yes not only to the ‘sinner’ but the ‘sin’?

To put it another way, we might ask: if one does not prefer, is one not privileging the accidental, the passive?\(^903\) Coomaraswamy described the sage’s life as “a perpetual uncalculated life in the present”\(^904\). This is very far from Nietzsche’s ideal, writing that life as “perpetual improvisation” would be his “exile and Siberia”\(^905\). For Nietzsche, life cannot be “entirely devoid of habits”, to be given structure, to be given *values*. Valuation, of course, requires *preference*, resistance: to some extent\(^906\), the mark of being needs to be impressed upon becoming\(^907\).

So, it might seem that one can make a form of critique beloved of all petty philosophers: is not non-resistance in the Redeemer’s sense resisting resistance itself?\(^908\) We might characterise the Redeemer’s “love without abstraction and exclusion” as love without

\(^899\) *AC*§29, p. 601.
\(^900\) *EH.BT.*§2, p. 272.
\(^901\) *AC*§41, p. 616.
\(^902\) *AC*§35, p. 609.
\(^903\) C.f. *EH*§CW.1, p. 318: “Such a failure to take sides among opposites! Such neutrality and “selflessness” of the stomach! This sense of justice of the German palate that finds all causes just and accords all equal rights—that finds everything tasty…” and *TSZ* “On the Spirit of Gravity” §2, p. 194: “I honor the recalcitrant choosy tongues and stomachs which have learned to say “I” and “yes” and “no.” But to chew and digest everything—that is truly the swine’s way. Always to bray Yea-Yuh—that only the ass has learned, and whoever is of his spirit…”
\(^905\) *GS*§295, p. 237.
\(^906\) Nietzsche certainly did not reject improvisation, but *perpetual* improvisation—a life *entirely* devoid of habit.
\(^907\) *NF-1886,7*[§54] (WP§617, p. 330).
\(^908\) Nietzsche’s own analysis is that the Redeemer resists resistance because this is what causes him to suffer intolerably, hence he is *incapable* of being an enemy (*AC*§29, p. 601).
selection, without “no”. And here is the sense in which Dionysian yes-saying goes further: it
moves past the rejection of “doubleness”\textsuperscript{909}, the “failure to take sides among opposites”\textsuperscript{910}. That is, to say yes to no-saying, to ranking and ordering, to moving past “one-sidedness” and to playing “the wicked game”\textsuperscript{911}. This of course leads to an apparent contradiction which Nietzsche discusses in \textit{Ecce Homo}:

“The psychological problem in the type of Zarathustra is how he that says No and does No to an unheard-of degree… can nevertheless be the opposite of a No-saying spirit…”\textsuperscript{912}

Elsewhere in the same text, Nietzsche writes that “negating and destroying are conditions of saying Yes”\textsuperscript{913}. But isn’t this just a word game? I don’t think so. In fact, the point that is being made here is quite simple: the total character of existence requires rank and order, is rank and order—so to affirm this character is to partake in ranking and ordering.

This requires an understanding of the relationship of whole and part in Nietzsche. The whole is not apart from the parts, so to say yes to the whole is not to say no to the part. In a late note, Nietzsche writes:

“This mode of thought, with which a definite type of man is bred, starts from an absurd presupposition: it takes good and evil for realities that contradict one another (not as complementary values, which would be the truth), it advises taking the side of the good, it desires that the good should renounce and oppose the evil down to its ultimate roots—it therewith actually denies life, which has in all its instincts both Yes and No. Not that it grasps this: it dreams, on the contrary, that it is getting back to wholeness, to unity, to strength of life: it thinks it will be a state of redemption when the inner anarchy, the unrest between those two opposing value drives, is at last put an end to”\textsuperscript{914}

This point made here is critical. One might think one affirms the whole by rejecting the part, one might think one is thereby “getting back to wholeness”, but the whole just is this relationship, this tension\textsuperscript{915}.

\textsuperscript{909} NF-1888,15[113] (WP§351, pp. 191–193).
\textsuperscript{910} EHCW§1, p. 318.
\textsuperscript{911} BGE§205, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{912} EH§Z.6, p. 306; c.f. also NF-1887,11[228] (WP§1020, p. 528).
\textsuperscript{913} EH§Destiny,4, p. 328.
\textsuperscript{914} NF-1888,15[113] (WP§351, pp. 191–193).
\textsuperscript{915} Hence, in NF-1888,14[184] (WP§567, p. 305) we read that no world would “remain over after one deducted” perspectivity—because doing so would be to “deduct relativity”.

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Earlier in this same note, Nietzsche writes “love and hate, gratitude and revenge, good nature and anger, affirmative acts and negative acts, belong together”. He then asks:

“Whence, then, comes the sickness and ideological unnaturalness that rejects this doubleness—that teaches that it is a higher thing to be efficient only on one side? Whence comes the hemiplegia of virtue, the invention of the good man?”

Nietzsche says that our demand here is that “man should castrate himself of those instincts with which he can be an enemy, can cause harm, can be angry, can demand revenge”, and claims that “this unnaturalness corresponds… to that dualistic conception of a merely good and merely evil creature”⁹¹⁶.

In Dionysus, Nietzsche sets forth an uncastrated divinity. Dionysus is the personification of polarity—nothing is excluded, including antipathy. Yes to everything means *yes even to no*⁹¹⁷. Thus Nietzsche writes of Zarathustra

“The ladder on which he ascends and descends is tremendous… in every word he contradicts, this most Yes-saying of all spirits; in him all opposites are blended into a new unity. The highest and the lowest energies of human nature, what is sweetest, most frivolous, and most terrible wells forth from one fount with immortal assurance”⁹¹⁸.

If we are to understand Nietzsche’s Dionysian spirituality, we must understand it in the context of “pagan” plenitude and good conscience, the “affirmation of the natural” and “sense of innocence in the natural”⁹¹⁹.

The Dionysian is “the religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or halved”⁹²⁰. This means it is a spirituality in which one does not renounce one’s individuality, one’s sensuality, or one’s antipathy. It is a spirituality with *Selbstgefühl*, in which all “one-

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⁹¹⁷ This is not an unfamiliar move amongst mystics, where there is a Yes which includes both yes and no (or a Good that includes both good and bad). For these reasons, they can say with Lady Julian that “sin is behovely [Synne is behouelye]” (Julian of Norwich, *A Book of Showings: Part I*, ed. E. Colledge and J. Walsh, Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978, p. 244). Richardson discusses this Yes as encompassing yes/no in relative/absolute terms in “Nietzsche’s Value Monism”, op. cit., p. 108f.
⁹¹⁸ EH§Z.6, pp. 304–305.
⁹¹⁹ NF-1887,10[193] (WP§147, p. 94).
⁹²⁰ NF-1888,14[89] (WP§1052, p. 542).
sidedness” of the anaemic philosophers, mystics, and cobweb-spinners is overcome, in which we are “weaned from the half and live resolutely in wholeness”\textsuperscript{921}.

\textsuperscript{921} This is a loose translation of a stanza from Goethe’s poem “Generalbeichte”: “Uns vom Halben zu entwöhnen / Und im Ganzen Guten Schönem / Resolut zu leben”. This poem was of significance to Nietzsche. He alludes to it in BT§18, p. 113—though he drops the part about living in goodness and beauty and replaces this will “fullness”). Nietzsche and Salome took these lines as their “motto [Wahlspruch]” (BNV-1882,234). This attitude is reflected in Salome’s poem which Nietzsche set to music as the “Hymn to Life” (see EHZ.1, pp. 296–297).
Chapter VI: Hafez

The influence on Nietzsche of the fourteenth century Persian poet Hafez is often noted in passing, but rarely explored in any depth. This is a great shame, not least because Hafez is amongst the finest examples in world literature of the sort of spirituality which we have been discussing in the preceding chapters.

For this reason, I shall undertake here a brief study of Hafez, not so much as a conclusion to the foregoing explorations, but as a supplementary illustration.

Nietzsche mentions Hafez in three finished works: Beyond Good and Evil, book five of The Gay Science, and The Genealogy of Morals. The last of these is repeated with slight alteration in Nietzsche Contra Wagner. There are also a few remarks in the notebooks from 1884 through 1888, including a poem addressed to Hafez. I shall look into each of these in turn, but let us first understand something of the context in which Nietzsche encountered Hafez.

VI.1

Nietzsche probably read Hafez in translation by both Hammer and Daumer. While Hammer’s translation of the Divan is not listed in the catalogue of Nietzsche’s books, this is no reason to think that he never owned a copy of this text. Published in 1812, it was—and to some extent remains—very popular in Germany, and was influential on both Goethe and Emerson.

Hammer saw Hafez’ poems as “mostly bacchanalian and erotic”. In Hammer’s view, Hafez is to be “understood neither entirely literally, nor wholly allegorically, but at some times as a champion of sensual pleasures, and at others as the voice of a mystical world”.

Hammer contends that a strongly allegorical reading of Hafez is a projection of a later and more puritanical time, and a means of defusing Hafez’ popularity by reinterpretation:

922 I work here with the Colli and Montinari edition of Nietzsche’s works, and do not deny that there may be references of which I am unaware. One note that is lacking there, and which I do not discuss below, is a draft of GS§370 that can be found at WP§846, pp. 445–446.


924 That Nietzsche would have been familiar with Hammer perhaps does not need proving. But I think it is worth mentioning here that I believe that Hammer is the source for Nietzsche’s mention of the Order of Assassins in the GM§III.24, with the slogan “nothing is true, everything is permitted” ["Nichts ist wahr, Alles ist erlaubt"] (p. 150). In his footnote to this passage (Ibid.), Kaufmann correctly identifies that this is neither Nietzsche’s coinage nor a paraphrase from Dostoevsky’s Brothers Karamazov—but he does not identify the source. In Hammer’s Die Geschichte der Assassinen, we read: “Dass Nichts wahr und Alles erlaubt sei…”924. See: J. Hammer-Purgstall, Die Geschichte der Assassinen, aus morgenländischen Quellen, J. G. Cotta’schen Buchhandlung, 1818, p. 50. Wood’s English translation renders this “Nothing is true and all is allowed”. See: J. Hammer-Purgstall, The History of the Assassins, trans. O.C. Wood, Smith and Elder, 1835, p. 55.

“…when hypocritical enemies were harshly accusing Hafez of sensual excess and forbidden ideas, no one thought of his dithyrambs on the pleasures of drinking and loving as mystical allegories of divine love and heavenly ecstasy. Later, however, when muftis, sheiks, ulemas, sofis, imams, dervishes, and muezzins, in a spirit of genuine or pretended piety, discovered that they could not stop the common people from singing the songs of Hafez, they declared his sensual images to be spiritual allegories and his entire use of language to be mystical, so that his orthodoxy and their own might be vindicated. Orthodox Muslims continue to be of this opinion. The commentaries of Schemi and Sururi are entirely in this vein. Sudi had sufficient insight and courage to think otherwise. This led to lively disputes for and against his ideas, not only in Shiraz, but also in Constantinople.”

VI.2

According to Nietzsche’s copy of Daumer’s *Hafis: Eine Sammlung persischer Gedichte* is heavily bookmarked. Daumer in his introduction offers basically the same interpretation as Hammer: besides speaking of Hafez as an “incomparable genius” and exemplary of “pure, unclouded, divine bliss”, Daumer describes Hafez as the “sworn enemy” of “priests, monks, mystics, and scholastic pedants”—and writing poetry “most free, bold and cheerful”. As for the mystical interpretation of Hafez, Daumer writes that the puritans found it “impossible to destroy his liberal-minded and joyful songs” through brutality, and so turned to subtler means of neutralising the poems’ power, declaring the apparently “sensuous and worldly” to be “spiritual allegories” in much the same way as “our theologians adapted The Song of Solomon [*das hohe Lied*]”.

According to Daumer, this was a shrewd sanitising and little more, for in the majority of Hafez’ poems, the “ascetic and ethical abstraction of the supernatural and celestial is exactly what Hafez denied”. Daumer then says:

“…to be sure, a certain mysticism can also be found here, but it is quite different from the monkish, gloomy, pious one”.

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926 Ibid.
927 C. Giuliano, et al. (eds.), op. cit., p. 178; according to the catalogue, Nietzsche had the 1846 edition published by Hoffmann und Campe. For those interested, the marked pages were pgs. 20, 22, 25, 32, 35, 37, 42, 54, 57, 64, 65, 67, 69, 70, 77, 80, 81, 84, 89, 105, 142, 146, 177, 183, 202, 213, 241, and 271.
This is an important point that we will be returning to again and again. It brings to mind a comment Emerson made about Swedenborg in *Representative Men*:

“…his books have no melody, no emotion, no humor, no relief to the dead prosaic level. In his profuse and accurate imagery is no pleasure, for there is no beauty. We wander forlorn in a lack-lustre landscape. No bird ever sang in all these gardens of the dead. The entire want of poetry in so transcendent a mind betokens the disease, and like a hoarse voice in a beautiful person, is a kind of warning… His laurel so largely mixed with cypress, a charnel-breath so mingles with the temple incense, that boys and maids will shun the spot”929.

Though this is not a section of Emerson’s text which Nietzsche could have read930, the sentiment is certainly one that Nietzsche himself expresses with respect to other writers. Indeed, as we shall see in what follows, Nietzsche goes further than Emerson: the absence of buffoonery in a work means that it is not only “boys and maids” that ought to flee931.

VI.3

It is often said that it is Goethe’s *West-East Divan* that introduced Nietzsche to Hafez932. This is perhaps true, but not especially helpful if we stop there. What may be helpful is to have some appreciation of how Goethe read Hafez—and how this influenced Nietzsche’s reading.

Let us begin with Goethe’s poem “Offenbar Geheimnis”933 from the *Divan’s* second book:

“Sie haben dich, heiliger Hafis,
Die mystische Zunge genannt
Und haben, die Wortgelehrten,
Den Wert des Worts nicht erkannt.

930 See below for details as to which of Emerson’s books Nietzsche had access. Grimm’s translation was only of the Shakespeare and Goethe essays.
931 NF-1887.9[143] (WP§187, p. 112).
933 Hadot deals at some length with this theme in Goethe’s writing in *The Veil of Isis*, op. cit., esp. pp. 247–261.
Mystisch heißest du ihnen,
Weil sie Närrisches bei dir denken
Und ihren unlautern Wein
In deinem Namen verschenken.

Du aber bist mystisch rein,
Weil sie dich nicht verstehn,
Der du, ohne fromm zu sein, selig bist!
Das wollen sie dir nicht zugestehn”934

“Open Secret”

“The mystical tongue” they have named you,
O Hafiz, our saint, nor to one
Of these scholars so learned in word-lore
The meaning of “mystic” is known.
A “mystic”—because in your pages
Their silliest notions they hail,
And their own sorry vintage the tapsters
In your name, as true Hafez, retail.

Pure mystic you are, and with reason,
For your meaning they never can hit,
You, while nowise the pious the blessed!
A fact they refuse to admit.935

They’ve claimed you, holy Hafiz,
A mystic tongue command.
These men of words, however,
That word don’t understand.

They call you “mystic,” thinking
Their nonsense-thought—for shame!
While impure wine they’re drinking
And serving in your name.

But you’re pure, and mystically.
Yet they cannot make it fit
That you’re blest without any piety!
And this they will not admit.936

Goethe here suggests a higher meaning to the term mystic than the common one. In the
Notes & Essays, he uses its common meaning when he writes of Jami:

“Jami gathers the whole harvest of previous efforts. He sums up the religious,
philosophical, scientific, and prosaic–poetical culture. He has the great advantage of
being born 23 years after Hafiz’ death and of finding as a young man an entirely
open field before him. The greatest clarity and tact are in his possession. Now he

934 J.W. Goethe, West-östlicher Divan, “Hafis Nameh”.
attempts and accomplishes everything, appearing both sensual and spiritual at the same time. The splendor of the real world and of the world of poetry lies before him, and he moves between them. Mysticism held no appeal for him. But because he would not have filled the sphere of national interest without it, he gave a historical account of all the follies through which, in stages, the human being, caught in his earthly existence, intends to come closer to the Divinity and finally to become one with it. In this process, however, finally nothing but unnatural, perverse, monstrous figures come to light. For what else does the mystic do but creep past problems, or shove them aside if that can be managed?937

The scholarly caste does not understand Hafez’ mysticism, Goethe suggests, because they cannot conceive of blessedness without piety. We might rephrase this as saying that there is for such men only a “gloomy, monkish, pious” mysticism.

Also in the Notes & Essays, Goethe writes:

“Persian poetry and what resembles it will never be received by the Occidental as entirely pure, with complete ease—a fact we need to be aware of if we are not to be suddenly disturbed in our enjoyment. Yet it is not religion that keeps us at a distance from that poetic art. The unity of God, submission to his will, mediation through a prophet—all of this coincides more or less with our own beliefs, with our conceptions. Our holy scriptures are similarly rooted there, even if only in a legendary form.

We are already long since acquainted with the fairy tales of that region—the fables, parables, anecdotes, witty and jesting speeches. Their mysticism should also appeal to us; at least it would deserve to do so, because of a deep and thoroughgoing seriousness, comparable to ours. But such feeling, in most recent times, if looked at closely, turns out to express only a spineless and inept yearning. The way it parodies itself is illustrated in the following verses:

Eternal thirst alone avails me
After thirst.

[Eichendorff, Abnugung und Gegenwart 2 Kap. 12]938

938 Ibid., pp. 211–212.
If we are to discover mysticism in Hafez, it shall not be a kind of “spineless and inept yearning”. It will not be an attempt to “creep past problems”, to evade the complexity of the world. What Goethe writes specifically of Hafez in the Notes is worth quoting at some length:

“In his hometown Shiraz, to which he limited himself, he taught as a dervish, sufı, and sheikh, well liked and highly regarded by the Muzaffar family and their connections. He was occupied with theological and grammatical works and rallied a large number of disciples. To these serious studies, involving the holding of a teaching post, his poems stand in total contradiction, which might be resolved, however, if we say: the poet must not believe in and live everything he expresses, least of all the poet who, born in a later period, gets into complicated circumstances requiring him to assume a rhetorical disguise and to present what contemporaries want to hear. That was the case with Hafiz. For just as a teller of fairy tales does not believe in the magical happenings he narrates but only thinks of how to animate them in whatever way will give his hearers the most pleasure, so too the lyrical poet has no need to affirm in his own practice what he invokes to delight and flatter singers and readers, high and low. It seems our poet did not set a great value on the songs that flow so smoothly: disciples collected them only after his death. I will say but little about these poems: one should enjoy them and bring oneself into harmony with them. A tempered, yet upwelling vitality streams from each.

Unassumingly happy and judicious within limits, taking part in the fullness of the world, looking into the mysteries of the Divinity from afar, but also at one point rejecting religious practice as well as sensual pleasure, the one as much the other—so in general this kind of poetry, whatever it appears to promote and teach, must above all maintain a skeptical mobility”\textsuperscript{939}

While issues with a limited hedonistic interpretation of Hafez are flagged here, it is equally clear that Goethe doesn’t go in for an other-worldly reading. That Hafez is “the one as much as the other” reflects his multiplicity, and suggests Hafez’ affinity with Goethe himself. Indeed, it recalls to my mind Goethe’s letter to Jacobi:

“As for me, with the multifarious directions of my character, a single way of thinking cannot be enough; as a poet and artist, I’m a polytheist, as a natural scientist, however, a pantheist, and I’m the one as decisively as the other…

\[Ich für mich kann, bei den mannigfaltigen Richtungen meines Wesens, nicht an einer Denkweise

\textsuperscript{939} Ibid., p. 203.
To get some perspective on the depth of Goethe’s respect for and affinity with Hafez, we should look at the poem “Unbounded [Unbegrënzt]”, here in Hamburger’s translation:

“What makes you great is that you cannot end,
And never to begin you are predestined
Your song revolves as does the starry dome,
Beginning, end for ever more the same;
And what the middle brings will prove to be
What last remains and was initially.

Of poets’ joys you are the one true source,
Wave after numberless wave you give to verse.
Lips that of kissing never tire,
Song from the breast that sweetly wells,
A throat that’s never quenched, on fire,
An honest heart that freely tells.

And though the whole world were to sink,
Hafiz, with you, with you alone
I will compete! Delight, despair,
Let us, the twins, entirely share!
Like you to love, like you to drink
My life and pride I here declare.

Self-fuelled now, my song, ring truer!
For you are older, you are newer”

I think the discussion of joy and woe [Lust und Pein] here is important in our understanding why Goethe took Hafez as his twin, his kindred spirit. It relates to the earthly spirituality of Hafez, a spirituality of “taking part in the fullness of the world”—for which we might well borrow Nietzsche’s description of the Dionysian faith as “the

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940 January 6, 1813. The translation is Dollenmayer’s. GLWA, ch. 29. In the Maxims (also quoted in Safranski), we read “Investigating nature / We are pantheists, / Writing poetry, polytheists / Morally, monotheists [Wir sind naturforschend Pantheisten, dichtend Polytheisten, sittlich Monotheisten]”.

941 GSP, pp. 204–205.

942 That is, where Hamburger gives us “delight, despair”.

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religious affirmation of life, life whole and not denied or halved”. In Dowden’s foreword to his translation of the *West-East Divan*, he writes of Goethe:

“He felt profoundly hostile to the neo-Catholic party in the Romantic School, and in the *Divan* some shrewd thrusts are delivered against them by the old Pagan—the old Pagan who was in spirit more religious than they—who had found, like Hafiz, the secret of being “*selig*” without being “*fromm,*” which fact they never could admit nor understand.”

Again we see this idea of a spirituality that confounds the narrowly pious. This fuller spirituality that does not turn against the particular, and that doesn’t see the divine as only one pole of existence (the good, the pleasant, for example), can be seen in Goethe’s *God and World* cycle just as much as in the *West-East Divan*. However, given their greater abstraction, these late poems—some of which we discussed earlier—will more easily be sanitised and falsely assimilated into our existing categories.

**VI.4**

Let me mention in passing that Nietzsche may well also have come to a new appreciation of Hafez through Wagner. In a letter to August Röckel, Wagner writes:

“I would also introduce you to a poet whom I have recently recognized to be the greatest of all poets; it is the Persian poet “Hafiz”, whose poems now exist in a most enjoyable German adaptation by Daumer.”

Wagner also makes clear how he interprets Hafez, speaking of the poet’s “self-assured and sublime tranquillity of mind” and saying: “The only merit of more recent developments in Europe seems to me to lie solely in a kind of *universal* disintegration, whereas I like to see in the person of this Oriental a precocious striving after individualism.”

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943 NF-1888,14[89] (WP§1052, p. 542). This idea of life halved comes up in Goethe’s poem “*Generalbeichte*” which was important to Nietzsche. In this poem, Goethe speaks of being weaned from the half and living resolutely in wholeness [*Uns vom Halben zu entwöhnen / Und im Ganzen Guten Schönen / Resolut zu leben*]. Nietzsche alludes to this poem in BT§18 (p. 113, where he drops the part about living in goodness and beauty and replaces this will “fullness”), and he and Salome (BVN-1882,234) took as their “motto” [*Wahlprufth*].


945 Comparable perhaps to how Nietzsche’s ethics is deemed *immoralist* from the perspective of a narrow morality. C.f. EH§Destiny.4.

946 See my discussion of Goethe and the One and many.


VI.5

Emerson’s influence on Nietzsche has often been discussed, but his influence with regards to Hafez has not been adequately noted. Nietzsche bought a copy of Fabricius’ translation of the Essays in the 60s, and replaced it after it was lost in 1874. Nietzsche had a copy of The Conduct of Life translated by Mühlberg, and Grimm’s translation of two essays from Representative Men, published as Über Goethe und Shakespeare. Nietzsche also owned a copy of Emerson’s essay “Historic Notes of Life and Letters in Massachusetts” from The Atlantic, which he paid to have privately translated to German. Most importantly for our purposes here, just one year after its release in English, Nietzsche bought Schmidt’s 1876 translation of Letters and Social Aims (Neue Essays).

Hafez is mentioned in many of Emerson’s essays to which Nietzsche is known to have read. In Essays: First Series, “History”. In Essays: Second Series, “Manners”. In The Conduct of Life, “Fate”, “Considerations by the Way”, “Power”, and “Worship”. The influence on Nietzsche of two of these essays—namely “History” and “Fate”—is well known. In Letters and Social Aims, Hafez is mentioned in “Poetry and Imagination”, “Quotation and Originality”, “Progress of Culture”, and “Inspiration”. Of prime importance, however, is Emerson’s relatively lengthy discussion of Hafez in the essay “Persian Poetry”, where he writes:

“We do not wish to strew sugar on bottled spiders, or try to make mystical divinity out of the Song of Solomon, much less out of the erotic and bacchanalian songs of Hafiz. Hafiz himself is determined to defy all such hypocritical interpretation, and tears off his turban and throws it at the head of the meddling dervish, and throws his glass after the turban. But the love or the wine of Hafiz is not to be confounded with vulgar debauch. It is the spirit in which the song is written that imports, and not the topics. Hafiz praises wine, roses, maidens, boys, birds, mornings, and music, to give vent to his immense hilarity and sympathy with every form of beauty

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950 T.H. Brobjer, Nietzsche’s Philosophical Context, University of Illinois Press, 2008, p. 119; Schmidt’s introduction to Letters and Social Aims discusses both the Essays and Representative Men—in the case of the latter, spending some time on Emerson’s discussion of Swedenborg and discussing the differences of Representative Men from Carlyle’s On Heroes.

951 The latter inspiring two early philosophical essays, “Fate and History” and “Free Will and Fate”, and the former being the source of Nietzsche’s epigraph to the first edition of The Gay Science: “To the poet, to the philosopher, to the saint, all things are friendly and sacred, all events profitable, all days holy, all men divine.”

952 C.f. Daumer on “vulgar intoxication” above. Emerson also writes here that “Hafiz does not write of wine and love in any mystical sense, further than that he uses wine as the symbol of intellectual freedom”.
and joy; and lays the emphasis on these to mark his scorn of sanctimony and base prudence. These are the natural topics and language of his wit and perception. But it is the play of wit and the joy of song that he loves; and if you mistake him for a low rioter, he turns short on you with verses which express the poverty of sensual joys, and to ejaculate with equal fire the most unpalatable affirmations of heroic sentiment and contempt for the world”

Here we see both a denial of any sanitising, “mystical” reading of Hafez, and an appreciation for the man’s “antithetical character”. In an essay entitled “The Influence of Hafiz on Western Poetry”, Salami writes of Emerson’s poem “Bacchus” and its provenance in Hafez:

“Though he adapted the poem which so deeply influenced him, he failed to grasp the very mystical overtones embodied in the poem. The reason may be traced to the fact that he read the poem in German of which he had an imperfect knowledge…”

True though it is that Emerson’s translations from Hammer are patchy, might it not be equally that Emerson didn’t have such an ascetic, other-worldly conception of the spiritual, and that he reserved the term “mystical” for just such a conception? In this same essay, Emerson writes of Hafez:

“He has run through the whole gamut of passion,—from the sacred to the borders, and over the borders, of the profane. The same confusion of high and low, the celerity of flight and allusion which our colder muses forbid, is habitual to him…”

This “confusion” is precisely Hafez’ rejection of our easy distinctions between the sacred and profane. It is our categories that are confounded when, in Hafez, we face again and again the judgement: that, too, is divine. It is thus that we could describe Hafez as a mystic, understanding this as an especially Dionysian kind wherein life is affirmed “as a whole, not denied and halved”. That Emerson was drawn to such an outlook is obvious, and said most clearly in a journal note where he writes of Hafez that

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955 I certainly don’t mean to suggest that Emerson had a thorough understanding of Hafez. Indeed, of those I mention here, Emerson strikes me as having the least feeling for Hafez, and largely seems to be following the lead of the German interpreters.
“Nothing stops him. He makes the daregod & daredevil experiment. He is not to be scared by a name, or a religion. He fears nothing. He sees too far; he sees throughout; such is the only man I wish to see or be.”

VI.6

One contemporary interpreter of Hafez who may help to substantiate the reading given by Hammer, Daumer, Goethe, and Emerson, is the scholar of Persian literature Dick Davis. Davis has written at some length about interpreting and translating Hafez, and his translations in *Faces of Love: Hafez and the Poets of Shiraz* are of great merit. In his introduction to this work, Davis writes:

“The interpretation of Persian poetry that apparently deals with secular love and wine as being in reality mystical and Sufi in its subject matter was well established by the fourteenth century. In the previous century the Sufi poet Eraqi had written a glossary of the secular terms he had used in his own poetry, explaining what was “actually”—that is, mystically/in Sufi terms—meant by them.”

Davis argues that this has led to great interpretive difficulty. After all,

“…if a poet wished to write a poem that was, simply and plainly, about a sexual partner and wine, what vocabulary was available to him apart from that which the Sufi commentators were insisting must be allegorical? How would a poem that talked about a lover and wine look if it actually was about a lover and wine?”

This difficulty is especially true of Hafez, says Davis, who “is the Persian poet who more than any other constantly suggests multiple and shifting possibilities of meaning.” Davis then discusses the history of interpreting Hafez, beginning with the early commentator Sudi:

“In his commentary, Sudi tends to stick to fairly literal meanings, and when he occasionally suggests mystical or spiritual interpretations this is usually warranted in an obvious way by the vocabulary of the particular poem on which he is

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960 Ibid., p. xxx.
961 Ibid., p. xxxi.
commenting—by, for example, a reference to “angels,” or “paradise,” or something similar. But subsequent commentators greatly expanded the number of Hafez’s poems that were interpreted as mystical/Sufi in orientation until virtually all of them were treated in this way, and the predominantly mystical interpretation of his poetry became the standard one … In general, the further we get from Hafez’s own time the more insistent the commentators become that mystical rather than secular concerns are what the poems are “really” about”.

Davis then offers a defence of a basically literal interpretation of Hafez, and here he is worth quoting at some length:

“Advocates of the exclusively mystical and Sufi interpretation of Hafez’s verse (“wine” in the poems means mystical doctrine or practice, which brings about the “intoxication” of mystical experience; the “friend” means God; “absence” means absence from the divine; the “wine-shop” means a Sufi meeting place, and so on) must contend with some strong contrary evidence within the poems themselves. Firstly, and very obviously, almost every time that Hafez mentions Sufis, or anything to do with Sufism, he does so with contempt. The great sin for Hafez is hypocrisy, and, as he frequently indicates, he considers Sufis to be just one more kind of hypocrite. It’s been said that Hafez is deliberately leading the uninitiated astray here, or inviting contempt because the world’s contempt was something that Sufis sought, but many readers will find it hard not to take him at his word. It’s true that quite often Hafez indicates that he has worn the distinctive Sufi cloak himself, but when he says this he also indicates that he wasn’t much of a Sufi underneath the cloak (as he believes many others who make a show of Sufism aren’t either), and that the best thing to do is to shrug off the cloak. If at some point in his life he had been involved with Sufism, he seems to have thought better of it by the time that most of his poems were written”

The form of interpretation suggested by Davis here is not, as Salami has suggested, necessarily a failure to “grasp the very mystical overtones” of Hafez’ poems. As Hammer wrote, “Sudi had sufficient insight and courage” not to interpret Hafez’ poems as spiritual allegories; this takes especial courage because it asks us to face up to the rich sensuality

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962 Ibid., p. xxxvi.
963 Ibid., p. xxxvii.
965 Quoted in K. Mommsen, op. cit., p. 200.
of a spirituality that confounds our narrow categories, while allegorical interpretations simply allow us to assimilate Hafez’ poems to these categories.

To help our understanding of Hafez, I offer below four of Davis’ translations.

I

“Last night she brought me wine, and sat beside my pillow;
Her hair hung loose, her dress was torn, her face perspired—
She smiled and sang of love, with mischief in her eyes,
And whispering in my ear, she drunkenly inquired:
“My ancient lover, can it be that you’re asleep?
The true initiate, when offered wine at night,
Would be a heretic of love if he refused
To take the draught he’s given, and drink it with delight.”
And as for you, you hypocrites, don’t cavil at
Lovers who drain life to the lees, since we were given
This nature when the world began, and we must drink
The wine that’s poured for us, whether from earth or heaven.
So take the laughing wine cup, raise it in your hand,
Caress your lover’s curls, and say Hafez has spoken;
How many vows of abstinence the world has seen
So fervently affirmed, and—like Hafez’s—broken.”

II

966 Ibid., p. 4; for comparison, consider Wilberforce Clarke’s version from his influential late 19th century translation:
“(The Beloved), tress dishevelled; sweat expressed; lip laughing; intoxicated
Garment rent; song-singing; goblet in His hand;
Eye, contest-seeking; lip-lamenting—
Came, at midnight, last night, to my pillow; (and there) sate.
To my ear, He brought His head; (and), in a low soft voice,
Said:—“O my distraught Lover! sleep is thine” (sleep hath overcome thee).
Of whatever, He (God) poured into our cup, we have drunk (good or bad);
Whether it be of the wine of Paradise, or the cup of intoxication.
That Arif (Lover), to whom they give wine like this, night-watching
Is infidel to love, if he be not wine-worshipper.
O Zahid! go: seize not a small matter against the drinkers of wine-dregs:
For, save this gift (of dregs), naught did they give us on the day of Alast.
The laughter (mantling foam) of the cup of wine; and the knot-seizing tress of the Beloved—
O many a repentance, hath it shattered like the repentance of Hafiz.”
“I saw the green fields of the sky
and there a sickle moon—
I reckoned what I’d sown, and thought,
“The harvest will come soon.”
I said, “My luck, you’ve been asleep;
now dawn has brought the sun.”
She said, “The past is past; do not
despair of all you’ve done;
The night you leave this world, go, climb
like Jesus through the skies—
Your lamp, a hundred times, will light
the sun as you arise.
Don’t trust the shining moon, she is
the highway robber who
Stole Kay Kavus’s throne, and then
the belt of Khosrow too.
Gold earrings set with rubies may
charm you, and lead you on,
But know this: Beauty’s reign is brief,
and all too quickly gone.”
God keep the evil eye from your
sweet beauty, which can field
A pawn to make the sun and moon
precipitously yield.
Say to the heavens, “Don’t boast of splendor!”
When love is matched with you,
The harvest of the moon’s a grain,
and of the stars but two.
Hypocrisy will burn the harvest
religion reaped; and so,
Hafez, shrug off this Sufi cloak—
just leave now, let it go.”

III

“Not every Sufi’s trustworthy, or pure in spirit,
And burning is no more than many of them merit.
Our Sufi prays at dawn, transported with delight,
But watch how drunkenly he welcomes in the night!
Would that a touchstone could display hypocrisy,
Blackening the liar’s face with shame, for all to see.
The pampered are not fit to travel on love’s road,
Only an outcast’s heart can bear the lover’s load.
Why let the world upset you? Why, and for how long?
Drink wine, since sorrow in a wise man’s heart is wrong.
Our serving boy’s young face is ready for its beard—
What tearful faces there will be, once it’s appeared!
And if that boy should serve me now, it is a sign
Hafez’s cloak and prayer-mat have been sold for wine.”

IV

“Last night I saw the angels
tapping at the wine-shop’s door,
And kneading Adam’s dust,
and molding it as cups for wine;
And, where I sat beside the road,
these messengers of heaven
Gave me their wine to drink,
so that their drunkenness was mine.
The heavens could not bear
the heavy trust they had been given,
And lots were cast, and crazed
Hafez’s name received the sign.
Forgive the seventy-two
competing factions—all their tales
Mean that the Truth is what
they haven’t seen, and can’t define!
But I am thankful that there’s peace
between Him now, and me;”

968 Ibid, p. 68.
In celebration of our pact
the houris drink their wine—
And fire is not what gently smiles
from candles’ flames, it’s what
Annihilates the flocking moths
that flutter round His shrine.
No one has drawn aside the veil
of Thought as Hafez has,
Or combed the curls of Speech
as his sharp pen has, line by line.”[^69]

Though these might seem cherry-picked, and picked they certainly are, I think that these few poems show that hypocrisy is a major theme in Hafez’ writing, and thus militate against any reading that would cast Hafez himself in an otherworldly light. Moreover, I believe that they exemplify beautifully the richly sensual spirituality about which I have been stuttering.

VI.8

With these poems in mind, we can now work through Nietzsche’s discussions of Hafez. I will do so chronologically. This may be somewhat masochistic, as it condemns me to starting with a note of which my interpretation is the least certain. At any rate, let us begin:

“The varying degrees of enjoyment for “true”

e.g.
Kant and Schelling
Machiavelli and Seneca
Stendhal and Walter Scott
Plato and Hafez
[die verschiedenen Grade des Genusses für „wahr“
\[\zeta B.
Kant und Schelling
Macchiavell und Seneca

[^69]: Ibid., pp. 40–41.
Fragments of this kind are common in Nietzsche’s notebooks, and lend themselves to many interpretations. What I say here will be tentative if not tenuous, and will rely a lot on the context. It is, let me say first, a fragment in a book of notes and drafts towards *Beyond Good and Evil*.

Perhaps this is supposed to be read as an increasing scale, with Kant and Schelling having the least taste for truth, and Plato and Hafez the most. Or perhaps the pairs are contrasted with each other.

The first reading seems to make some sense. Later, Kant, Schelling, and Seneca would each be characterised as amongst Nietzsche’s “impossible ones.” But in the previous notebook, Machiavelli is praised as a “highlight of honesty” along with the Jesuits, Montaigne, and La Rochefoucauld. Though perhaps honesty and truthfulness ought to be kept quite separate here—for reasons I shall soon mention.

Nietzsche’s praise for Stendhal is consistent. In the immediately earlier notebook, Nietzsche quotes Stendhal’s characterisation of beauty as “the promise of happiness” which he contrasts with the Kantian conception of disinterest, just as he will later do at greater length in the third essay of the *Genealogy*. Here we see an unneutered conception of beauty—and we will now see an unneutered conception of truth, and as we shall shortly speak of an unneutered concept of purity and innocence.

As for Scott, in the same notebook Nietzsche discusses his mythologising of the English middle-ages. This perhaps suggests an indifference to truth in forming a narrative.

What of Plato? Well, I tend to be cautious with Nietzsche here. Nietzsche uses Plato in various and conflicting ways in his work. So we must ask, ‘which Plato’?—and in the case of this note we do not have much to work with. I think of a later note in which Nietzsche speaks of the caricature:

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970 NF-1884,26[331].
971 TI§IX.1, p. 513.
972 NF-1884,25[74].
973 NF-1884,25[154].
974 GM§III.6, p. 104.
975 In BGE§39, p. 50, Nietzsche quotes Stendhal on the need to be “dry, clear, without illusion” in order to be a philosopher. This might seem to point in the opposite direction, though it is worth noting that this comes in the midst of Nietzsche’s discussion about the necessity of mask for truth, which we have discussed in the foregoing.
976 NF-1884,26[331], c.f. NF-1884,26[393], and also the later note NF-1887,11[330] (WP§830).
“Every society has the tendency to reduce its opponents to caricatures—at least in imagination—and, as it were, to starve them. Such a caricature is, e.g., our ‘criminal.’ Within the aristocratic Roman order of values, the Jew was reduced to a caricature. Among artists, the ‘philistine and bourgeois’ become caricatures; among the pious, the godless; among aristocrats, the man of the people. Among immoralists it is the moralist: Plato, for example, becomes a caricature in my hands.”

Indeed, Nietzsche elsewhere suggests that Plato knew much more than he let on:

“…What is needed above all is an absolute skepticism toward all inherited concepts (of the kind that one philosopher perhaps possessed—Plato, of course—for he taught the reverse)”

“Certainly, Plato was not really that kind of dullard when he taught that concepts were fixed and eternal: yet he wanted this to be believed”

“Fundamentally, Plato, as the artist he was, preferred appearance to being! lie and invention to truth! the unreal to the actual!…”

And in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche speaks of his doubts about other possibilities of Plato interpretation:

“…There is nothing that has caused me to meditate more on Plato’s secrecy and sphinx nature than the happily preserved petit fait that under the pillow of his deathbed there was found no “Bible,” nor anything Egyptian, Pythagorean, or Platonic—but a volume of Aristophanes.”

So, we *could* read this as suggesting that Plato had much less of an appetite for truth—and was more of an artist; that is, more consciously an artist. But this seems an unlikely interpretation, given Nietzsche’s general caricature of Plato as epitomising the faith that “God is the truth, that truth is divine.”

The other possibility for interpretation that I suggested is that we read the pairs as *contrasts*. I submit that the only way to make sense of this would be to read the first as more *truth*-
enjoying than the second. Although I caution that truth-seeking and truth-enjoying are not the same thing.

Let us see if we can make this any clearer with reference to the fragments that surround this one in the notebook. In the note that immediately precedes ours, Nietzsche evokes Christianity as explaining Pascal’s “deep interest in truth” [Tief interessirt für Wahrheit]. The topic of the Christian deification of truth is a familiar topic, as with the diagnosis of how this leads to the Christian as having an especial and pathological interest in truth that eventually turns nihilistic. As Nietzsche notes elsewhere, “One interpretation has collapsed; but because it was considered the interpretation, it now seems as if there were no meaning at all in existence, as if everything were in vain”.

Three notes later, “the faith in truth” [Der Glaube an die Wahrheit] is discussed. Here it is Homer that is contrasted with Plato. This forms part of the critique of the “will to truth” [Wille zur Wahrheit] that begins in this period. In this note, Nietzsche says that we have not appreciated the flipside of the antagonism between philosophers and artists—the “friends of deception”: “the unsuitability of truth to life [die Untauglichkeit der Wahrheit zum Leben]”. This reminds us of the later, and far better known, section entitled “How we, too, are still pious” from the fifth book of The Gay Science, where Nietzsche says that the will to truth may be “a principle that is hostile to life… a concealed will to death”. This is also suggested in the note that immediately follows ours, where Nietzsche questions motivations behind knowledge seeking, and asks whether it is true that one prefers truth.

In this notebook Nietzsche also writes that “the will to truth and certainty is born of a fear of uncertainty”. Such themes are discussed at length in later works. But of especial interest to us now—given the contrast of Plato and Homer—is the third essay of the Genealogy: in section 24, Nietzsche says that “the will to truth requires a critique”, then in section 25 he speaks of the “overestimation of truth” and says:

“Art… in which precisely the lie is sanctified and the will to deception has a good conscience, is much more fundamentally opposed to the ascetic ideal than is science: this was instinctively sensed by Plato, the greatest enemy of art Europe has yet produced. Plato versus Homer: that is the complete, the genuine antagonism—

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983 NF-1884,26[330].
984 NF-1886,5[71] (WP§55, p. 35).
985 NF-1884,26[334].
986 GS§344, p. 282.
987 NF-1884,26[332]. C.f. also the beginning of Beyond Good and Evil: the first section asks “why not rather untruth? And uncertainty? Even ignorance?”, and the fourth speaks of untruth as a “condition of life”.
988 NF-1884,26[301].
there the sincerest advocate of the “beyond,” the great slanderer of life; here the instinctive deifier, the golden nature.

In the notebook that immediately precedes the fragment we have been considering, Nietzsche writes: “We know… that reverence for truth is already the consequence of an illusion—and that one should value more than truth the force that forms, simplifies, shapes, invents.

If we interpret this our note as saying that Hafez had a low degree of enjoyment in truth, we might also think that this has to do with his realisation of its falsity. As Nietzsche puts it elsewhere, “Perhaps nobody yet has been truthful enough about what “truthfulness” is.”

The artist doesn’t associate truthfulness with “the affects grown cool, the tempo slowed down, dialectics in place of instinct…” We might contrast the “artists of apotheosis” who enrich what they see with the artists like the French naturalists that Nietzsche believed actually cheapened phenomena by their attempt to get at the facts. In an unpublished poem, Nietzsche writes:

“Where, where is the innocence of these lies? […] The poet who can lie knowingly, willingly
He alone can speak truthfully”

[Wohin, wobin ist die Unschuld aller dieser Lügen!
[…] Der Dichter, der lügen kann
wissentlich, willentlich
Der kann allein Wahrheit reden]

The idea of the “innocent lie”, and of lying knowingly as telling the truth is relevant here. We might think of this as not being fooled into believing that one’s interpretation is interpretation free, as an awareness that truth doesn’t remain truth “when the veils are withdrawn.”

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991 BGE§177, p. 93.
992 GM§III.25, p. 154; on this different evaluation, see GS§88 on “being serious about truth”.
993 The association of Hafez with Homer will be touched on in what follows.
994 This is evidently a draft for what would become the “The Song of Melancholy” appended to the forth part of Zarathustra, where the poet is described as “An animal, cunning, preying, prowling, / That must lie, / That must knowingly, willingly lie” (TSZ, p. 298).
995 NF-1884,28[20].
996 GS§P.4, p. 38.
Let us remember that for Nietzsche, seeing as beautiful makes beautiful. The ‘neutral’ is not the true; this is Nietzsche’s critique of the ‘evil eye’ of French naturalism. “The “impersonal” is merely the personal weakened. The artists of apotheosis make perfect, divine. What is taken in flows back out of such artists’ wells as a gift of their love. Theirs is a golden eye as opposed to an evil one: it is not one that makes ugly, but makes perfect, divine. It enriches rather than cheapens, “spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things”.

We have to understand that, for Nietzsche, there is no interpretation-independent “truth”. As he writes, “Will to truth is a making firm, a making true and durable, an abolition of the false character of things, a reinterpretation of it into beings. “Truth” is therefore not something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that must be created.

The sense that we are discovering facts is born of our own poverty and actually makes things “more meagre” as opposed to “enrich[ing] everything out of one’s own fullness”. Nietzsche says that this “having to transform into perfection is—art. That is, the abundant cannot but enrich, just as the hungry cannot but hollow out.

Nietzsche also writes of the artist “infus[ing] a transfiguration and fullness into things and poetiz[ing] about them until they reflect back our fullness and joy in life. But, in apparent tension to what is said above, one aspect that often comes up in Nietzsche’s description of the artist is his ignorance of this enriching. This is put quite clearly in a late note which also speaks of “the inner need to make of things a reflex of one’s own fullness and perfection”. Here it is said that “the artist who began to understand himself would misunderstand himself: he ought not to look back, he ought not to look at all, he ought to give.—” That is, he is not aware that he is lying. As Nietzsche writes in another note in the same notebook, “artists should see nothing as it is, but fuller, simpler, stronger.” We might wonder what is meant here by “as it is”—is that just the consensus reality? But
the point is fairly clear: the artist of apotheosis does not experience the world in the same way as the evil eyed. As Blake wrote in the “Proverbs of Hell”, “a fool sees not the same tree that a wise man sees”\textsuperscript{1008}.

VI.9

Well, so much for Nietzsche’s first reference to Hafez. The second comes in the form of a poem addressed to Hafez, and here, fortunately, we are on surer ground.

“An Hafis

Frage eines Wassertrinkers

Die Schenke, die du dir gebaut,
ist größer als jedes Haus,
Die Tränke, die du drin gebraut,
die trinkt die Welt nicht aus.
Der Vogel, der einst Phönix war,
der wohnt bei dir zu Gast,
Die Maus, die einen Berg gebar,
die – bist du selber fast!
Bist alles und keins, bist Schenke und Wein,
bist Phönix, Berg und Maus,
Fälltst ewiglich in dich hinein,
fliegst ewig aus dir hinaus –
Bist aller Höhen Versunkenheit,
bist aller Tiefen Schein,
Bist aller Trunkenen Trunkenheit
– wozu, wozu dir – Wein?”\textsuperscript{1009}

Below are the only two English translations of which I am aware:

more perfect…” To the lover, things not only \textit{seem} perfect, but \textit{become} perfect. This is a strong and clear statement of Nietzsche’s sense of the relationship between appearance and reality.

\textsuperscript{1008} See W. Blake, \textit{The Poetry and Prose of William Blake}, ed. D.V. Erdman, Doubleday & Co, 1970, p. 35. Blake writes elsewhere that “he who does not imagine in stronger and better lineaments and in stronger and better light than his perishing and mortal eye can see, does not imagine at all” (Ibid., p. 532). And for Blake, imagination is far from untruth. This is comparable with Nietzsche’s note that “Artists should see nothing as it is, but fuller, simpler, stronger: to that end, their lives must contain a kind of youth and spring, a kind of habitual intoxication” NF-1888,14[117] (WP§800, p. 421). See my discussion in the foregoing about the pagan versus the \textit{anemic}, the full versus the thin.

To Hafis

*Toast Question of a Water-Drinker*

The inn that you built,
Is greater than any house,
The drinks that you brewed,
The world could never drink.

The bird, who once was a Phoenix,
Lives with you, as a guest,
The mouse, who gave birth to a mountain,
Who—is almost like you!

You are all and naught, are the inn and the wine,
Phoenix, mountain and mouse,
You always withdraw into yourself
You always fly out of your self—

You are all deep illusions,
You are all drunken drinkers,
—What for, why wine for you? 

The reference to the mountain and the mouse is an inversion of the discussion of the mountain in the labour in *Aesop’s Fables*: great promise that delivers something trifling. In *The Art of Poetry*, Horace advises:

“… you are not to begin as the Cyclic poet of old:

*Of Priam’s fate and famous war I’ll sing.*

What will this boaster produce in keeping with such mouthing? Mountains will labour, to birth will come a laughter-rousing mouse!”

So we understand that Hafez’ poems are not at pains to prove their own seriousness, but quite the reverse. They are unassuming, yet deliver what is monumental.

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It is Nietzsche’s question to Hafez—‘why do you ask for wine?’—that requires some unpacking. We might spell this out—perhaps unpardonably—as ‘if Hafez is intoxication, why does he need wine?’, or perhaps ‘if Hafez is that upon which all others are drunk, why does he need wine?’

In the fourth part of *Zarathustra*, the Soothsayer says:

> “Although I hear water splashing nearby like speeches of wisdom—that is, abundantly and tirelessly—I want *wine*. Not everybody is a born water drinker like Zarathustra. Nor is water fit for the weary and wilted: we deserve wine”

The Soothsayer (Schopenhauer) *needs* wine—or thinks he does. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche wrote:

> “To believe that wine *exhilarates* I should have to be a Christian—believing what is for me an absurdity… Later, around the middle of life, to be sure, I decided more and more strictly against all “spirits”: I, an opponent of vegetarianism from experience… cannot advise all more spiritual natures earnestly enough to abstain entirely from alcohol. *Water is sufficient… In vino veritas:* it seems that here, too, I am at odds with all the world about the concept of “truth”—in my case, the spirit moves over water”.

The spirited do not need spirits. They do not need substitutes. This bears comparison with the discussion of culture as intoxication in *The Gay Science*. There Nietzsche writes “Does he that is enthusiastic need wine?”

The thought expressed in this passage is that intoxicants (theatrical or otherwise) are attempts to “produce an effect without a sufficient reason—aping the high tide of the soul!” For a spell, we escape our colourless lives and enter into the rich vibrancy of another world—that we might feel that we have tasted life. This might prove too effective a substitute, such that we lose interest in real colour. However, it is not the dispirited that Nietzsche is speaking about here. What of the spectacle for those whose lives *are* rich? Nietzsche says they are “nauseating” and recommends that “whoever finds enough tragedy and comedy in himself, probably does best when he stays away from the theater”.

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1014 EH§Clever.1, pp. 238–239; see also HAH§347.
1015 GS§86, pp. 141–142. The original has “*Was braucht der Begeisterte den Wein!*”; the same wordplay with “spirit” exists in German as in English; ‘what is wine [a lesser intoxicant] to the spirited, the inspired?’
1016 Ibid.
VI.10

We also hear in Nietzsche’s poem that “in the depths” Hafez “still shines”, which leads us to the third fragment in which Nietzsche discusses Hafez. I quote it here in full:

“The highest and most illustrious human joys, in which existence celebrates its own transfiguration, come, as is reasonable, only to the rarest and best-constituted men; and even to these only when they themselves and their ancestors have lived long, preparatory lives directed to this goal, and not even in the knowledge of this goal. Then an overflowing wealth of the most multifarious forces and the most dextrous power of “free willing” and lordly command dwell amicably together in one man; the spirit is then as much at home in the senses as the senses are at home in the spirit; and whatever takes place in the spirit must enkindle a subtle extraordinary happiness and play in the senses. And also the other way around! Consider this reverse process in the case of Hafiz; even Goethe, however much more faintly, gives us an idea of this occurrence. It is probable that with such perfect and well-constituted men the most sensual functions are finally transfigured by a symbol-intoxication of the highest spirituality: they experience a kind of deification of the body in themselves and are as distant as possible from the ascetic philosophy of the proposition “God is a spirit”—and this shows clearly that the ascetic is the “ill-constituted man,” who calls good only a something-in-itself, and indeed a something that judges and condemns—and also calls it “God.” From that height of joy where man feels himself to be altogether a deified form and a self-justification of nature, down to the joy of healthy peasants and healthy half-human animals, this whole, long, tremendous light and color scale of happiness, the Greeks, not without the grateful shudder of him who is initiated into a mystery, not without much caution and pious silence, called by the divine name: Dionysus.— What do any latter-day men, the children of a fragmentary, multifarious, sick, strange age, know of the range of Greek happiness; what could they know of it! Whence would the slaves of “modern ideas” derive a right to Dionysian festivals!”1017

There is much here that we could explore. For example, the linking of Hafez with Goethe (a repeated association with Nietzsche), the construal of both as amongst the “best-

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This is a point of great importance to Nietzsche's change in taste of music after his discovery of the recurrence in 1881, which he mentions in EH§Z.1, p. 295.

1017 NF-1885,41[6] (WP$1051, pp. 540–541); Kaufmann's version continues beyond this point, however I follow the Colli and Montinari edition by seeing these as distinct fragments. This fragment reads quite like a draft of GM§III.2, which we shall consider shortly.
constituted men”, and the linking of both with the Dionysian—which would make quite defensible, I think, a reading of Hafez into the passage on Goethe and the Dionysian in Twilight. But for now, let us see how this helps our understanding of Hafez’ shining in the depths.

The depths can be thought of here as the animal, the passional. That Hafez shines here points to his conception of spirituality, one directly opposed to the “ascetic philosophy of the proposition ‘God is a spirit’…” (The quote here is, of course, from John 4:24. In Luther’s 1522 translation, we read “Gott ist Geist” (as in the NIV)—but in Luther’s 1545 edition, we read “Gott ist ein Geist” (as in the KJV)).

Nietzsche’s talk here of the “deification of the body”, of a carnal spirituality, is suggestive of the spirituality that we find in Hafez—one that is remote from the otherworldliness of all “monkish, gloomy, pious” mystics. This form of spirituality is not, of course, unique to Hafez—although he exemplifies it well. Another exemplar is Blake, nowhere more obviously than when he writes:

“The worship of God is Honouring his gifts in other men each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best. Those who envy or calumniate great men hate God, for there is no other God”

We will flesh out these ideas shortly, but let us note in passing the similarity in Hafez, where individuality is affirmed, and where the hypocrisy of the “pious prigs” with their otherworldliness is rebuked, the Sufi cloak cast off in favour of an embrace of creation.

“That you’re a pious prig by nature
   Doesn’t mean you have to blame
   Libertines for their faults; those sins
   Won’t be imputed to your name.
   Each one of us will reap the seeds
   He sows, so what is it to you
   Whether I’m good or bad? To work on who
   You are should be your aim.
   Everyone searches for the Friend,

1018 Once again, there is an appreciation here of range, of polarity. The higher men are, as we hear elsewhere, those who represent “the antithetical character of existence most strongly”. NF-1887,10[111] (WP§881, p. 470).
1019 TTI§IX.49.
1020 Blake, op. cit., p. 42; in statements like this, one can perceive that there is a degree of truth in Yeats’ statement to Lady Gregory that “Nietzsche completes Blake and had the same roots”. See: W.B. Yeats, Letters, ed. A. Wade, Rupert Hart-Davis, 1954, p. 379.
Whether they’re drunk or stone-cold sober;
And love’s in every house—the mosque
And synagogue are just the same.
I bow my head in worship on the bricks
That form the wine-shop’s threshold;
And if that blockhead doesn’t get it, then
It’s him who is to blame!
Don’t sadden me with tales of providence
And God’s eternal promise—
What do you know of who, behind the veil,
Can boast of beauty’s name?
It’s not just me who’s wandered out
Of lonely Piety’s front door;
My father let his chance of heaven’s grace
Elude him; I’m the same.
If this is who you are, the nature
You were given, then bravo!
And good for you if your fine character’s
Exactly as you claim!
O Hafez, on the last day, if you bear
A wine-cup in your hand,
You’ll go straight into heaven from the street
Of drunkenness and shame.”

Read straight, this poem appears as another version of Blake’s epigram that follows the passage we have just quoted: “One law for the lion and ox is oppression”1022. That is, the “naturally” pious ought to be allowed theirs, but not to force it upon the libertine, turning him into a hypocrite1023. Here we have the affirmation of a sentiment that is found over and over again in Nietzsche’s work, for example:

“Moralities must be forced to bow first of all before the order of rank; their presumption must be brought home to their conscience—until they finally reach agreement that it is immoral to say: “what is right for one is fair for the other”…”1024

1022 Blake, op. cit., p. 43.
1023 But we might also suspect that Hafez’ suggestion is that even the “naturally” pious are unnaturally so.
1024 BGE§221; c.f. the discussion in the Genealogy of the pluralism inherent in master morality.
VI.11

Having looked at the first three of Nietzsche’s references to Hafez, we now have to consider the references in the published books: BGE§198, GS§370, and GM§III.2, before looking at a final unpublished note.

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, there is a remark which, on the face of it, sounds rather critical of Hafez (and Goethe):

“…that accommodating and playful surrender to the affects, as Hafiz and Goethe taught it, that bold dropping of the reins, that spiritual-physical *licentia morum* in the exceptional case of wise old owls and sots [*weiser Käuze und Trunkenbolde*] for whom it “no longer holds much danger”…”**1025

The drunkard [*trunkenbold*] spoken of here obviously refers to Hafez. But how are we to make sense of this passage? I suspect that the quoted line “*wenig Gefahr mehr hat*” is a reference to the proverbs in *West-East Divan*, where the Confidant says to the Vizier

“Du hast so manche Bitte gewährt,
Und wenn sie dir auch schädlich war,
Der gute Mann da hat wenig beehrt,
Dabei hat es doch wenig Gefahr”**1026

“Thou hast granted many a man’s desire
Even when thine interest it has crossed
Little does this good man require,
And free from danger as from cost”**1027

In the *Beyond Good and Evil* passage, Nietzsche is talking about the *unconditionality* of moral systems; that they “generalize where one must not generalise”. He sees these systems as “not by a long shot “science,” much less “wisdom,” but rather, to say it once more, prudence, prudence, prudence, mixed with stupidity, stupidity, stupidity”. Before discussing Hafez and Goethe, Nietzsche applies this to Stoical systems that advice indifference to the

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**1025** BGE§198, p. 110.

**1026** J.W. Goethe, *West-östlicher Divan*, op. cit., “Hikmet Nameh”; another version I recall seeing has “*keine Gefahr*” (no danger) rather than “*wenig Gefahr*” (little danger)—this is reflected in the two English translations offered.


affects, and to the Aristotelian “tuning down of the affects to a harmless mean”. We might understand that they are being praised for not weakening the affects—but perhaps they needn’t fear them because…

This should remind us of a passage from book five of *The Gay Science*, just two sections after a reference to Hafez to which we shall shortly turn:

“All philosophical idealism to date was something like a disease, unless it was, as it was in Plato’s case, the caution of an over-rich and dangerous health, the fear of over-powerful senses, the prudence of a prudent Socratic.—Perhaps we moderns are merely not healthy enough to be in need of Plato’s idealism? And we are not afraid of the senses because—”

This also bears contrast with the lengthy passage on Goethe in the Skirmishes of *Twilight*, which seems to treat the issue rather differently: there we hear of a spirit that has “become free” and “stands amid the cosmos with a joyous and trusting fatalism.” This has emerged from lengthy discipline and self-control, and it is presented as Nietzsche’s ideal, the Dionysian.

Here we see Nietzsche’s general attitude toward the affects, as evidenced by the following passages:

“Once you suffered passions and called them evil. But now you have only your virtues left: they grew out of your passions. You commended your highest goal to the heart of these passions: then they become your virtues and passions you enjoyed. And whether you came from the tribe of the choleric or of the voluptuous or of the fanatic or of the vengeful, in the end all your passions became virtues and all your devils, angels. Once you had wild dogs in your cellar, but in the end they turned into birds and lovely singers. Out of your poisons you brewed your balsam. You milked your cow, melancholy; now you drink the sweet milk of her udder.”

“In Summa: domination of the passions, not their weakening or extirpation!—The greater the dominating power of a will, the more freedom may the passions be allowed.

The “great man” is great owing to the free play and scope of his desires and to the

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1029 GS§372, p. 333.
1030 TI§IX.49, p. 554.
yet greater power that knows how to press these magnificent monsters into service…"^{1032}. 

“Overcoming the affects? – Not if what is implied is their weakening or extirpation. But putting them into service: which may also mean subjecting them to a protracted tyranny… At last they are confidently granted freedom again: they love us as good servants and go voluntarily wherever our best interests lie”^{1033}.

So here we see the “dropping of the reins” as the consummation of strength—for one’s affects now incline toward what is healthy, whereas the decadents instincts are always “attracted by what is harmful”^{1034}.

VI.12

In book five of *The Gay Science*, we find another mention of Hafez:

“Regarding all aesthetic values I now avail myself of this main distinction: I ask in every instance, “is it hunger or superabundance that has here become creative?”… The desire for destruction, change, and becoming can be an expression of an overflowing energy that is pregnant with future (my term for this is, as is known, “Dionysian”); but it can also be the hatred of the ill-constituted, disinherited, and underprivileged, who destroy, must destroy, because what exists, indeed all existence, all being, outrages and provokes them. To understand this feeling, consider our anarchists closely.

The will to immortalize also requires a dual interpretation. It can be prompted, first, by gratitude and love; art with this origin will always be an art of apotheoses, perhaps dithyrambic like Rubens, or blissfully mocking like Hafiz, or bright and gracious like Goethe, spreading a Homeric light and glory over all things. But it can also be the tyrannic will of one who suffers deeply, who struggles, is tormented, and would like to turn what is most personal, singular, and narrow, the real idiosyncrasy of his suffering, into a binding law and compulsion—one who, as it were, revenges himself on all things by forcing his own image, the image of his torture, on them, branding them with it…”^{1035}

[^1032]: NF-1887,9[139] (WP§933, p. 492).
[^1033]: NF-1885,1[122] (WP§384, p. 207).
[^1034]: EH§Destiny.8, p. 334.
The specific point about Hafez’ “blissfully mocking” character I shall take up below. For now, let us note that a little earlier in the same passage, we hear that “there are two kinds of sufferers”: those who suffer from the “over-fullness of life” and those who suffer from “the impoverishment of life”. Each kind of sufferer will be drawn to a different kind of art and knowledge—the former will want the tragic, the Dionysian, while the latter will want either “rest, stillness, calm seas, redemption from themselves”\(^\text{1036}\) or “intoxication, convulsions, anaesthesia, and madness”. This reminds us of our discussion above of whether one needs intoxicants or whether one is generative enough, whether one is intoxication.

Once again we see Nietzsche’s sense of Hafez’ richness of character. The artists of apotheosis—Hafez amongst them—are obviously the artists of overfullness. They do not need art to fill a void, but to release the pressure of their own abundance.

**VI.13**

In the *Genealogy*, we have a final published reference\(^\text{1037}\) to Hafez in the essay on ascetic ideals. Nietzsche writes that “there is no necessary antithesis between chastity and sensuality”, before saying:

“…even in those cases in which this antithesis between chastity and sensuality really exists, there is fortunately no need for it to be a tragic antithesis. At least this holds good for all those well-constituted, joyful mortals who are far from regarding their unstable equilibrium \([\text{labiles Gleichgewicht}]\) between “animal and angel” as necessarily an argument against existence—the subtlest and brightest among them have even found in it, like Goethe and Hafiz, one more stimulus to life. It is precisely such “contradictions” that seduce one to existence…”\(^\text{1038}\)

Here we see Nietzsche’s praise of fertile tensions. This emerges also in the important note which we discussed earlier about the German mystics and their lack of self-esteem. Recall that there we read that “great self-admiration and self-contempt belong together”, that the mystic’s feeling Godlike is linked to their feeling worm-like\(^\text{1039}\). Unlike these mystics, Hafez

\(^{1036}\) There is an interesting complication here that I must resist the temptation to discuss at depth at this time. Nietzsche’s later aesthetic is one in which precisely such temporary perfection is valued. That is to say, one’s task is so heavy that one seeks “to rest in the hiding-places and abysses of perfection” (GS§368, pp. 324–325—this is repeated with minor adjustments in NCW.Objections, p. 664). See also GS§302, p. 242 on “bold men, soldiers, seafarers… seeking their brief rest and pleasure” in music.

\(^{1037}\) Final, that is, if we exclude the slightly modified repetition of this in NCW§Apostle.2, p. 674. GS§370 is also repeated in NCW with modification, though the remark about Hafez is dropped: see the section titled “We Antipodes”, pp. 669–671.

\(^{1038}\) GM§II.2, pp. 98–99.

\(^{1039}\) NF-1884,26(442).
has robust self-esteem. He doesn’t take sides against his individuality. This means he is not tortured like, say, Pascal: his pride has a natural outlet, and so he does not have to have the flagellant’s pride at his own wretchedness\textsuperscript{1040}.

Furthermore, what is animal in us is not objectionable, it is a part of our economy. These tensions are stimuli, and to desire their resolution is to desire impotence\textsuperscript{1041}. In \textit{Beyond Good and Evil}, the attitude of the higher man (here, the “free spirit”) towards his inner multiplicity is made clear: he is “grateful to god, devil, sheep, and worm” in himself\textsuperscript{1042}.

In the second essay of the \textit{Genealogy}, Nietzsche speaks of “the morbid softening and moralization through which the animal “man” finally learns to be ashamed of all his instincts” and writes:

\begin{quote}
“On his way to becoming an “angel” (to employ no uglier word) man has evolved that queasy stomach and coated tongue through which not only the joy and innocence of the animal but life itself has become repugnant to him—so that he sometimes holds his nose in his own presence and, with Pope Innocent the Third, disapprovingly catalogues his own repellent aspects (“impure begetting, disgusting means of nutrition in his mother's womb, baseness of the matter out of which man evolves, hideous stink, secretion of saliva, urine, and filth.”)\textsuperscript{1043}
\end{quote}

The later passage on Hafez shows us a different attitude toward the body. After saying that the “unstable equilibrium” of Goethe and Hafez is a “stimulus to life”, Nietzsche criticises those who “worship chastity”. It should not be made into an end in itself. As he puts it in a famous late note, Nietzsche’s desire is to make “asceticism natural again”—the aim of fasting, say, is no longer denial but strengthening\textsuperscript{1044}. It is not about diminishing the appetite, but enhancing potency\textsuperscript{1045}. Which is of course to say that it cannot be absolute—or else, the appetite consumes itself and all that one is left with is Stoic hardness.

In this we see once more the possibility of a deeply sensuous spirituality—indeed, recall that Nietzsche commended Hafez’ “deification of the body”\textsuperscript{1046}. Nietzsche elsewhere writes

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{1040} That is to say, pride always finds an outlet: and here it finds one that is more convoluted. Such hypocrisy in the posturing of the “spiritual type” is a consistent object of derision of Hafez, as I hope that the poems quoted above to have shown.
\textsuperscript{1041} C.f. TSZ Prologue §5, p. 17: “One must still have chaos in oneself to be able to give birth to a dancing star…”
\textsuperscript{1042} BGE§44, p. 55.
\textsuperscript{1043} GM§II.7, p. 67.
\textsuperscript{1044} NF-1887,9[93] (WP§915, p. 483).
\textsuperscript{1045} C.f. NF-1888,14[117] (WP§800, p. 421): “Chastity is merely the economy of an artist—and in any event, even the artists fruitfulness ceases when potency ceases…”
\textsuperscript{1046} NF-1885,41[6] (WP§1051).
\end{footnotes}
that “the most spiritual men... are sensualists in the best faith”\textsuperscript{1047}. Here, as in the fragment under consideration, Nietzsche is speaking of the “well-constituted and complete man”. In such men, sensualism and spirituality are not mutually exclusive.

The spirituality of the “ill-constituted” that conceives of God as otherworldly, as distinct from the world around us. For all its affirmation, it is yet life halved. The absolute is chosen over the relative—the divine over the personal, unity over multiplicity. In the case of the body, these mystics’ typical attitude is one of denial\textsuperscript{1048}.

But as we have seen, on the Goethean conception of the One and many, it is simply an impossibility to “take sides” with the whole against the part. Thus, we come to the spirituality of the “well-constituted”. It is not so “one-sided”\textsuperscript{1049}. It resists the “division” or “tearing asunder” [das Auseinander] of “reason, senses, feeling, and will”. It wants “totality” and enters the “midst of life... with a joyous and trusting fatalism”\textsuperscript{1050}. This is what Nietzsche calls the Dionysian spirituality, and characterises as “the religious affirmation of life, of life as a whole, not denied and halved”\textsuperscript{1051}.

It is necessary to understand this well before we can see the truth in Stambaugh’s characterisation of “Nietzsche the poetic mystic”\textsuperscript{1052}. Similarly, to say simply that Hafez is a “Sufi” or a “mystic” is not at all helpful if we do not try to distinguish this mysticism from, say, the very different mysticism of Rumi.

If we may call Hafez and Nietzsche mystics, then we must say that these mystics reject neither their individuality, nor their sensuality. This in contrast to the attitude exemplified by Pascal on the moi\textsuperscript{1053}, and Paul’s remark that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17).

When we attempt to situate Nietzsche, and I think equally Hafez, in a generic mystical milieu, we can go quite badly awry\textsuperscript{1054}. For example, C.E. Rolt writes in his translations of Dionysius the Areopagite:

\textsuperscript{1047} NF-1886,5[34] (WP\$1045); “the splendid animal must be given first...”
\textsuperscript{1048} Even if a fairly genial one. Consider St. Francis’ relationship to “Brother Ass”. See Thomas of Celano’s Life of St. Francis, repeated in Bonaventure’s Life.
\textsuperscript{1049} C.f. NF-1884,26[3].
\textsuperscript{1050} TIIIX.49, p. 554 [TM].
\textsuperscript{1051} NF-1888,14[89] (TLN p. 249, WP\$1052).
\textsuperscript{1052} J. Stambaugh, “The Other Nietzsche”, TON, p. 135.
\textsuperscript{1053} C.f. the Epilogue to the Case of Wagner and NF-1887,10[125].
\textsuperscript{1054} This is not to deny that there are more promising comparisons. There are, for example, several interesting studies comparing Nietzsche and certain thinkers of the far-east, where the earthiness, sensuality and sensibility of the Chinese transformed the ascetic and abstracting tendencies of Indian spirituality.
“This path is not for all men, but some are impelled to seek it; and if it is denied them within the Christian pale, they will go and look for it elsewhere. Nietzsche is but one of those who have thus disastrously wandered afar in search of that which is actually to be found within the fold. Had he but studied the Dionysian writings he might have remained a Christian”\textsuperscript{1055}

What is misunderstood here? Why can’t Nietzsche be assimilated to a Dionysius, an Eckhart\textsuperscript{1056}? Equally, why can’t Hafez be assimilated to Rumi? Selbstgefühl, good conscience in individuality, in the fullness of one’s character, seems to be a promising response.

\textbf{VI.14}

Let us turn, then, to Nietzsche’s final reference to Hafez, here in a late note:

“\textquote{In modern Europe, only the Jews have touched upon the highest form of spirituality: that of ingenious buffoonery. With Offenbach and Heine, the potency of European culture is really outdone. Other races are not yet ready for this kind of spirit. This borders on Aristophanes, Petronius, Hafez…”\textsuperscript{1057}

The association with Aristophanes and Petronius is very telling for how Nietzsche reads and ranks Hafez. This is very high praise indeed\textsuperscript{1058}. This fragment ends by noting that “Germans today take themselves desperately seriously [verzweifelt Ernst]”. This brings to mind Nietzsche’s discussion of the “deep dreamy seriousness [tiefen träumerischen Ernst]” of German mystics and musicians\textsuperscript{1059}.

The discussion of buffoonery here and our discussion of the spirituality of the “well-constituted” above need to be brought together. This is done very explicitly, for example, in Ecce Homo where Nietzsche speaks of the highest spirituality as one in which god is inconceivable “apart from the satyr”\textsuperscript{1060}. Evidently, for Nietzsche, the highest spirituality is not one that excludes humour, but one in which, as he writes in Beyond Good and Evil, there is room for that “golden laughter”\textsuperscript{1061} of the gods:


\textsuperscript{1056} I choose these as examples of mystics in the Christian tradition that strike me as amongst the least guilt-centric, and least fuelled by resentment.

\textsuperscript{1057} NF-1888,18[3].

\textsuperscript{1058} See for example BGE§28, NF-1885,34[80], NF-1887,10[193] (WP§147) and NF-1887,9[157] (WP§380).

\textsuperscript{1059} NF-1884,26[341].

\textsuperscript{1060} ElH\textsuperscript{C}lever.4, p. 245.

\textsuperscript{1061} That this golden laughter is not the absence of mockery tells us a good deal. Golden laughter is not laughter without a target (I think of many of Lear’s nonsense poems here). Golden laughter is surely free of resentment, but for Nietzsche, to be free of resentment is not to be free of enmity. C.f. GS§200, p. 207.
“Gods enjoy mockery: it seems they cannot suppress laughter even during holy rites”\textsuperscript{1062}

We find something similar to this in a previous reference to Hafez where he is described as “blissfully mocking [\textit{selig-spöttisch}]”\textsuperscript{1063}. Mocking has the association of \textit{scorn} that surprises us here, how can one be at once scornful and blissful (or blessed)? But that is exactly what Nietzsche has in mind. Spirituality is not \textit{grim}. But it doesn’t exclude \textit{enmity}, either: saying \textit{yes} to everything is not an incapacity to say \textit{no}.

Bicknell describes Hafez as “almost the only poet of unadulterated gladsomeness that the world has ever known. There is no shadow in his sky, no discord in his music, no bitterness in his cup”\textsuperscript{1064}. There is some truth in this description, though it is a vast oversimplification, for there certainly is much antipathy in Hafez.

Like Heine, Hafez could be said to “possess that divine malice \textit{[göttliche Bosheit]}” which Nietzsche construes as an aspect of perfection\textsuperscript{1065}. Nietzsche refers to Heine’s “crime” of laughing—a crime, that is, in the eyes of the modern Germans who, Nietzsche tells us, take themselves “desperately seriously”\textsuperscript{1066}. Again like Heine, Hafez’ antipathy is one that \textit{laughs}. There is something unmistakably joyful about it. That we find something incommensurable about these qualities reveals something about our sensibility. Those who would turn all of Hafez’ exuberance into allegory, all of his intoxication into sobriety, betray that they, like Chairman Mao, worship at the altar of the Great Furrowed Brow\textsuperscript{1067}.

In another late note, Nietzsche writes:

G.K. Chesterton said of Nietzsche that “he could sneer, though he could not laugh” (op. cit., p. 73)—which is certainly wrong, but nonetheless revealing. I have a great deal more to say about the notion of golden laughter, and of \textit{golden seriousness} (see NCW on Mozart) and how this relates to the relationship between buffoonery and spirituality in Nietzsche’s later aesthetic, but that shall have to wait for another occasion.

\textsuperscript{1062} BGE\textsuperscript{\textsection}294, p. 233.
\textsuperscript{1063} GS\textsuperscript{\textsection}370, p. 330.
\textsuperscript{1065} EH\textsuperscript{\textsection}Clever.4, p. 245. This idea of divine malice opposed to the malice of weakness, and golden seriousness as opposed to gravity, suggests the contrast of forms of lightness: the lightness of not having responsibility versus the light feet of those with a heavy pack. For Nietzsche, it is a matter of \textit{extending} responsibility: “What is noble?—…that one instinctively seeks heavy responsibilities” (NF-1888,15[115]) (WP\textsuperscript{\textsection}544), c.f. BGE\textsuperscript{\textsection}212). This is what he praises Goethe for in \textit{Twilight} not being “fainthearted” but for taking “as much as possible upon himself” (TI\textsuperscript{\textsection}IX.49). For Nietzsche, it is not about shirking weight, not about the dandy’s lightness, but about “transforming all that we are into light and flame” (GS\textsuperscript{\textsection}P.3), about the “art of apotheosis” and “aureole” that \textit{overcomes} weight, not bypasses it (NF-1885,2[114] (WP\textsuperscript{\textsection}845)).
\textsuperscript{1066} NF-1888,18[3]: “Heute macht man Heine in Deutschland ein Verbrechen daraus, Geschmack gehabt zu haben—gelacht zu haben: die Deutschen selbst nämlich nehmen sich heute verzweifelt ernst”
\textsuperscript{1067} Mao endorsed the saying “knit your brows and you will hit upon a stratagem” says that those who “think hard” are “sure to triumph”. See: Mao Tsetung, “Our Study and the Current Situation”, in \textit{Selected Works: Vol III}, Pergamon Press, 1965, pp. 174–175. Nietzsche criticises this attitude at GS\textsuperscript{\textsection}327, p. 257.
“How little the subject matters! It is the spirit that gives life! What stuffy and sickroom air arises from all that excited chatter about “redemption,” love, blessedness, faith, truth, “eternal life”? Take, on the other hand, a really pagan book, e.g., Petronius, where fundamentally nothing is done, said, desired and valued but what by peevish Christian standards is sin, mortal sin even. And yet how pleasant is the purer air, the superior spirituality of its quicker pace, the liberated and overflowing strength that feels sure of the future! In the entire New Testament there is not one single bouffonnerie: but that fact refutes a book—

Reading the *Satyricon*, one feels that Petronius is neither condemning nor merely cataloguing. Nietzsche found in Petronius a very different and richer conception of innocence than what we are accustomed to, writing that “compared with this happy man, a Christian is absolutely without innocence.” This is very similar to the earthly conception of purity that Nietzsche developed elsewhere:

“The preaching of chastity amounts to a public incitement to anti-nature. Every kind of contempt for sex, every impurification of it by means of the concept ‘impure’, is the crime *par excellence* against life—is the real sin against the holy spirit of life.”

In Hafez, we find an innocence and purity that “remains faithful to the earth”, we behold a man who sounded out the hypocrisy of the “pious prigs”, a man who exposed the falsity of our opposition between deep spirituality and rich sensuality, a lover who “drains life to the lees”. In Hafez we find a man capable of an honest boast, with a pride that needs seek no recourse to the convolutions of those for whom self is sin. In Hafez we find both clear sky and railing jibe, dirty hands and “seventh day”; and to all of this, to enmity and amity, to life’s polarity, we hear a resounding yea.

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1068 NF-1887,9[143] (WP§187, p. 112).
1069 C.f. Nietzsche’s criticism of French naturalism, mentioned above. In the introduction to his excellent translation of *The Satyricon*, Arrowsmith writes “Compare Petronius to the major roman Roman satirists… the crucial difference is surely that the Satyricon is unmistakably comic, everywhere shot through with a gusto and a verve and a grace of humor that is almost totally absent from the tolerant strictures of Horace or the gentle, crabbed austerity of Persius or the enormous savagery of Juvenal. After all, one *laughs* with Petronius; the effect of the Satyricon is neither scorn nor indignation, but the laughter appropriate to good satire enlarged by the final gaiety of comedy”. Petronius, *The Satyricon*, trans. W. Arrowsmith, The University of Michigan Press, 1959, p. xi. See also Arrowsmith’s comparison of Petronius’ *Satyricon* to Rabelais’ *Gargantua* and Apuleius’ *Golden Ass* at pp. xvi–xvii.
1070 NF-1887,10[193] (WP§147, p. 94).
1071 EH§Write.5, p. 268. This is, of course, a criticism of chastity as an end.
Appendix A: Mysticism and Philosophy

It has become fashionable to regard mystical experiences as the point or culmination of the religious life, and to regard “mystics” as those who offer instruction on the attainment of such experiences. That this is inapplicable to Nietzsche should be plain from the foregoing, but it is also inapplicable to most prominent mystics of history.

In the introduction to the first volume of his *The Presence of God*, McGinn writes:

“It was perhaps the greatest insight of Friedrich Baron von Hügel’s great book, *The Mystical Element of Religion*, to emphasize that mysticism is only one part or element of a concrete religion and any particular religious personality. No mystics (at least before the present century) believed in or practiced “mysticism.” They believed in and practiced Christianity (or Judaism, or Islam, or Hinduism), that is, religions that contained mystical elements as parts of a wider historical whole.”

Before we sing “get you gone, Von Hügel”, let us bestow our blessings on his head. The idea that religion is *about* mysticism and that everything else is mere decoration or obfuscation is not uncommon in academic circles, where some scholars attempt to strip all superfluity to reveal the mystical core common to all traditions, the *philosophia perennis*.

The crassest thinkers believe that this obviates any need for engagement with spiritual traditions—that one can go directly to their ‘source’. Others think that it means that one can engage with *any* tradition, just so long as one follows it right through to their heart, where one will arrive at the Commons. Both rely on the assumption that the territory through which one passes does not condition where one arrives.

It seems to me that the goal of comparative study is not access to the Commons, but seeing the reality of difference. There is no *one* truth that is being differently revealed—no one

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1073 In these two appendices I attempt to offer some clarification as to (A) what I conceive of as mysticism, and what its relationship is to philosophy, and (B) what I conceive of as the relationship between mysticism and activism. These are the sorts of questions I have often been asked when discussing my project with others. While answers are suggested in the main text, I thought that it may be helpful to address these issues here from a different angle. If these appendages dangle indecently, feel free to lop them off.


1075 That such perennialism is off the table for Nietzsche should be obvious given his discussions of the indispensability of masks and his emphasis on the interpretative character of existence: “facts are precisely what there are not, only interpretations” (NF-1886,7[60] (WP$481, p. 267)). The constructivist position discussed in very broad strokes here can be found, for example, in G.M. Jantzen, “Could There be a Mystical Core of Religion?”, *Religious Studies*, vol. 26, 1990, pp. 59–71.

1076 This assumption, it might be felt, is warranted by the purported fact that where one arrives is the unconditioned—the absolute, qua absolute, must be unstained by history, particularity (i.e. relativity). Such a view has, I think, the consequence of relativising the absolute to the relative (I discuss this briefly in chapter V).
elephant which the blind men are groping. Many in comparative studies have realised this point. But the idea of filling out a picture using information from various traditions remains widespread.

The morphological view of religious traditions—caricatured as the view that they are “just different”—might strike some as wearily relativistic, as providing no basis for progress. The question immediately is raised: toward what would one like to progress? Towards the flawless mirror? Again, what has one taken one’s relationship to the “wicked game” to be? Furthermore, to learn other traditions does allow one to see one’s own through new eyes—however the new here is not the objective, but rather the fecund, the creative.

In reaction to certain tendencies in the popular discourse on mysticism, one finds some thinkers keen to avoid using the term altogether. Ross, for example, writes:

“Today, the resurgence of interest in so-called mysticism (a dog’s breakfast of a word that needs to be eliminated from the discussion) is tainted with voyeurism and self-aggrandizement, and has become a consumer circus based on quests for “experiences” that lead customers away from, not toward, the silence and illumination they seek.”

James’ emphasis on private and extreme experiential states is in many ways symptomatic of what Ross here diagnoses—and it has not gone unnoticed that the V.R.E. reads a lot like the D.S.M.  

1077 There are many different intentions evidenced by the mystics who have plumbed various traditions—and most seem to be engaging with these very issues. But some do seem to be akin to those who desire to become fluent in a second language for the sheer delight of being able to read a poet in the original. What we are to make of the one who desires to learn because he realises that not all poems can be written in English, just as not all music can be played on the violin? Must we assume he is looking for to piece perspectives together into Truth?

1078 The pursuit of the one behind the many in religion seems to be rooted in the idea of a language that doesn’t distort. That is, the very language that the book of nature is written in. There is here the faith that nature is some determinate, specifiable way—and that we have the capacity to acquire its language. This view was critiqued in the generations before Nietzsche (by, for example, Herder), but has come under more popular and more extensive scrutiny since the linguistic turn in Anglo-American philosophy and hermeneutic turn in Continental philosophy (On the excesses of these turns, see: R. Shusterman, “Beneath interpretation: against hermeneutic holism”, The Monist, 1990, vol. 73, no. 2, pp 181–204). Given its apparent openness to the truth of (or at least truth in) various traditions, Perennialism might appear to some to be an exception to this pursuit, but I disagree. It is rooted in the idea of unveiling the truth—that is, getting rid of the ‘trappings’ (masks) of traditions. Moreover, it often seems to be little more than a covert Advaita Vedanta exclusivism (i.e., other religions are ‘true’ to the extent that they approximate Advaitic teachings).


1080 Merton speaks for example of “the astonishing jumble of the authentic and inauthentic in a book like James’ Varieties of Religious Experience” (See: T. Merton, “The New Consciousness”, in Zen and the Birds of
It is certainly true that one encounters everywhere mystaks, which are to mystics what muzak is to music. They surround us but do not startle. They offer us the world if only we will learn to tap into the power of now.

The reaction against the mystaks is often itself mistaken. For example, we find Flasch declaring in his book on Meister Eckhart:

“I cannot recommend the book for lovers of mysticism. It would be confusing if they had to read that they should use their reason resolutely in all circumstances, bi allen dingi… Their embarrassment would be complete when the text instructs: if they knew in the context of a true mystical vision like Paul the Apostle’s (and thus not just during a pious feeling or a subjective vision) that there was still a sick man who needed a bowl of soup, then they would be better advised to abandon the ascent to heaven and fetch some soup for the poor man… A single glance at the news today reveals where we can find a sicben menschen, a sick man, in need of soup. The times of “rapture” (Verzückung), as Josef Quint translated Eckhart’s inzucke, are over…”1081

The times are too grim for contemplation—to seek otium after Kyoto is odious. Here we are not so far from the defective altruism discussed in chapter IV, and nor are we far from the timely notion of the “mystic warrior” peddled by certain merchants of the mystakal1082.

That there is no mysticism as such does not mean that the vocabulary of mysticism is completely unserviceable. Take for example the common sense of mystical experience as the individual’s felt unity with the whole. This is vague, but workable1083. It has the merit of revealing that the particular conception of part and whole, one and many, will be hugely important in differentiating varieties of unitive experience both within and across

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1082 I take up this theme again in Appendix B.
1083 So the terms have a certain ‘looseness’ to them—but why is a tight fit what we are looking for? Do we really think we are doing the lord’s work when we shift the borders on our maps? I have here picked on one aspect of its looseness. But we could also ask: what is meant by felt? Is the point one of ‘direct apprehension’ or ‘subjective certainty’? Is it one of mathein or pathein? If the former, does it have to be clear and distinct?… These are sometimes interesting questions to ask—but to require that they are answered before calling something mysticism. What does this evince?
traditions. What is this unity? To suggest only three—and each raises a host of new questions—it could be unity as continuity, dependence, or identity.

Flasch is right to argue that Eckhart is a philosopher, but this does not mean that he is not a mystic. It seems to me that the relationship between One and many is amongst Eckhart’s most prominent subjects, but also that Eckhart intends this relationship to be in some way directly experiencable. Eckhart teaches how one should relate to God—which is to say, how the part should relate to the whole. Further, Eckhart is concerned that this felt relation mirror the actual relation between part and whole. That is, his concern is not merely for producing ‘states of the heart’ but for truth. He is certainly no ‘subjectivist’, whatever that might mean. Indeed, the comments like the one noted by Flasch on the necessity and value of intellect have to do with the platonic rationalism of Eckhart’s mysticism.

There are many mystics who are not philosophers. There are others who are not philosophers in this sense. Either that is because they do not make mystical experience the focus of philosophical investigation, or because they regard description not only as impossible, but additionally stress that attempts to describe are, in some important sense, beside-the-point.

Kaufmann described the difference between Nietzsche and the Zen master as being that “Nietzsche’s ultimate concern is with truth. The Buddhist’s is not.” Kaufmann plainly means here by ‘truth’ what can be said—his objection to ideas of “subjective truth” early in the same text makes this clear: “Talk of ‘subjective’ truth suggests that ‘objective’ truth is, after all, not everything; and that is true enough. But it is all the truth there is.”

That is, Kaufmann takes the difference to be one of seeking verbal formulation for the way things are, versus contentment with ineffability:

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1084 That such conceptions condition experience—including what ‘counts’ for a given individual as a mystical experience—seems to me quite plain; yet this ‘constructivist’ point is vigorously denied from various quarters, including not only the perennialists, but also those who take it to undermine the capacity for ecumenism (where this is not understood as mutual illumination but as a process of convergence or conversion).

1085 It is this experiential aspect that is commonly thought to differentiate mysticism from metaphysics. I think that Flasch is right to point out the false opposition between mystic and scholastic (ibid., p. 15, p. 46). One imagines that a good deal of scholasticism was motivated by mysticism, and intended to unpack mystical experiences and gesture toward them as well.

1086 I confess here (as I did in chapter II) that I primarily know Eckhart through his Sermons—his German and not his Latin works. Flasch is no doubt right to see this as a limitation of any reading of Eckhart (ibid., p. 46).

1087 Of course, the word ‘philosopher’ is every bit as ambiguous as ‘mystic’, and some may want to insist that such thinkers are merely philosophes, sages, or some such. I cannot bring myself to be too concerned about such titles—after all, there is a metaphysician working down the hall from me who studies time travel.


1089 Ibid., p. 108, §35.
For the philosopher, knowledge and understanding are no mere instruments for the attainment of an experience, as they were for the Buddha, nor does he repudiate them when he finds them unreliable guides. For the philosopher, every experience is a steppingstone to deeper understanding and a higher knowledge…”

On Kaufmann’s understanding of Zen, words are used as a finger to point to an experience beyond words. They are a tool—and, of course, a potential snare. To philosophise—to seek verbal formulation—does not necessarily rely upon the belief in the possibility of the final success of the descriptive venture. Kaufmann writes that great philosophy begins “on the other side of ineffability”.

In the case of Zen, language—with its inherent limitations—is pointed past to the world that it cannot penetrate. In the case of philosophy, one intends to extend those very boundaries—one moves deeper into, rather than away from, thought. It should go without saying that while they seem to pull in opposite directions, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Kaufmann’s reminder that Nietzsche is after above a philosopher might seem condescending, but it is one I find useful to reflect on. We must make sense of what Nietzsche meant in

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1090 Ibid., p. 267, §63.
1091 Kaufmann plainly has no small feeling for Zen. Take, for example, his suggestion that beyond a certain point one may gain more instruction from watching the cello masterclasses of Pablo Casals rather than continue reading the writings of Zennists. See: W. Kaufmann, Religion in Four Dimensions, Reader’s Digest Press, 1976, p. 350, §96.
1092 Nietzsche and Goethe—both with their strong antipathy toward what they respectively conceived of as metaphysics—are good examples of this.
1093 W. Kaufmann, Critique, op. cit., p. 267, §63. Later in the same text (p. 318, §72) Kaufmann discusses the extent of the ineffable: “If utterly unimaginative declaratory sentences could do full justice to all our non-mystic experiences, there would be no need for poetry and painting, for the subtle prose of Joyce and Faulkner, or for music… All experience has a trans-scientific dimension which it takes art to communicate. The inadequacy of ordinary propositions to the mystic’s experience does not set his experience apart.”
1094 That is—it goes with saying what has already been said, in particular the discussion of multiplicity in chapter V, where we saw that Nietzsche understood the highest individual to be the one who represents to the highest degree “the antithetical character of existence” (NF-1887,10[111] (WP$881, p. 470)). Nietzsche’s own reflections on the value of the sensory (discussed in chapter I)—that “the splendid “animal” must be given first” (NF-1886,5[34] (WP$1045 pp. 537–538))—give us an idea of how those who can remain in their senses are potentially those who can think most deeply, and hence “the most spiritual men… are sensualists in the best faith” (ibid.).
A philosopher certainly may think spontaneously, without blocking his own path. Plainly this has a good deal to do with, say, Nietzsche’s notion of thinking as dancing. Thus one can practice Zen in philosophy, as Herbert von Karajan practiced Zen in conducting. I do not take Kaufmann’s claim to the difference between Zen and philosophy to imply the contrary. But the idea that this is basic to Zen strikes me as a little odd. Not that the application of Zen practice is something new (though the question about the detachment of Zen from its specifically Buddhist context is raised as much by the appropriation of Zen practices by the Samurai as by anything said in the 20th century by, say, R.H. Blyth, Thomas Merton, Aelred Graham, or Hugo Enomiya-Lassalle). The point is rather that the emphasis in Zen is—particularly in the Sōtō school—on the path as goal. Put crudely, zazen isn’t about becoming a Buddha, but it is the practice of being a Buddha. In such a context, the notions of fertility stressed by Nietzsche as much as the pragmatists seem to be misplaced.
saying that he transposed “the Dionysian into a *philosophical* pathos”\textsuperscript{1095}. I take the answer to be suggested in a short passage in *The Gay Science* titled “*In media vita*” which I quote here in full:

“No, life has not disappointed me. On the contrary, I find it truer, more desirable and mysterious every year—ever since the day when the great liberator came to me: the idea that life could be an experiment of the seeker for knowledge—and not a duty, not a calamity, not trickery. –And knowledge itself: let it be something else for others; for example, a bed to rest on, or the way to such a bed, or a diversion, or a form of leisure—for me it is a world of dangers and victories in which heroic feelings, too, find places to dance and play. “*Life as a means to knowledge*”—with this principle in one’s heart one can live not only boldly but even gaily, and laugh gaily, too. And who knows how to laugh anyway and live well if he does not first know a good deal about war and victory?”\textsuperscript{1096}

\textsuperscript{1095} EH§BT.3, p. 273; emphasis mine.  
\textsuperscript{1096} GS§324, p. 255.
Appendix B: Mysticism and Activism

“One owes it to one’s health”—that is what people say when they are caught on an excursion into the country. Soon we may well reach the point where people can no longer give in to the desire for a vita contemplativa (that is, taking a walk with ideas and friends) without self-contempt and a bad conscience. Well, formerly it was the other way around: it was work that was afflicted with the bad conscience. A person of good family used to conceal the fact that he was working if need compelled him to work. Slaves used to work, oppressed by the feeling that they were doing something contemptible: “doing” itself was contemptible. “Nobility and honor are attached solely to otium and bellum,” that was the ancient prejudice.”

That time is plainly upon us. I become aware of this daily when I sit upon the train and observe my fellow passengers as they—often to a man—poke phones and scroll feeds, trying to wring the most out of their commute. The compulsive—even desperate—quality is often quite undisguised, as a passenger hovers over some menu screen, tapping, opening and closing, then hovering again over the menu, as though waiting for the inspiration as to exactly what it is that they are looking for—productivity in pursuit of an agenda. Also apparent is the sheer jumble of activities: petition signing and digital prayer not only abut but interpenetrate the praise of someone’s photograph of their Eggs Benedict. This is the culture where Cosmopolitan swallows Cleanthes, and the Five Steps to Detachment and the recipe for a ‘hard’ orgasm are set on facing pages—the culture where a Mondrian can be mistaken for a cake decoration.

While the screen stroker is undeniably the image of modernity, this sort of furious recreation is something that has long been observed and discussed, perhaps most famously by Pascal in his Pensées:

“Diversion. From childhood onwards people are entrusted with the care of their honour, their property, their friends, and even with the property of their friends. They are showered with duties, the need to learn languages and exercises. They are led to believe that they will never be happy if their health, honour, and wealth, and those of their friends, are not in a satisfactory state, and that if one element is amiss

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1098 See the cover of C. Freeman, Modern Art Desserts, Ten Speed Press, 2013.
1099 Shifting the place of observation from the train to the hallways of the academy, one notices that it is not just the masses, and that even the Brahmin behave like cattle. Although I feel I am being a little unfair in saying this, since the placidity and rumination of cows is nowhere to be seen. (For a less familiar evaluation of the bovine in Nietzsche’s thought, see GM§P.8, p. 23.)
they will be unhappy. So they are given offices and duties which keep them hectically occupied from daybreak. You may well observe that it is an odd way to make them happy. What more could we do to make them unhappy? What do you mean, what could we do? We would only have to remove all these preoccupations from them because they would then see and think about what they are, where they come from, where they are going. So you cannot give them too much to do, too much to distract them, and that is why, after creating so many duties for them, if they have some spare time they are advised to amuse themselves, play games, keep themselves totally occupied. How hollow and full of filth man’s heart is.”1100

Pascal’s claims are closely echoed by many passages in Nietzsche’s writings, such as in the third Meditation where he writes that “the objective of human arrangements is through distracting one’s thoughts to cease to be aware of life” and that “haste is universal because everyone is in flight from himself”1101.

But Pascal himself was quite incapable of otium1102, of living the “soft, peaceful existence” he described. Rather, Pascal could “only approve those who search in anguish”1103. I rather suspect that this anguish and self-flagellation is here its own kind of distracting “bustle” and industriousness1104.

In many ways a closer thinker to Nietzsche on this point is Herzen, who takes up this Pascalian sentiment in his great dialogue “Before the Storm” in From the Other Shore1105. Here Herzen writes that “to look at the end and not at the action itself is the greatest of errors” and that nature “does not disdain what is transient, what lives only in the moment. At every point she attains all she can attain…”1106 This is an essentially morphological thought, and it is clear that Goethe is a touchstone. Here, life is its own end:

1100 Pascal, op. cit., p. 49, §171. See also the whole of Chapter IX: Ibid., pp. 44–49.
1101 UM§3.4, p. 158.
1102 Compare on this point the extraordinary feeling that Nietzsche has in his later philosophy for divertimenti by that or any other name: “My melancholy wants to rest in the hiding places and abysses of perfection: that is why I need music” (GS§368, p. 325).
1103 Pascal, op. cit., p. 45, §168: “We are not looking for this soft, peaceful existence… but the bustle which distracts and amuses us—the reason why we prefer the hunt to the kill. That is why we like noise and activity so much…”
1104 C.f. our earlier discussion of Pascal’s tortured egoism in chapter IV. Here the ego turns against itself in order to occupy itself with the only task it may legitimately undertake: self-flagellation. I am often (naively) surprised by the naivety of ‘seekers’ about the possibility for self-deception in all such projects of self-inquiry. Williams on sincerity and authenticity is quite instructive on this point, particularly in his analysis of Rousseau. See: B. Williams, Truth and Truthfulness, Princeton University Press, 2002, pp. 172–205.
1106 Ibid., p. 33.
“And what, pray, is the end of the song that the singer sings? … The sounds that burst from her throat, the melody that dies as soon as it has resounded? If you look beyond your pleasure in them for something else, for some other end, you will find that the singer has stopped singing, and then you will have only memories, and regrets, and remorse, because, instead of listening, you were waiting for something else. You were misled by categories not fitted to catch the flow of life… I prefer to think of life, and therefore history, as an end attained than as a means to something else.” \(^{1107}\)

This is quite unlike Pascal, who placed the value of life beyond this world—which was to him worth very little. Pascal’s sentiment is not altogether unlike the one that Zarathustra describes as the most false and treacherous:

“Let the world go its way! Do not raise one finger against it… Let him who wants to, strangle and stab and fleece and flay the people. Do not raise one finger against it! Thus will they learn to renounce the world.” \(^{1108}\)

Pascal wants us to work towards an otherworldly end. But there is little difference here between this view and those who consider an earthly future as the meaning of the world\(^{1109}\).

Herzen’s view on the contrary is as follows:

“If progress is the end, for whom are we working? […] Do you truly wish to condemn all human beings alive to-day to the sad role of caryatids supporting a floor for others someday to dance on? […] The aim of each generation—is itself. Nature not only never makes one generation the means for the attainment of some future end, she does not concern herself with the future at all. Like Cleopatra, she is ready to dissolve a pearl in wine, for a moment’s pleasure. Nature has the heart of a bacchante, of a bayadère.” \(^{1110}\)

\(^{1107}\) Ibid., pp. 35–36.

\(^{1108}\) TSZ “Old and New Tablets” §15, p. 205.

\(^{1109}\) I discussed this point with respect to Nietzsche and Hegel in chapter I.4.

\(^{1110}\) A. Herzen, “Before the Storm”, From the Other Shore, op. cit., pp. 36–37; c.f. “Consolatio” (Ibid., pp. 106–107): “Why does anything live? This I think is the limit of all questions. Life—is both the means and the end, the cause and the effect… Life does not try to reach an aim, but realizes all that is possible, continues all that has been realized. It is always ready to go one step further in order to live more completely, live more, if possible. There is no other aim. Very often we take as an aim what are consecutive phases of some single development to which we have become accustomed. We believe that the aim of the child is its coming of age, because he does come of age; but the aim of a child is rather to play and enjoy himself, to be himself. If one looks for the final aim, then the purpose of everything living is—death”. This is another very clear statement of morphological thought.
This agrees closely with Nietzsche’s sentiment that “with the “beyond” one **kills life**” and his contention that:

“Becoming must be explained without recourse to final intentions; becoming must appear justified at every moment...; the present must absolutely not be justified with reference to a future, nor the past by reference to the present.”

There is perhaps quite direct influence here. While I do not know for certain that Nietzsche read *From the Other Shore*, similar sentiments are recorded in Herzen’s famous memoirs, which Nietzsche certainly did read. In the early 70s, Nietzsche said that he

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1111 AC§58, p. 650.

1112 NF-1887,11[72] (WP§708, p. 377). Despite his evident agreement with Goethe that “the present alone is our joy [*Die Gegenwart allein ist unser Glück*]”, Nietzsche sometimes laments the myopia of his own time. For example, in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, he writes: “who would still dare to undertake projects that would require thousands of years for their completion? For what is dying out is the fundamental faith that would enable us to calculate, to promise, to anticipate the future in plans of such scope, and to sacrifice the future to them—nearly, the faith that man has value and meaning only insofar as he is a stone in a great edifice; and to that end he must be solid first of all, a “stone”...” But he makes clear here that the most myopic of all are the socialists—that is, those that think they are building a society, a future (GS§356, p. 303–304). See also NF-1884,26[100] (WP§408, p. 220): “What do philosophers **lack?** (a) an historical sense, (b) knowledge of physiology, (c) a goal in the future...” (C.f. TSZ, “Old and New Tablets” §26, p. 213). This is a non-trivial aspect of Nietzsche’s thought. He argues that morality was “designed to motivate the individual to sacrifice himself to the future”—and for this Nietzsche expresses his gratitude to morality (NF-1886,5[58] (WP§404, pp. 218–219)). Elsewhere he writes that “through Christianity, the individual was made so important, so absolute, that he could no longer be sacrificed: but the species endures only through human sacrifice. All “souls” became equal before God: but this is precisely the most dangerous of all possible evaluations!” (NF-1887,11[72] (WP§246, p. 142)). But let us not ask—as Nietzsche does in another context—the question as to whether—the goal here is not “a beautifying pretext” (GS§360, p. 316). Rather than ‘justifying’ the process, one might think of the goal may be instrumental to the process in giving it an orientation. Nietzsche writes that “mankind is an abstraction” (WP§398)—that he also considered the ego to be an abstraction does not mean that Nietzsche is no individualist. Indeed, the rejection of such (Christian) claims about equality is precisely what underwrites Nietzsche’s criticism of the ‘higher type’ as being instrumentalised to the lower (which I discussed with respect to nursing in chapter IV). Here we might again quote Herzen on “twenty generations of Germans who were wasted in order to make Goethe possible” (A. Herzen, “Year LVII of the Republic”, in op. cit., p. 63). As Nietzsche himself writes, “a high culture is a pyramid: it can stand only on a broad base; its first presupposition is a strong and soundly consolidated mediocrity [...] Mediocrity... is the very first necessity if there are to be exceptions: a high culture depends on it” (AC§57, pp. 646–647). Thus it is that Zarathustra says to the creators: “Unlearn this “for,” you creators! Your very virtue wants that you do nothing “for” and “in order” and “because.” You shall plug up your ears against these false little words” (TSZ “On the Higher Man” §11 p. 291). The creator’s work, their task, imbues them with “the inner certainty of having a right to everything” (NF-1887,10[128] (WP§388, pp. 208–209)). It is thus that they enrich life—not through their sacrificing themselves to the lower. Thus Nietzsche writes contra Comte that the lower type are “a base upon which higher species performs its own tasks—upon which alone it can stand” (NF-1887,9[44] (WP§901, p. 479)).


1114 For example, there Herzen records a dialogue between himself and Louis Blanc:

““Human life is a great social duty, man must constantly sacrifice himself for society”

“Why?” I asked suddenly.

“How do you mean “Why?”—but surely the whole purpose and mission of man is the well-being of society?”

“But it will never be attained if everyone makes sacrifices and nobody enjoys himself”

“You are playing with words”

“The muddle-headedness of a barbarian,” I replied, laughing...” N.B. This passage is not in the abridged volume, but can be found in the four volume 1968 edition. I quote it here—with slight modification—from I. Berlin, “Herzen and Bakunin on Individual Liberty”, in *Russian Thinkers*, Penguin, 1979, p. 82.
learned from Herzen’s memoirs “how to think about a number of negative tendencies much more sympathetically than I could until now”\textsuperscript{1115}.

There is little reference to Herzen—that “nobly fiery and persistent soul”\textsuperscript{1116}—in Nietzsche’s later work\textsuperscript{1117}. However, Nietzsche was in touch with Herzen’s children through Malwida von Meysenbug\textsuperscript{1118}, the matriarch of the Sorrento intellectual community where Nietzsche would for a time live\textsuperscript{1119}. But the directness of the influence is not especially important here. The point is rather that Herzen provides us with another model of this resistance to the instrumentalism and herd mentality that is likely to become resounding in periods of great social agitation, a period through which we are surely living. Let us take for example the dialogue between Hilton Kramer and Suzi Gablik in the latter’s book \textit{Conversations Before the End of Time}\textsuperscript{1120}.

Gablik responds to Kramer’s disdain for making art instrumental to some political agenda by charging him with both “fiddling while Rome burns” and “rearranging deck chairs on the Titanic”\textsuperscript{1121}. To look at art as an end is inappropriate to such desperate times. Compare Flasch’s claim that “the times of “rapture”… are over.”\textsuperscript{1122}

Kramer responds that while we do face grave environmental problems, “they are being addressed in a piecemeal fashion”. While one might doubt the truth of \textit{that} claim\textsuperscript{1123}, what follows seems to me beyond reproach:

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{1115} BVN-1872,253 (SL, p. 99).
\item \textsuperscript{1116} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{1117} NF-1888,14[64] (TLN, p. 245) reads: “Question: is it \textit{depersonalisation} by a truth when one submerges oneself in a thought? / …Herzen, claims this is so: in his opinion it’s quite usual to forget one’s ‘moi’ and let it go— / Question: whether this too is not mere \textit{illusion}, whether the thing which finds a question interesting is not our whole, manifold …”. The editors of TLN claim that this is a reference to “Alexander Herzen (1812–1870). Russian social philosopher whose memoirs Nietzsche had read”, but this is not right. The reference here is to Herzen’s physiologist son (also named Alexander, Sasha) who authored \textit{The Brain and Cerebral Activity from a Psycho-Physiological Viewpoint} (1887) which Nietzsche was reading (in French) during this period. See C. Giuliano, \textit{et al.} (eds.), \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 292–293.
\item \textsuperscript{1118} Meysenbug had taken responsibility for raising Herzen’s daughter Olga—for whose marriage to Gabriel Monod Nietzsche later composed a piece of music titled “\textit{une Monodie à deux}”. He wrote to his sister in ‘77 that he found Natalie (Tata) Herzen the “most suitable” woman for him to marry “as far as intellectual qualities are concerned” (BVN-1877,609 (SL, p. 156)). In a letter to Meysenbug after his break, he claims identity with Herzen and says that “in Natalie lives her father” (BVN-1889,1248).
\item \textsuperscript{1119} A good account of this is provided in M. Tomoschewsky, “Malwida von Meysenbug and the Cult of Humanism”, \textit{ProQuest Dissertations Publishing}, University of Illinois at Chicago, 1993.
\item \textsuperscript{1121} Ibid., p. 115.
\item \textsuperscript{1122} K. Flasch, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 52
\item \textsuperscript{1123} That Kramer is confessedly temperamentally insusceptible to catastrophic thinking (S. Gablik (ed.), \textit{op. cit.}, p. 117) means that he might think that the action being taken is adequate. Note, however, that my own position here—as Herzen’s in 1847—is not contingent upon a denial of the severity of the situation.
\end{footnotes}
“I don’t want to live in a world in which they’re being addressed in anything but a piecemeal fashion, because large collective mandates for dealing with the environment are going to be so diminishing to individual freedom and initiative that they will result in a society not worth living in.”

Kramer—whose art criticism I quite admire—was certainly not immune to the pressure toward a compromising kind of political involvement. One regrets that those with genuine feeling for art feel compelled to enter the fray and defend the tradition, rather than doing the kind of work that actually establishes and extends it. It seems to me that a society in which one’s exercise of free speech is principally in defence of free speech is a model of a society not worth living in. I suppose that I am constitutionally incapable of trusting martyrs.

Nietzsche said that “without music, life would be an error”. This is true—without the pointless, for what do we go on? Only, it seems, to continue going on. Without people making and enjoying great artworks, and doing other intrinsically valuable things, what are we but caryatids supporting caryatids? We are going on so that future generations might—what? Go on going on? As Herzen said bluntly, well-being will “never be attained if everyone makes sacrifices and nobody enjoys himself”.

This bizarre instrumentality is prevalent in environmental debates, where there are frequent appeals to preserve natural sites so that they may be enjoyed by future generations; yet the people evincing these views show no actual feeling for the things they seek to preserve.

“Nothing needs to happen—things are perfect as they are”. This realisation is indeed—as some mystics have claimed—the basis of much sane action. That is, the sweetest fruits are not those of duress. Yet in our time this claim is liable to be contorted into the belief that the only way to change the things that need changing is to believe that nothing needs changing. That is, we hope to gain from a feeling of perfection an indefatigability, an unwavering resolve—we hope to become ‘mystic warriors’. The intrinsic—the sense of

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1124 Ibid., p. 116.
1125 TT§L33, p. 471; c.f. BVN-1888,976.
1126 I do not deny that this is its own form of pointlessness—and can be found very beautiful when seen as such. But precisely this attitude towards ‘going on’ is closed to the people who adopt it.
1127 Quoted in I. Berlin, op. cit., p. 82.
1128 Starting from this direction, one may realise that there is much intrinsic value in undertaking seemingly instrumental tasks.
1129 C.f. HH§210, p. 97 and EH§Clever.10, p. 258.
perfection—is instrumentalised. That is, there is a compulsion toward a state of mind where we do not feel pressure—*because* this will allow us to get more done.

Many of those who would agree with me contra Mao on the knitted brow\(^{1130}\) would do so at least in part because they see the instrumental value of relaxation. Take for example Shusterman:

“The often painful strain of attention in what we presume to be purely mental work comes from the muscular tension involved in such allegedly “pure” thinking. We tend to feel such tension only when it reaches a certain threshold of pain or discomfort, feeling it in the strain of our eyes, our backs, and, if we are sufficiently sensitive, in the fatigue of our facial muscles. But greater somatic self-consciousness could provide us with a better monitoring of these muscular contractions so that we can learn to avoid or at least diminish those that are unnecessary or unnecessarily severe. By arresting or minimizing such pain-producing contractions before they are sustained long enough to generate the pain, we can enable ourselves to think longer and harder with greater ease and less distraction from discomfort and fatigue.”\(^{1131}\)

It is not difficult to point out the self-deception that goes on when constipated Kantians\(^{1132}\) imagine strain to be the measure of greatness—that is, when they mistake the relief felt at the unburdening of the bowels with the quality of product.

But when Nietzsche spoke of thinking “*as* a kind of dancing”, he meant more than to draw a contrast with the Kantian method but also with its motivation\(^{1133}\). Nietzsche didn’t mean simply that one travels *further* when one travels with light feet. Dancing is here a model of something done for its own sake, and it is on such a model—Nietzsche tells us—that we are to think of philosophy\(^{1134}\).

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\(^{1130}\) See chapter VI.


\(^{1132}\) On this point, see DTMI, p. 161f and 166f.

\(^{1133}\) TI§VIII.7, p. 512. Here Kant is referred to as “that most deformed concept-cripple of all time”.

\(^{1134}\) This point helps us to understand the contrast between Nietzsche and the Zen master as made by Kaufmann (W. Kaufmann, *Critique*, op. cit., p. 108, §35): Nietzsche’s “ultimate concern is with truth” (i.e. verbal formulation) because he finds it intrinsically valuable to undertake—to play with—such formulations. That this is *play* should not mean that it is not *serious*—GS§324 makes it very clear that Nietzsche doesn’t consider *philosophy* to be diversion.
Some of the finest arguments for ‘unselfing’ are of an entirely selfish character. Take for example John Cowper Powys, who—at the age of 80—wrote: “No man… can completely lose themselves in the elements, or even lose himself in those primitive ways of enjoying the elements such as eating and drinking and feeling the warm sun or the cool wind on his body, as long as he is distracted by pride or vanity or conceit. Nothing in the whole world destroys the pleasure of pure sensation so quickly as those portentous exaltations and solemn puffings-up of our ridiculous ego”1135. (Where are such bon vivants today? Their Vanilla Path seems unviable in these decadent times1136, and so we turn instead to Kali Yuga extremists and Foucaultian fisting enthusiasts who dispense “ever sharper spices” for our weary nerves1137.)

In his Mellon lectures, T.J. Clark quotes Picasso’s response to the question as to why he never painted landscapes: “I have always lived inside myself”. Clark responds: “how Nietzsche would have snarled at this! The idea of preferring one’s mental phantasmagoria to the glitter on the bay!”1138. Though I regard Nietzsche a much closer temperamental match with Matisse than Picasso1139, Clark’s contrast here could easily be overstated1140. Nietzsche writes in a famous passage of the Genealogy that “All instincts that do not discharge themselves outwardly tum inward—this is what I call the internalization of man: thus it was that man first developed what was later called his “soul”…”1141 But it should not be imagined that Nietzsche is ‘against’ internalisation—for equally well known is what Nietzsche says of the bad conscience shortly after: it is “an illness, there is no doubt about that, but an illness as pregnancy is illness”1142.

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1136 One recent example is David Abram, who takes on the unenviable job of trying to coax modern man back into his body, back under the spell of the sensuous. See D. Abram, Spell of the Sensuous, Vintage Books, 1997. The difficulty of this task is shown well when Abram speaks of his return to the States from his adventures and how he ended up seeking out of “garbage dumps” because “only such an intensity of smells” served to seduce his body back into an immersive experience (Ibid, p. 25).
1137 CW§5, p. 166.
1139 Compare, for one thing, the extreme social reserve and sense of propriety of Nietzsche and Matisse to the anything-but-decorous Picasso.
1140 Clark’s basic point that Nietzsche worked from nature while Picasso insisted he “never saw any” landscapes is certainly not wrong. But we should not underestimate the side of Nietzsche for whom “abstract thought” was on good days “festival and intoxication” (NF-1885,34[1.30]). Clark’s commentary on Picasso’s “Still Life with Mandolin and Guitar” (1924) in the pages surrounding the passage just quoted bears serious reflection and comparison with the very important conception of the mask in Nietzsche’s philosophy.
1141 GM§II.16, p. 84.
1142 GM§II.19, p. 88.
Despite Nietzsche’s feeling for the smallest and nearest\textsuperscript{1143}, comments such as those about the exquisite beauty of “spots of sunlight on the wall”\textsuperscript{1144} are not so common. Nietzsche is no Powys—he does not desire to become “an anonymous harp-string of pure, undefiled, unconfused, unentangled, undistracted sensation”\textsuperscript{1145}. For all of his feeling for natural beauty—for “significant form”\textsuperscript{1146}—Nietzsche was a highly inward man.

The ‘empty mind’ is not Nietzsche’s ideal—which is one reason why attempts to situate him in a Zen context often feel strained\textsuperscript{1147}. I do not mean to perpetuate the philistine stereotype of Zen—the tradition’s profound achievements in the arts show the fertility of that emptiness\textsuperscript{1148}.

“Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes”\textsuperscript{1149}. With its insistence on particularity, this could be a Zen teaching. Let us not mediate everywhere we admire\textsuperscript{1150}. The differences between Nietzsche and Zen\textsuperscript{1151} are extensive—and I think

\textsuperscript{1143} See for example NF-1879,41[31], GS§27, AC§59, EH§Clever.10.

\textsuperscript{1144} HH§P.5, p. 9. It is not unimportant that it is the \textit{convalescent} that is receptive to such subtleties, to the “bloom and magic” of everyday experience. C.f. my discussion in chapter III on Russian fatalism and convalescence.

\textsuperscript{1145} J.C. Powys, op. cit., p. 136.

\textsuperscript{1146} In NF-1887,11[13] (WP§818, p. 433) Nietzsche went so far as to say that “One is an artist at the cost of regarding that which all non-artists call “form” as content, as “the matter itself”…”

\textsuperscript{1147} Again, I think Kaufmann’s contrast in \textit{Religion in Four Dimensions} (op. cit., p. 350, §96) is perceptive here with respect to the relative concern for truth (i.e. verbal formulation).

\textsuperscript{1148} That the Zen tradition has a lot to offer (and perhaps especially to sense-starved westerners) is beyond question. I have (un)learned a good deal from Zen teachers, who have the capacity to rend—as if by lightning—the “grey sky of abstraction”, revealing the “filigree of things” (CW§1, p. 158). But for Nietzsche, the value of such concreteness is the opportunity it provides to think more and more deeply. When Nietzsche says in this same text that “Bizet makes me fertile” he means that Bizet’s music makes him “a better philosopher” (Ibid., pp. 157-158). Moreover, Nietzsche by no means considers the skies of abstract thought to be always grey (c.f. NF-1885,34[130] on abstract thought as “festival and intoxication”). See the brief note to Appendix A on the compatibility of Zen and philosophy.

\textsuperscript{1149} GS§228, p. 212.

\textsuperscript{1150} When I read the poetry of Nietzsche and Bashō, what I am struck by is difference—and in a way that is quite different from the difference between Nietzsche and Hafez. This is so despite the richness of allusion and literariness of Bashō—a richness lost in the Imagist conception of haiku that still dominates casual reading in the west. (I note that I know Bashō—like Hafez—entirely from translation. A useful introduction—with penetrating interpretation—is R. Aitken, \textit{A Zen Wave: Bashō’s Haiku and Zen}, Shoemaker & Hoard, 2003).

Appealing to differences in “historical, cultural, philosophical, and personal situation” (G. Parkes, “Open Letter”, op. cit., p. 42) explains very little if anything—for what is the individual beyond these? (C.f. Parkes (Ibid., p. 58): “Of course there are differences, most of them deriving from the differences in historical and cultural situation…”)

\textsuperscript{1151} Despite this phrase being used—by Parkes and Davis, for example—it must be kept in mind (as these two examples mostly \textit{do} that it doesn’t make much sense to speak of a comparison between Nietzsche and Zen in general rather than some particular Zen thinker(s)—for Dōgen, Bankei, Hakuin, Sengai, and Ryōkan are hardly of a piece. But this is just to say that mediation \textit{within} a tradition is as pernicious as between traditions.

As to the questions of the teachings of Zen masters and their similarity to the teachings of Nietzsche, I take myself to have hinted at an answer in the main body (see especially chapter II). While there are undoubtedly similarities, I think these have been overplayed. For one thing, despite the highly individual—often eccentric—characters emerging from Zen practice, the emphasis on the individual is extremely different—and I do not think this can be reduced to “differences in historical and cultural situation…” (G. Parkes, “Open Letter”, op. cit., p. 58). That strong individuality requires neither Nietzschean self-esteem nor
especially so in the case of “how best to live one’s life”, which is just the place where mediators have claimed to find strongest resonance. The extent of feeling for—and the celebration of—the interior life of the individual is a striking difference. When we deny in Nietzsche the presence of Selbstgefühl—of egoism with a good conscience—we do so at the expense of the possibility of the most rewarding kind of comparison.

I certainly do not think that the involved mystic is a contradictio. We have seen many profound examples of this in the twentieth century—Merton and Heschel, to name only two. What I cannot abide is the notion that, given the desperate state of the world, this task is everybody’s. As Nietzsche wrote: “Let us finally consider how naïve it is altogether to say: “Man ought to be such and such!” Reality shows us an enchanting wealth of types, the abundance of a lavish play and change of forms.”

In the belief that nobody can be sufficiently engagé, I cannot help seeing the one seemingly credible narrative of our time: busyness. Here panicked dayfillery—so estimably undisguised in the crossword junkie—dons the garb of sanctity. We must—in the terms of the Up From Edenists—wake up, grow up, show up… The marriage of mystical insight and utilitarianism is one of the strangest features of our cultural climate. “Our vanity desires that what we do best should be considered what is hardest for us. Concerning the origin of many a morality.”

Do not misunderstand me. Though it may be true that it is this very industriousness that has caused our present plights, I am not saying that we need otium. I do not want to chair a committee on social inaction in which we sit in Quaker productive silence or scheme as to the true utility of the useless—with motions prescribing Morandi as a calmative.

Mindfulness is symptomatic. “One owes it to one’s health”, and to the health of the earth—so one meditates with a watch in one’s hand. True enough, the distracted cannot

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Pascalian self-loathing is not, I think, a matter for debate. But that these lead to different manifestations of individuality is a claim I find equally clear. Certainly Nietzsche’s argument about Pascal being ruined by the Christian conscience (NF-1884,26[3]; a fragment discussed at several points in the main text) relies on such an assumption.

1152 Ibid.

1153 ToV.6, p. 491. C.f. NF-1887,11[226] (WP§339, pp. 185–186): “One believes one knows, first, that an approach to one type is desirable; secondly, that one knows what this type is like; thirdly, that every deviation from this type is a regression…”

1154 See for example my discussion of Johnston in chapter IV.

1155 BGE§143, p. 89.
sensibly act. But all this slowing down for the sake of sane action betrays its own insanity—
going on for the sake of going on. This is caryatid consciousness with cosmic pretensions.

You say that pointing out that this attitude “helps nothing”\textsuperscript{1156} is as useless as Nietzsche
“admonishing moralities to become moral”\textsuperscript{1157}?—“Well, so much the better.”\textsuperscript{1158}

\textsuperscript{1156} C.f. Nietzsche on Zola and the Goncourts in NF-1888,14[47].
\textsuperscript{1157} BGE§221, p. 149.
\textsuperscript{1158} BGE§22, p. 31.
References to Nietzsche’s works

I have made extensive use of the electronic version of the G. Colli and M. Montinari critical edition of Nietzsche’s Werke and Briefwechsel available under the editorship of P. D’Iorio at <http://www.nietzschesource.org/eKGBW/>. I used this source rather than the print versions for ease of access. The notes are prefixed NF (Nachlass Fragment) and the letters BVN (Briefe von Nietzsche). The references offered in the footnotes can simply be pasted in front of the URL above.

Nietzsche’s works are referred to in the footnotes using the following abbreviations:

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