

NIETZSCHE AND NIHILISM

by

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ABSTRACT

The failure of Hegel's attempt at a 'grand' synthesis of Platonic and Christian thought has forced upon continental philosophy a radical rethinking and re-evaluation of both metaphysics and theology — what Heidegger has called the onto-theological tradition. Nietzsche's re-evaluation of that tradition results in the thesis of philosophic nihilism — that philosophy itself, since Parmenides' thesis of the identity of thought and 'Being', is complicitous in nurturing the modern sense of meaninglessness which Nietzsche calls European nihilism. If nihilism is viewed as being at the very centre of Nietzsche's thought, then very different conclusions may be drawn, than by those interpreters who take his 'doctrines' of the *ubermensch*, the eternal recurrence, and the will to power, too literally as 'solutions' to the 'problem' of nihilism. The recognition of nihilism as the culmination of a long historical process which begins, philosophically, with 'morality' as the unexplored substratum of all claims to truth, forbids further solutions in the form of 'overcoming' or 'progress' — the modernist strategy by which the past is hollowed out, denigrated, in the interest of a newer truth. Instead Nietzsche responds to European nihilism with an exploration of the possibilities of history — foremost of which is the notion of eternal recurrence. Here the eternal recurrence is taken figuratively, a poetic device which points to a new definition of philosophy which "so far as it is science and not legislation, ... means only the broadest extension of the concept of history."

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INTRODUCTION

Nietzsche's Problematic: Nihilism

The history of philosophy is a secret raging against the preconditions of life, against the value feelings of life, against partisanship in favour of life. Philosophers have never hesitated to affirm a world provided it contradicted this world and furnished them with a pretext for speaking ill of this world. It has been hitherto the grand school of slander. (WP 461)

This essay is a discussion of the issue of nihilism as it is viewed by Nietzsche. The basis of this discussion is the idea that Nietzsche's struggle with nihilism is at the centre of his thought. My thesis is first, that Nietzsche refuses the evasion of subjectivity that, I think, is at the heart of metaphysical thought. Secondly, the reintroduction of subjectivity, or 'illusion' into philosophy requires a radical revision of the notion of reason and philosophy. And finally, nihilism can only be 'overcome' and transformed by first recognizing its deep roots in the history of philosophy. Such transformation is for Nietzsche the philosophic and educational task of modernity.

By subjectivity I mean that all action and thought must be based on only partial knowledge and therefore on a certain degree of error. To this extent all action is 'tragic' in the broadest sense of the word and Nietzsche claims to be the first tragic philosopher (EH 8). But Nietzsche ultimately goes beyond or wishes to go beyond the notion that error or illusions are acceptable, at least philosophically. The acceptance of illusion, or what is sometimes called Jesuitism, is what Nietzsche does NOT accept; neither does he accept the noble lie of Plato which is an aspect of this Jesuitism. The philosophic search is infinite (JW 124). Nietzsche's answer to a tragic insight is "nothing other than a historical consciousness which prepares his long encounter with the persistence of the past in archaic history, a persistence he attempts to re-evaluate and surpass by translating the Dionysian excess of space and time into the eternal recurrence, a time in excess of history's self figuration (Ghisalberti, 1996). In other words, Nietzsche transforms philosophy into an historical analysis which he calls genealogy through which 'illusions' are understood 'scientifically' as necessary to particular context specific 'world disclosures.'

The metaphysical tradition resulted in nihilism because neither subjectivity, nor illusion, and therefore the partiality of knowledge was honoured. Instead the infinite search for truth which has always really guided both philosophy and science has been hidden, buried, for two reasons. First the very hypothetical nature of Greek philosophy had been hidden by the notion that certain, absolute, truths were possible in the form of, for example, Platonic Ideas. Second Plato's noble lie, the necessity of the ordering of society and the soul according to the epistemology of Forms, had hidden over the notion of the infinity of Eros, which always refuses denotation, always evades language itself. In short classical metaphysics had attempted to represent philosophy as the attainment of finite truths.

Nietzsche refuses the finite of classical metaphysics and the mimetic repetition of the past by custom and tradition which accompanies this 'finite'. Philosophy's task is precisely to prevent the repetitions of time and history by a form of "indemonstrable philosophizing", a philosophy no longer motivated by certainty but by the will to power, to expansion which "gravitates towards a condition of immeasurability - wills its own expansion, desires to be more than it is at any given time — the will to power becomes the motivating principle of an ecstatic ontology — even though the finite continuously restrains this movement" (Ghisalberti, 1996):

Measure is alien to us, let us admit it to ourselves; what we itch for is the infinite, the unmeasured. Like a rider on a charging steed we let fall the reins before the infinite, we modern men, like semi-barbarians — and attain our state of bliss when we are most — in danger!

If Nietzsche here expresses a certain ambivalence towards the infinite it is because "without any limitation there is no knowing' (PTAG 37). It is for this reason that Nietzsche cannot merely 'overcome' the Greeks, cannot forego Apollo and metaphysics in particular, but must engage in a critique of metaphysics which is more than 'deconstructive', which points out possibilities which have heretofore been hidden by forms of 'teleology' which have evaded many truths, particularly the 'abject', the horrifying, the unsavoury truths of history, in favour of a philosophy which can eventually show those truths as insignificant in the light of an epistemology of certainty. It is precisely this (Platonic-Parmenidean) persistent focus on 'Being' as a purified entity which Nietzsche sees as at the origins of nihilistic thinking. The exclusive focus on 'Being' as truth, as God, as the 'good' as the essence of metaphysics is what Nietzsche humourously labels "monotono-

theism", a persistent neurosis ingrained in philosophy as repetition, and as a repetition which confirms conventional realities while at the same time putting out of play the infinite quest which really has been the impetus (though unacknowledged in the orthodox tradition) of philosophic thought.

Philosophic nihilism may here be provisionally defined as the awareness that our sense of the meaning and value of human life is grounded in a conception of either God or metaphysical truth — of a TRUE world or ONE ultimate reality, which provided the context and the substratum for all meaning and value. Not only are all such substratums false or illusory, but they eventuate in a necessary denigration of THIS, the lived world of everyday experience by existing as standards by which this world is inevitably judged.

Nietzsche, takes philosophical nihilism seriously. This is not a trite statement; his contemporary and philosophic enemy, the historicist, Karl Marx, viewed ideas themselves as secondary, as epiphenomena of social and economic structures. For Nietzsche "the greatest thoughts are the greatest events" (BGE 285); "genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators" (BGE 211). Therefore Nietzsche has to deal with the tremendous influence of Plato-Platonism-Christianity; the illusory nature of their so called foundations does not discount them from analysis-quite the contrary-their tremendous influence must be accounted for.

As well Nietzsche saw that reason, logic is intimately tied to both metaphysics and Christianity. As Nietzsche viewed it "metaphysics signifies a philosophical system of thought that is always led by the question of logical truth, and the use of reason" (Vattimo, 1985). This sense of reason as THE route to truth in philosophy, has led to constructions of 'self', that particularly in modernity beginning with Descartes, do not correspond to meaningful cultural and social practice. It is this disparity between meaningful experience-praxis and reason-philosophy, defined metaphysically and therefore abstractly, that Nietzsche viewed as leading to 'European Nihilism'(WP 1) and which can provide us here with a second provisional definition of nihilism.

Nietzsche saw the price that was paid, historically, for the 'privileged' view that reason, or logical thought, as the essentially human characteristic, as the 'core' feature of humanity, privileged human beings with the 'Truth' about the universe, and therefore about humanity's place in it. His discovery (and this must be seen as 'radical' for his time) is that there simply IS NO such privileged

access to truth. Neither nature, nor reason, are in themselves imbued with meaning, or at least with meanings which would provide answers to political- social organization, or even to existential authenticity. What is that price? What could be the meaning and status of knowledge under the sign of the 'death of God', the inability to affirm timeless structures which could guide us, or the sense of reason or order which is embedded in the cosmos?

Nietzsche sees that price as firstly, no less than the potential extinction of all the claims to truth of traditional metaphysical thought, and secondly, a vacuum of meaninglessness left in the ruins of these axial world systems. The process of this extinction stops only

when it reaches the point where these supposed truths — such as God or the soul — are revealed to be no less subjective values, and no less errors, than any other human beliefs or opinions." (Vattimo, 1983)

Nietzsche comments in *Human All too Human* "that metaphysics appears as the science ..which deals with the fundamental errors of mankind...but as if they were fundamental truths." Nietzsche unmasks all logic, reason and truth as, in effect, systems of persuasion, of rhetoric. For Nietzsche, "the difference between error and truth is always an illusory one and to do away with one means to do away with the other as well."

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? Perhaps the apparent world?
But no with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world! (TI 1889)

In fact, if I understand Nietzsche correctly, then one could offer the following Nietzschean definition of philosophy. Philosophy IS the extinction of the self or subjectivity, i.e., the 'apparent' world. Philosophy has been based on that extinction; it has strengthened the sense of that extinction. Therefore, Nietzsche who refuses this extinction of both self and 'appearance' or opinion, attacks philosophy itself, attacks the Socratic giving of reasons, the Platonic assumption of structures and of the logical reasoning which leads to them, the philosophic creation of a priori's, as well as the Kantian notion of the 'thing in itself', as nihilistic.

Rather than making the world an intelligible place, these philosophies create 'illusions' which, though necessary for survival, made the world LESS intelligible than it might be without them. For example the Kantian, 'ding an sich', the 'thing in itself', forces upon Kant the notion of a noumenal realm which is inaccessible to rational thought and therefore holds the world at a distance. Subjectivity becomes impotent in any manner which is meaningful except in the

impersonal sense of following 'moral imperatives', or rules by which one lives in the face of an essentially unintelligible universe. With Kant as well as with the entire metaphysical tradition from Plato through to Hegel, philosophy contributed to the unintelligibility of the world, rather than its intelligibility. Philosophy constructed 'problems' which could be 'solved' only under the sign of 'death', of desiccation, of the mummification of what is alive, changing, breathing — that is life itself. And again an important feature of that 'death in life' is the sense of the 'extinction of subjectivity' upon which philosophy-science has been based.

But I must point out that the purpose of placing nihilism at the centre of Nietzsche's thought is NOT to say that 'the self' can be restored or that the sense of the loss of 'Truth' is a 'problem' which can be 'solved' through the excavation of deeper truths. In this, I am guided by the thought of Heidegger and his Italian disciple Gianni Vattimo. For as Vattimo points out, Nietzsche does not seek a more adequate form of the Parmenidean thesis of the unity of thought and Being; he does not view the correspondence notion of truth as the correspondence of proposition to truth as if it were "partial incomplete or somehow inadequate and therefore that the notion of Being which follows from this as a false description of Being as it REALLY is given and the experience of truth as it REALLY occurs" (Vattimo, 1997). If, as Nietzsche states, referring to the 'Copernican revolution' and to the impossibility of returning to the humanist view which places humankind at the centre, 'we have moved from the centre to x', (WP 3) then there is no act of thought or will, which can place us back at the centre of things. This is the positive meaning of nihilism for Nietzsche; "for Nietzsche the accomplishment of nihilism is all that we should wait and hope for" (Vattimo, 1988, p20). It is the recognition and understanding of this position of 'x' which constitutes the accomplishment of nihilism, an understanding which, as Nietzsche points out in *The Gay Science* 125, is resisted, is difficult.

This way of interpreting Nietzsche does not ignore Nietzsche's attempt to restore for modernity a meaningful sense of praxis, agency or self. Rather I think that what is important for Nietzsche is that a sense of self or agency cannot be meaningfully constructed metaphysically (i.e. from reason or logic) but only through the medium of culture as he begins to define it in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Nietzsche sees that productive praxis-agency is a cultural 'achievement' that can arise under conditions which foster it. And the greatest achievement or accomplishment for Nietzsche is

what he calls 'accomplished nihilism'-a major feature of which is the overcoming of resistance to a particular kind of knowledge-truthfulness in the face of the 'illusions' which are an important aspect of culture formation. The sense of nihilism as an 'accomplishment,' an achievement, implies a sense of agency which acknowledges conflict, which must face a certain resistance to that accomplishment.

In the famous 'madman' scene in *The Gay Science* (125) and in section 344 of the same book, Nietzsche suggests that the problematic conflict is between truthfulness and the illusions which history has shown to be illusions. Nihilism is an 'accomplishment' when that struggle is taken up in such a way as to NOT deny history and therefore when one can, at the minimum, acknowledge that the denial of illusions, particularly in the name of progress, is reactionary, is guided by the 'spirit of revenge'.

The spirit of revenge is simply the desire to revenge oneself on history, on the past, by a kind of megalomania, an overblown self evaluation which thinks that one may become free of the repetitions of the past. Nietzsche's project, one may argue correctly, IS the project of that attempt at freedom, at a certain indeterminacy, at keeping open an infinite horizon, and 'open seas' (see, for example JW 124 - *In The Horizon of the Infinite*). But Nietzsche can keep open the infinite horizon only by an exploration of the finitude which binds him, of the accepted conventions of the metaphysical tradition. This is the first meaning of the eternal recurrence-the acceptance of necessity and particularly the necessity and valorization of history (the second meaning is the eternal recurrence as transformation). The spirit of revenge as philosophy is guided by the REFUSAL of history in the form of the notions of 'overcoming' and progress, the notion that the newest philosophy has surpassed the older rendering it obsolete. More practically, the spirit of revenge is the living of life with the bad conscience which views THIS life as only a shadow, only a ghostly thing in comparison to the glory of God, the perfection of reason, or the absolutes of Beauty, Truth, and Goodness. But THIS form of the spirit of revenge, that is, the Platonic-Christian form is also a refusal of history in the name of static atemporal truths.

What then of Nietzsche's attempt to 'overcome' Plato and Platonism. Is this not then guided by the 'spirit of revenge'? Instead of advocating an overcoming, Nietzsche's anti-Platonism places him at the centre of a contradiction. For if Plato is 'accepted' by Nietzsche then Nietzsche must also

'accept' the metaphysics which Nietzsche views as nihilistic. If Nietzsche 'rejects' Plato as well as Plato's metaphysics, then he must reject him in the name of something-most likely in the name of 'Truth'. Thus Nietzsche would be caught in the trap of re-inscribing the very metaphysics which he rejects. How does Nietzsche extricate himself from this trap – or does he?

I suggest in this essay that Nietzsche, first, accepts this very contradiction as 'tragic'; for it is the tragic contradiction between truthfulness and the impossibility of overcoming illusion which Nietzsche wants to reinscribe as philosophical. Secondly, though, Nietzsche does not ultimately accept illusions that have been FOUND to be illusions. Philosophy is an infinite quest guided itself by the infinite; illusions must be not eradicated, exterminated, but recognized as such and overcome. It is the people of the marketplace, in *The Joyful Wisdom* 125, the men of 'science' who wish to eradicate illusions, viewing them as anachronistic; they refuse the pain of tragic knowledge; they validate science as a new truth. In *The Joyful Wisdom*, Book Four, Nietzsche will show that science too is a metaphysical quest; instead Nietzsche will honour the quest itself, the infinite search. The philosopher becomes "the one who prevents time and history from copying the past, from remaining imbedded in a series of finite events sanctioned by the mimetic repetition of the past, by custom and tradition." (Ghisalberti, 1996, quoting from Lacoue-Labarthe)

My interpretative stance then is Nietzsche's sense of the tragic dimensions of life and thought which forbids both 'problems' and 'solutions' and which pushes philosophy itself away from the context of reason, rationalism, and therefore of 'solutions'. Nihilism for Nietzsche cannot be 'overcome', at least not by the modernist strategy of overcoming which is itself nihilistic; it hollows out the past as outdated illusions, pushed aside by the new 'truth'; Nietzsche's 'overcoming' of nihilism, to use a word from Heidegger's *Identity and Difference*, is a 'verwindung', a "going beyond that is both an acceptance and a deepening." (Vattimo, 1988)

Philosophers, Nietzsche complains, have provided answers while at the same time they have misconstrued the questions. And these answers have, since Descartes particularly, come in the form of an 'overcoming' a rendering obsolete of the previous solutions, viewing the previous as 'false', the new (i.e. the philosopher who is speaking now) as true. This overcoming is exemplified in its most nihilistic form by Descartes' attempt to render the past obsolete. This scraping away at our historical traditions is one of the focuses of Nietzsche's attack on the modernist tradition as

nihilistic. But what worth could these traditions have, if they are essentially illusions; if the truths of philosophy are illusions masquerading as truths, how can we NOT be lost in meaninglessness. In what sense can we valorize or re-valorize our traditions and our sense of continuity with them? First one must understand the extent and the precise manner in which Nietzsche finds these traditions nihilistic. Then one must see that illusions, for Nietzsche, are not embraced but at the same time not rejected in modernist manner. Nietzsche rejects what he calls Jesuitism — the honouring of the noble lie of Platonic thought; but he also rejects the putting behind oneself of noble lies or illusions as mere illusions, as insignificant, as if these lies and illusions have not been an important part of our intellectual history.

Nietzsche finds nihilism to be ingrained in the very heart of western philosophical activity, western metaphysical tradition, what I name in chapter one, the orthodox tradition of philosophy. In that exploration Nietzsche cannot disentangle himself from the tradition he is criticising. How can Nietzsche 'expose' this tradition as nihilistic without engaging it, without somehow being himself caught in its web? The Cartesian gesture, to name ancient philosophy 'useless', unpragmatic, (Rules for the Direction of the Mind-4) and to attempt a complete overhaul which would, unlike the ancients, be powerful and useful, is the modernist gesture, but is not Nietzsche's gesture. Nietzsche's overcoming is of a different sort because it is a confrontation, not with the ancients, but with what he calls in *The Will to Power*, an 'uncanny visitor which is at our door.' (WP 1)

Nietzsche's overcoming is a 'verwindung', a convalescence, a resignation, a healing whose condition is that the 'illness' which is metaphysics, cannot merely be tossed aside without tossing OURSELVES aside; nihilism can only be recognized and lived through. In section 344 of *The Gay Science* Nietzsche argues that the outright denial of our philosophic illusions (that is, for example embodied in 'overcoming') "calls upon us to reject and deny OURSELVES along with our former philosophical illusions." (Havas, 1995)

"The most universal sign of the modern age: man has lost dignity in his own eyes to an incredible extent" (WP 18). This has resulted from the fact of the devaluations of our highest values. "What does nihilism mean? That the highest values devalue themselves" (WP 12). Central to this devaluation is an 'event' which Nietzsche diagnoses and announces in *The Gay Science* 125, where the death of God is announced by a madman. This 'scene' is of the utmost importance to

Nietzsche's thought as well as to the construction of this thesis. For the people to whom God's death is announced respond with laughter believing the announcement to be 'old hat' in the light of modern science, and enlightened reason. In reading *The Gay Science* we come face to face with our own avowal of science as truth; for WE are the people who are laughing, we moderns who do not question sufficiently the relationship between truth and science. We deny ourselves when we refuse to recognize the intimate connection between our 'needs' or our 'desires' and the beliefs we reject in the name of knowledge-science.

The burden of the second part of this thesis is to discuss Nietzsche's sense of the relationship between science-truth and history and to explain how this figures in Nietzsche's understanding of what it means to be an 'accomplished nihilist' (WP 148). In brief, both Socratism and Christianity embody notions of truth which forces upon these two axial systems a facing up to the illusions which exist at their centre. Only an historical awareness of this process can lead to an understanding of the conjunction of truth and morality, the ascetic ideal, which is at the heart of these traditions. A resistance to this understanding blinds us to the reality of our accomplishments, our excellence as moderns, as well as to the difficulties of living in the shadow of our religious and metaphysical beliefs.

The shadow is a central trope in the writing of Nietzsche. To live as a 'modern' is to live in the shadow of Platonism-Christianity. In the first part of this thesis I explore the meaning of this statement for Nietzsche. Here Nietzsche takes up what he believes is the true vocation of philosophy: critique. Nietzsche concluded in a note on Plato's 'ideal state' that "Plato's error lies only in the concept of a philosophic state: "philosophic analysis cannot create but only destroy." (PTAG 840) This goes to the heart of Nietzsche's thesis on the metaphysical tradition- philosophy creates standards, criteria, categories, which are life denying, rendering desiccated what is alive and breathing – philosophy unto death.

Already in the philosophy of Parmenides, Nietzsche discovered a proclivity for "bloodless non-sensate concepts...when it became clear for Parmenides and his student Zeno, that their philosophic concepts would not penetrate to the core of existence, undo the knot of reality, they did not reject the assumption of the identity of thought and being, the idea that thought and Being could somehow be identical, but instead they gave up on empirical reality." (PTAG 844-846)

Nietzsche attempts to not give up on empirical reality. It is evident to me (though not to all commentators) that he wishes also to give up on neither philosophy nor on truth. But Nietzsche refuses the 'bloodless' truths of Parmenides. 'Being' is the main target of Nietzsche's attack on philosophic abstractions. Parmenides and the Eleatics initiate what I call the orthodox tradition of philosophy which activates the thesis which for some reason has dominated philosophy: the thesis of the identity of thought and 'Being'. It is the Eleatics and later Plato who place 'Being' at the centre of their philosophy. For Parmenides 'Being' is thought in a context which is BOTH religious and philosophical (Wheelwright, 1966). Plato attempts to think 'Being' in a manner which puts its religious context out of play in the interest of defining philosophy as a 'discipline' (Klein, 1995). At the same time, admittedly, Plato problematizes Parmenides' notion of 'Being' and particularly the notion of the identity of thought and Being. Plato, unlike Parmenides, is a political and social theorist who explores the notions of justice, freedom, and truth in contexts in which these notions must 'work', must be viable in the context of the polis. Particularly in the famous Allegory of the Cave, in Book Seven of *The Republic*, this problematization of Parmenides is evident in the inability of the philosopher to explain his newly found truth, and in the desire of the cave dwellers to kill the philosophic 'traveller'. Nevertheless despite these problematizations, 'Being' remains for Plato the concept which guides his thinking. In the Allegory of the Cave, which I discuss in Chapter Two, Plato USES the notion of truth as divine, uses Homer and Parmenides, in a way which is somewhat surreptitious, in order to convince us that philosophy and rational thought are divine activities by virtue of their concern with 'Being', by virtue of their capacity to penetrate Being.

For Nietzsche this pretence, the idea that thought can penetrate 'Being' is at the origin of the nihilism which is, for him, totally imbricated with the orthodox tradition of philosophy. Therefore Nietzsche attacks vociferously the notion of Being and the division of the world into a world of 'Being' and 'Becoming'. It seems that in this attack Nietzsche puts forth the notion that there is only becoming, time history, decay, change, sensuous reality-that there is no such thing as 'Being'. This, I think IS Nietzsche's position when he is engaging in critique, a radical atheism which attempts to liberate the philosophic concept from its moorings in what Heidegger calls the onto-theological tradition-to liberate the concept so that it can open to a pluralism of meanings-and to liberate the concept from any strict separation of literal and figurative meaning (Deleuze, 1988). [But I do not

think that Nietzsche can ultimately sustain his attack on 'Being' without undermining his own ontology—that the "world is the will to power and nothing but the will to power." (WP 138)]

With Descartes this pluralism (of the concept) as well as language's potential for polysemic (figurative) meaning is nowhere in evidence. It disappears in the interest of absolute certainty, of the quest for an absolute of denotative meaning which would make philosophy into a science, rendering philosophy itself obsolete. And in this quest for certainty the 'world' or 'life' as Nietzsche calls it goes underground, disappears entirely. At least in Plato, there was the taking into account, in all sorts of ways, of lived reality, though as I argue, dialectics and reason ultimately take precedence over this 'lived' reality of politics and the polis. But in Descartes, as Arendt argues, the senses and the world are withdrawn, since the senses are dubious sources of certainty. In this respect Descartes is a Platonist. And by the time of Descartes' writing, Plato, under the powerful influence of Christian and Aristotelian thought, has become Platonism. As Heidegger states it in *What is Philosophy*, "the originally Greek nature of philosophy in its European sway has been guided and ruled by Christian conceptions." (Heidegger, 1955, p31)

Descartes then is Nietzsche's second major opponent after Plato. He is the initiator of the epistemological tradition, the tradition which needs to prove philosophically the reality of the external world. Why this need for proof, which Nietzsche sees as implicitly devaluating 'life'? Here is Arendt in a passage from *Between Past and Future*, which at once describes the hysteria of modernity's need for proofs and at the same time beautifully confirms Nietzsche's thesis of the nihilistic origins of the epistemological tradition:

the shortest and most fundamental expression of this 'world alienation' ever found is contained in Descartes' famous 'de omnibus dubitatum est...the search for truth or knowledge could now trust neither the given evidence of the senses, nor the innate truth of the mind, nor the inner light of reason...reality no longer was disclosed as an outer phenomenon of human sensation, but had withdrawn into the sensing of the sensation itself. It now turned out that without trust in the senses, neither faith in God nor trust in reason could any longer be secure, because the revelation of both divine and rational truth has always been of persons' relationship to the world...the fundamental experience underlying Cartesian doubt was the discovery that the earth, contrary to all direct sense experience, revolves around the sun. (Arendt, 1949)

In this essay I agree with Arendt that the Copernican Revolution is a defining moment for Nietzsche's understanding of nihilism which is at least as important as his critique of the Platonic

notion of Being. For Nietzsche's audience, particularly in *The Joyful Wisdom*, is not those of an outdated faith but those for whom the illusions of faith can be left behind as archaic in the light of scientific reason. It is because of the centrality of the announcement of the 'death of God' in *Joyful Wisdom* 125, that I view Descartes and modernism as more central to Nietzsche's attack on the 'orthodox tradition' than his attack on Plato. It is not until my discussion of science and the ascetic ideal in the last chapter of this thesis, that Nietzsche's anti-Platonism, though an essential aspect of Nietzsche's attack on metaphysics can be seen as less important than his attack on the "overmathematization of the enlightenment tradition" (Rosen, *Priestly Lectures*, 1995) which begins with Descartes and not with Plato.

The second part of this thesis deals with nihilism from the standpoint of Nietzsche's vision of tragedy. I attempt to describe this vision as the 'standpoint' from which Nietzsche derives his critique of metaphysics and Christianity. Dionysus is a central force in Nietzsche's thought from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo* and *The Will to Power*. But, as I argue, to focus on Dionysus to the exclusion of Nietzsche's other two themes, truth and history, is to commit an error in Nietzsche interpretation which I label the 'artistic hypothesis'. The artistic hypothesis, favoured by some postmoderns, states that artistic creation in the form of willful imposition, is the 'solution' to the problem of a chaotic cosmos. I claim that Nietzsche thinks that there is no 'solution' because the 'problem' has been misconstrued.

The burden of the final sections of this thesis is to show that the themes of truth, history, and tragedy, must be dealt with as they are interlaced in Nietzsche's thought, particularly as they are introduced TOGETHER in *The Birth of Tragedy*, and are developed in *The Joyful Wisdom* and *The Genealogy of Morals*.

CHAPTER ONE

Nietzsche and The Orthodox Tradition of Philosophy

...in antiquity the dignity and recognition of science were diminished by the fact that even her most zealous disciples placed the striving for VIRTUE first, and one felt that knowledge had received the highest praise when one celebrated it as the best means to virtue. IT IS SOMETHING NEW IN HISTORY THAT KNOWLEDGE WANTS TO BE MORE THAN A MERE MEANS. (GS 123)

Western culture emerges from two great sources, the Judeo Christian and the Greek. These roots and their transformations comprise the inescapable background and legacy of 'western thought'. Within these two branches are found a broad spectrum of paths to knowledge or wisdom; it is one of Nietzsche's abiding insights that this potentially broad spectrum, for various reasons, has become narrowed down. The Pre-socratic (particularly Heraclitus), Greek Tragedy, the rhetorical tradition (exemplified by Giambattista Vico) and the gnostic tradition, have all been overpowered by what I name in this thesis the 'orthodox tradition'.

The 'orthodox' traditions of Athens and Jerusalem describe these paths to knowledge and wisdom as reason and revelation. The attainment of knowledge and wisdom, and thus morality, how we should best live, are linked to each other in these two primary traditions. Truth and 'the good', are linked together; it cannot be conceived that the 'good' or morality could be derived from anything but truth and knowledge, which exist in an objective sense 'out there' as Rorty states it (Rorty, 1989). This ideal is summed up in one of Plato's most famous 'aphorisms': 'virtue is knowledge'.

What I call in this thesis the 'orthodox' tradition privileges 'Truth' over opinion and therefore objectivity over subjectivity or opinion, the universal over the particular. The word orthodox is from the Greek 'orthos' (truth) and doxa (opinion), therefore 'true opinion'. True opinion is an oxymoron which is resolved in the orthodox tradition through the excision or evasion of self or subjectivity. In her essay "The Concept of History", Arendt, in talking of the kind of 'objective' scholarship, which Nietzsche, in his essay "The Use and Abuse of History" abjures, states: "The.....

problem of objectivity in the historical sciences is more than a mere technical, scientific, perplexity. Objectivity [entails] the 'extinction of the self' as the condition of 'pure vision'. (Arendt, 1954).

The orthodox tradition displays a central contradiction which is related to the 'extinction' of the self." This is the notion that there are truths which form an independent framework of analysis free of human 'contamination' which, at the same time, are the ground or foundation of human thought — an obvious paradox. The orthodox tradition "posits a realm of truth over and against experience, possessing the meaning which is absent in experience" (Warren, 1988). For Nietzsche, this holds true for both the Christian and Platonic-Aristotelian world views.

It is this central paradox, exposed by Nietzsche's critiques of both the Christian and Platonic traditions, which Nietzsche views as the origin of nihilism. Nietzsche's claim is that the 'true' worlds posited by Platonism and by Christianity are actually false worlds which were originally created from out of a spirit of weakness or revenge against the powerful who did not need these fictions to sustain life or needed other fictions. In this way Nietzsche undermines a central tenet of the tradition — the claim to objectivity or universality. He then traces the connection between political power, imagination, and nihilism. More specifically, Nietzsche charges that subjectivity, or opinion, nullifies itself as a participant in worldly political practice when it creates imaginary worlds which are, by definition, impotent, since they are created for the specific purpose of circumventing, through 'otherworldliness' the reality of oppressive political situations (though in a creative way which allows the oppressed to survive).

At least one definition of nihilism for Nietzsche, then, is the evasion of self, (in the form of the creation of an imaginary self) or subjectivity, in the interest of the creation and supporting of imaginary truths. Perhaps more accurately, Nietzsche asks what kind of self creates various stances towards the world. Thus Nietzsche brings to the foreground in philosophy other traditions besides that of the orthodox—the skeptic, the gnostic, the rhetorical or poetic, and the Pre-socratic — all of which problematize, as does Nietzsche, the relationship between truth defined in any absolutist or universal sense, and self or subjectivity.

The orthodox tradition engages in an evasion of chaos, the Heraclitean flux of appearance which does not allow escape to the 'resting places of 'Being'. Neither reason nor revelation, as defined by the orthodox tradition of philosophy, provide access to the truth of flux, of appearance.

The orthodox tradition, by definition, assumes the Parmenidean identity of thought and Being, and therefore a cosmos which is more or less imbued with both reason and order. For Nietzsche, no such identity is possible because 'Being' must be defined as an essential chaos. Reason within Nietzsche's Heraclitean cosmology can only be perspectival and therefore partial, since there is no 'world' or Being which may be grasped, there is no 'thing in itself'.

Thus Nietzsche attacks the orthodox tradition at its roots both from the standpoint of the 'foundational' structures of truth which it erects (i.e. Platonic Ideas, a priori's, transcendental ego's) and from the standpoint of the kind of self or subjectivity which, first, has a need to erect such structures (a self of resentment, or the 'spirit of revenge', or the self of 'slave or herd morality) and secondly, from the standpoint of the imaginative creation of such structures (a self of weakness which cannot sustain the grandeur of a powerful and demanding God, and which evades 'this worldly' struggles and therefore the possibility of any effective praxis). From this analysis results the thesis that imagination must become more aware of itself as a formulating principle in western thought, as the 'vis formandi' (Castoriadis, 1981). We can no longer afford the illusion that the 'foundational' structures of Athens (reason) and Jerusalem (revelation) are inviolate permanent a prioris that have nothing to do with human making, human imagination, human creativity. This route has run its course; illusions must be destroyed, namely the illusion that reason and God are entities which we merely have to 'hook onto' to find 'out there'. Thus Nietzsche presents a very great challenge — that humanity begin to take responsibility for its imaginative products — that the west increase its self-awareness of its creative input.

At the heart of nihilism is found this very avoidance — 'the devil or God is responsible.' Nietzsche requires us to own up, to a kind of responsibility, to the extent to which we, historically, have created and constructed the problem of nihilism and then have 'lived into it'. This involves a transformation of the west's self awareness of its creative role. Existential authenticity now involves an awareness of our collective role in the creation of history, including its myths. The study of history becomes an exploration of what Nietzsche calls genealogy; as Deleuze so brilliantly puts it, Plato's ahistorical question 'what is' this or that is transformed to a more historically contextual statement — 'what kind' of person would create this or that — 'who' would say this, what 'type' of

person would perpetuate this or that kind of life (Deleuze, 1962.) Not only history, then, but, psychology, sociology, biography, enter the arena of philosophy, in the form of genealogical/historical analysis. Nietzsche wants philosophy to lose its purity; he exposes the 'a prioris' that have governed philosophy since Plato, as structures of thought which evade their origins in human need, human survival. Nihilism is the condition which has occurred in Europe because of the blithe acceptance, usually for the purpose of power and domination, of a priori's which have justified judgements of superiority, of reason as a universal ground of experience through which the domination of others may be rationalized. I am thinking here of the relationship between European imperialism and the universalisms of the Descartes to Kant tradition, which, it so happens, correspond to each other over a 400 year period.

Nietzsche's anti- Platonism consists of a reversal of the orthodox tradition's choice of 'Being', as the ground, foundation, or structure upon which further thought should be built. Implicit in the orthodox tradition is an architectural metaphor-thought has a 'structure' which mirrors the structure of the cosmos. Both Derrida and Rorty treat this theme in depth. Derrida speaks of the overstructuration of thought in the orthodox tradition. This has resulted from the notion of thought's foundations, that there is a correspondence between thought and 'Being' that, according to the correspondence theory of language, must be preserved. The strategy for carrying out this preservation entails, as Foucault describes it in *Madness and Civilization*, a separation of reason from unreason, or the irrational, and a concept of language which puts its metaphorical or poetic uses out of play.

Reason in Platonism is conceived both as a structure inherent in an orderly universe and a faculty of the 'mind' which mirrors that structure (Taylor, 1989). Rorty, in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, calls this epistemology 'hylomorphism' — the conception according to which knowledge is not the accurate representation of an object but rather the subject's becoming identical with it" (Rorty, 1989). Following from this is a correspondence theory of language and truth which states simply that "propositions are true if and only if they correspond with facts" (Honderich, 1995).

Nietzsche's antiplatonism and his anti-rationalism contest both of these notions. The universe is not reasonable but chaotic. Language and art are not mirrors of, but supplements to,

nature. But Plato, as I attempt to show in the next chapter puts neither opinion, nor subjectivity nor natural forces and the concept of nature out of play as does Descartes, or as does Platonism.

Nevertheless, Plato must be seen, along with Parmenides as an initiator of the orthodox tradition of philosophy. In the allegory of the cave, even within the context of irony which I elucidate in the next chapter, Plato subjects philosophy to a purification. Even if, as I say in the next chapter, Plato construes the separation between 'being and becoming' in a somewhat ironic fashion, problematizing Parmenides unity between thought and being, at the same time, in the Republic, he consistently attempts to define and purify philosophy as a standard, as THE viewpoint from which 'life' in Nietzsche's terms, is evaluated. Also Plato, though in the Allegory seems to be dealing with his notion of nihilism-relativism in the form of the poets and sophism, puts Heraclitus out of play entirely, 'packaging' things much too neatly for Nietzsche.

Though my reading of the allegory of the cave in the next chapter stresses that phronesis and opinion are not excluded (as they are in Descartes) I nevertheless argue that Nietzsche is not wrong to focus on the Being-Becoming antinomy. At the end of the next chapter I formulate this argument from the standpoint of the Allegory itself. For now I want to stress that what I call the orthodox tradition is not embodied in any one philosopher; there are always aporia which can be seen as going contrary to the orthodox tradition. The 'orthodox tradition' as I name it is something which has evolved historically while at the same time denying any historical development by employing the concept of Truth as an absolute. The tradition has evolved beginning with Parmenides to Plato, to Aristotle, to St. Augustine's reading of Plato and Aristotle, to Aquinas and through to Descartes and Nietzsche. The orthodox tradition is nothing but each of these thinkers reacting, in the name of Truth, to the limitations and errors of their precursors, a process which in the introduction to this thesis I name 'overcoming' (Using Arnold Gehlen's terminology). The historical nature of this development is repressed in the orthodox tradition in the name of Truth and through the idea that the concrete individual, as soul, or as reason, is unproblematically, part of the structure of truth. In this manner the tragic nature of life, which is that 'action-praxis-thought' can never rid itself of error or illusion, is excluded from philosophic thought, an exclusion which Nietzsche attempts to remedy.

As I try to make clear in the introduction to this thesis, Nietzsche is perhaps the first thinker to understand the implications of the process of 'overcoming' as the failure to integrate illusion or error and therefore subjectivity, or the partialness of knowledge, into philosophy. He attempts to do this by broadening the scope of philosophy to include history and psychology. Nietzsche's attack on the orthodox tradition is not an attack on any particular philosopher but rather is an attack on metaphysics and its repression of history, beginning with Parmenides. What I will argue in the next chapter is that Plato brings the antinomy Being-Becoming out into the open in PROBLEMATIZING Parmenides notion of the unity of Thought and Being. Nietzsche uses this terminology for an attack on Platonism-Christianity which wholeheartedly embraces 'Being' at the expense of becoming. Nietzsche does attack Plato, but as his writings progress his attack is levelled more and more at Christianity or Platonism- Christianity. Nietzsche indicates this change in accent by placing, in Zarathustra, and in The Joyful Wisdom, the death of God, and in The Anti-Christ, the critique of Christianity, at the centre of his discussion of nihilism.

CHAPTER TWO

The Allegory of the Cave

You will, no longer be able to follow, my dear Glaucon, I said, although there wouldn't be any lack of eagerness on my part. But you would no longer be seeing an image of what we are saying, but rather the truth itself, at least as it looks to me. Whether it is really so or not can no longer be properly insisted on. But that there is some such thing to see must be insisted on. Isn't it so? (Bloom, 1968).

Introduction

In this chapter I will attempt to interpret the allegory of the cave with a reading which cuts against the grain of a large majority of interpreters. These readings from Arendt to Sheldon Wolin, to R. M. Hare, to Eric Havelock, all are critical of a Plato who in one form or another, according to their argument, is guided by the imperative of metaphysical truth, or by what I call the orthodox tradition. According to what I named in my introduction the orthodox tradition, there are free standing a priori structures which are external and prior to human action or thought. The most evident form of this orthodoxy for Plato is obviously the Ideas or Forms. But this orthodox form of metaphysics does not encompass all of what metaphysics means. I will suggest that there are 'weaker' or more moderate interpretations of Plato's metaphysics, in which, for example, the Forms are viewed, as Rosen suggests, as a limit on discursivity, and not as definite existent entities, or essences.

From this standpoint, the large majority of Plato interpreters including Nietzsche, react unjustifiably to Plato's epistemology, but leave out his rhetoric, the dramatic form of the dialogue, as well as more ambiguous (in the positive sense of noticing aporia) readings of both his metaphysics and his epistemology. Most of these interpreters, and Rorty is the strongest case in point, criticize Plato's metaphysics, or Plato for being a metaphysician, so that they can push forward their own historicist, (Nietzsche) or pragmatic (Rorty) positions, while at the same time willfully ignoring the writers (Sophists, Parmenides, Heraclitus, Gorgias) to which Plato is reacting. Plato is 'set up' as an ahistorical writer who pushed a program of 'metaphysics' in the form of the 'Forms' and who therefore could ignore history, since truth, in this interpretation, has little or nothing to do with history.

But there are other interpreters, in particular Stanly Rosen, Leo Strauss, Drew Hyland, and Zdravco Planinc, who view Plato as having no specifiable theories or doctrines except those which are brought forth in kaleidoscopic fashion to render very partial answers to the specific problems discussed but not solved in each dialogue. Politics and social reality, then, are not put aside in Plato in the interest of the philosophical sublime (Bercarich) or for a philosophy which is irreconcilable with politics. (Bloom, Arendt)

Arendt, for instance, views Plato as irremediably denigrating politics, the inside of the cave, as against metaphysical truth, the outside (Arendt, 1954). Thus she agrees without qualification with Nietzsche's thesis that 'Being', and all such metaphysical constructs, create standards of evaluation against which the cave or politics must be measured. Along the same lines, Gregory Vlastos, for example, thinks that while Plato begins with opinions he ultimately aims at their transcendence. Likewise Sheldon Wolin views Plato as striving for a science of political order "one that traced the proper relationship between men, indicated the causes of evil in the community, and prescribed the overarching pattern for the whole, in the light of a vision of the Good (Mara, 1997). All of these interpreters, including Habermas and Rorty, take Plato's metaphysics to be the primary and exclusive starting point and end point for interpreting Plato. They interpret Plato according to the orthodox tradition and in this way perpetuate the orthodoxy of philosophy, paradoxically even though these thinkers are reacting AGAINST such orthodoxy.

However, as I will argue, this is not Plato's program; nor is it Socrates'; the dual function of the 'program' is to teach Glaucon the folly of its simple adoption and therefore the imprudence of his character, while at the same time suggesting that the idea of the 'good' must be the guiding principle — the middle way of phronesis, practical wisdom, and prudence. Phronesis, in this way acts as a 'middle way' between the darkness of the cave and the blindness of the sun.

In this regard the word orthodoxy may be seen as opposite to, phronesis and as leading directly into an interpretation of the allegory. The word Orthodox is composed of two Greek words — *orthos*, — 'truth', and *doxa*, — 'opinion' — thus 'true opinion'. 'True opinion' is an oxymoron whose contradiction is solved, in the orthodox tradition, by privileging truth over opinion. Embodied in the cave allegory as is well known is the conflict between truth and opinion, often cited by Nietzsche, for reasons which I will discuss later in this thesis, as appearance and reality. The very word orthodoxy, then, embodies the *aporia* of the allegory; the

word itself leads directly to a paradox, one embodied but not 'solved' in the allegory. Rather, the allegory DEALS with orthodoxy (and thus with the nihilism and or violence which results from notions of absolute truth) and does not simply press forward a notion of absolute truth as the necessary condition of philosophy. Both truth and opinion will be seen to have their gradations and their variations, corresponding in fact to different 'types' of persons, different forms of subjectivity. This interpretation brings Plato closer to Nietzsche, and certainly, much closer to Nietzsche than postmodernists would allow.

Thus in interpreting the 'allegory', I want to engage the text as a reversal of both current, and particularly postmodern, interpretations which view, Plato, as the thinker who has conceived everyday reality as a shadow of the real. As against these interpretations, I will use the cave allegory to point out the pragmatic nature of Platonic thought. In doing so, I reverse the current thinking, which, from the viewpoint of a predominant philosophical viewpoint of postmodernity, pragmatism, Plato irremediably separates philosophy from practical life, rendering Platonic philosophy either useless or overly critical of everyday life and particularly subjectivity or opinion. As against these opinions, I view the allegory as exhibiting the importance of a profound practicality, and I view philosophy as a form of practice which is closely and intentionally linked to both education and politics, and thus which does not break its links to a practical notion of subjectivity, or opinion.

Socrates suggests to Glaucon that we imagine an underground cave which has a distant opening towards the light but which is totally, except at its opening, cut off from any natural sunlight. Persons, men, women, and children, are enchained, shackled, so that they are unable to move, even to turn their heads to regard one another. They face an inside wall of the cave and have never seen the sunlight. What they can see is the images of artifacts which are carried along a ridge above and behind them, shadows which are created by a fire which is behind them between them and the artifacts. The result is that the 'prisoners' see only the shadows of artifacts ("the shadows of artificial things"), in the translation by Bloom, 1968, but take these artifacts for 'reality' for this is the only reality which they know. The 'prisoners' see only shadows and know only of these shadows. This is the world of imagination as described in the divided line. The state of mind which exists in this world is error, or ignorance, and the objects of this error are shadows, or illusions.

Outside of the cave, is the natural light whose origin is the light of the sun. This light the cave dwellers have never seen. The source of this light, the sun is meant to represent the ultimate source of knowledge and the end point of the journey of the soul, from ignorance to enlightenment, from imagination to trust, to intelligence and finally to intellect. The cave dwellers live in the first home a starting point in the journey towards enlightenment whose end point is intellect. The proper 'object' of intellect is the Idea of the Good, the ultimate Platonic Form. It is the ultimate form because it combines the ultimate metaphysical truth, the Ideas or Forms with the ultimate in morality, The Good. There are other forms, such as the form of, say, a particular object, or a particular notion such as beauty. In fact, in *The Symposium* the ultimate Form is the Idea of Beauty. The Good only appears in *The Republic*, but the Form of the Good, represented by the sun, is the ultimate form, because it combines both metaphysics and morality, truth and goodness. (Nietzsche was later to label this, the ascetic ideal and to argue against the notion that truth is connected to morality but not to beauty, or even to myth and error). The idea of the Good must be the ultimate guiding light of our lives, and only through 'seeing' it which comes through the life of philosophy, can the cave be really understood for what it is, a form of entrapment in ignorance.

Into this scenario of what may be called two perfections or two purities, ultimate ignorance and ultimate goodness and truth, Plato introduces two 'turnings', two movements away from the cave and towards the light, and two turnings back towards the cave. Understanding of Plato's theory of anamnesis, presented in the *Meno*, shows these turnings to be symbolic, allegorical. We cannot imply that because one of the cave dwellers must move, physically, to attain knowledge, that Plato is introducing history, or any form of contingency, or time, through his allegory — quite the opposite. These turnings are turning of the soul towards the knowledge of which it is already in possession. This constitutes the allegorical nature of the cave. Yet the 'fact' of the ultimate importance of time (the time required for the learning of philosophy and space (the need to move out of the 'city' represented by the cave), is a necessary aporia within the allegory itself. Like all theories within the orthodox tradition, which purport to 'see' truth through direct intuition, the denial of the everyday world of sensuous reality is the price. For Arendt, as for Nietzsche, this price, constitutes the beginning of respectively 'world alienation', and nihilism.

But I am jumping ahead of my proposed goal to understand Plato on his own terms, or at least in ways which can make sense from our perspective 2500 years after Plato.

From this static situation which Socrates only later calls the first home arises the first motion of change, which we will call the 'first turning'. (Socrates calls these changes or progressions in education, 'turnings of the soul'.

THE first turning takes place when one of the prisoners is released within the cave and can see the entire situation within:

take a man who is released and suddenly compelled to stand up, to turn his neck around, to walk and to look up towards the light: and who moreover, in doing all this is in pain and because he is dazzled, is unable to make out the ... the shadows he saw before ... don't you believe such a man would be at a loss and believe that what was seen before was truer than what is now shown? (Bloom, 1968).

This event is said to occur 'by nature', ('physei', 515d) as the first step in the cave dwellers 'release and healing from bonds and folly' (515c). This means that the first turning is a matter of natural curiosity to know, in the sense in which Aristotle speaks of the desire to know as an essential aspect of human nature: "All human beings by nature, desire to know. An indication of this is our esteem for the senses; and most of all the sense of sight ... sight best helps us to know things, and reveals many distinctions" (Metaphysics, 980a 22-27, quoted from Planinc, 1993, 1991, p87). This nature is universal; all persons have this natural desire though not all persons, as we shall see, take action to pursue this natural desire. He is compelled by nature to turn towards knowledge. This is, in my opinion a crucial detail of Plato's description of the beginnings of knowledge. He is COMPELLED, but not by any person, but by his natural DESIRE TO KNOW. But there is pain involved. Habitually he has been still and staring at shadows which he has taken to be real. The net result of his movement then is confusion. The 'natural travellers' now has two conflicting sets of beliefs and desires as well as confusion and pain. But he, at least potentially, has knowledge which others are lacking. It is a differential knowledge — the second perspective gives knowledge of the first.

Now speech, for the first time enters the allegory. The cave traveller is told that he had seen shadows previously and that he is now turned towards 'beings' rather than the shadows which Socrates calls 'phluaria' - nonsense, foolish talk, 'silly nothings' (Planinc, 1993): he is 'compelled' (this time by a person) to answer questions about the shadows and in confusion he

'flee(s) turning toward those things he is able to make out.' In other words he turns back towards the habitual, the comfortable illusion of the shadow world. He refuses knowledge out of the confusion of being 'dazzled' and out of discomfort at not getting accustomed to the new reality, but also because of the blinding force of truth-*aletheia*.

The significance of the 'natural traveller' is that through action which occurs 'by nature', and with no guarantees, he finds the beginnings of knowledge and transforms, or at least begins to transform opinion into knowledge. He demonstrates that there is more than appearance or opinion **INSIDE** the cave. He performs an action without knowledge of its consequences. This can be seen as the beginnings of *phronesis*, or practical wisdom, as well as of knowledge in general. Knowledge always requires a *praxis* or action, and here the overcoming of opinion is tied to the definite action of a 'release' through the action driven by curiosity or wonder. But it is only the rudimentary beginnings of knowledge, because the traveller by 'nature', to be brought out of shadow, must both communicate with a fellow traveller and move further out of the cave.) This 'first traveller', the traveller 'by nature' (*physei*), still lacks trust (*pistis*) through which his new knowledge can be affirmed. He rejects what is given him which is not 'by nature' — that is the words of his 'guide' who has pointed out the reality of shadow, and therefore the very limited, solipsistic nature of the first traveller's life. This knowledge is rejected, let us surmise, for a 'practical' reason — to protect the traveller's natural state of wonder from the intrusions of social reality, or out of attachment to habit. But the price of this rejection is knowledge and fullness of life. It is, in the context of *The Republic*, the refusal of dialogue and therefore of the ascent through dialectic.

This is a second turning inside the cave by which the dweller is compelled, this time by another, to look directly at the light of the fire. The result is that he would flee, turning away to those things he is able to make out and hold them to be clearer to what he is being shown (515). Here the dweller is told nothing but he is forced to look at the light of the fire. Again he shrinks back. As we shall see in the fourth and ultimate turning, the fire inside of the cave represents or mirrors the sun outside.

At this point the cave can be seen as differentiated into two different caves. There is the cave of the 'perpetual prisoners' (516e) who turn away from dialogue and the fire; there is the cave of those who accept the ascent, and the cave of those who do not. This is Socrates-Plato's

schema, and not one I am imposing; for the name of the 'cave' changes as the dialogue progresses. The cave becomes differentiated into 'the perpetual prisoners' (i.e. the cave of those who refuse knowledge) and our 'common home'.

Now in the third turning the traveller must be 'dragged away from there by force, along the rough steep, upward way and 'dragged into the light of the sun'. The traveller becomes 'distressed and annoyed at being so dragged'. Again, he becomes confused and is 'unable to see even one of those things said to be true'. Why does Plato here stress the extreme forcefulness of being compelled by someone? Because the last two turnings take leave of the dialogic situation between Socrates and Glaucon; for Glaucon is not being dragged or forced anywhere. The first two turnings parallel the situation of the leisurely conversation between Socrates and Glaucon. The second two turnings do not. Socrates never makes direct claims to know the truth nor to be able to communicate the truth to Glaucon particularly in the form of a certainty by which Glaucon wishes to know the truth (Hyland, 1995). Glaucon wishes to view the truth as certainty and as mathematics, or in Socrates terms, in terms of philosopher kings (Planinc, 1991). Socrates does not go in this direction but points out 'second folly', the folly 'outside' which is of a different nature than that inside. Thus we can conclude that the conversation between Socrates and Glaucon, figuratively, takes place within the cave, which must be thought of as the polis, or the place where there is no compulsion, but free and open discussion. Glaucon fancies that figuratively, he and Glaucon are somehow in possession of the truth and are speaking from the viewpoint of transcendence. Socrates never claims such transcendence. Nor can it be assumed that Plato assumes the stance of transcendence.

It is only with the third 'and fourth turnings' out of the cave itself that violence, laughter and derision enter the picture in a more extreme form than in the first two turnings. Notice the parallels between the first two turnings and the third turning. The dweller is now 'dragged' towards the light and because he is in the brightness of the sun is again dazed and confused. First he would 'make out the shadows and after that the phantoms of human beings and later, the things themselves' (516a). In other words the story of the story of the third turning reproduces the gradations of reality inside the cave — 'shadows, phantoms, the things themselves' (516a). There is the same sense of being confused before a period of adjustment, as inside the cave.

Finally the fourth and ultimate turning occurs. 'Then finally he would be able to make out the sun — not its appearance in water or some alien place, but the sun itself' (516b-c). Notice that this ultimate turning parallels the second turning inside of the cave towards the fire, which is the representative of the sun inside of the cave. It is clear that there is both a real source of light within the cave as well as a kind of truth, which parallels the truth found 'outside'. Now Socrates hypothesizes that if the 'traveller' returned to the cave his eyes would get 'infected with darkness'.

Now again, as in the first two turnings inside, the traveller is the source of laughter. Now there is an added sense of derision of those who see him as confused and bungling. Notice that Socrates nowhere states that he has brought the truth of the outside of the cave to the inside. It is enough that the traveller is showing a massive confusion which, it is known to the perpetual prisoners derives from being outside of the cave. This is enough for the dwellers 'to get their hands on and kill the man who attempts to release and lead up' (520-521a). The perpetual prisoners do not know that the fourth traveller has beheld the blinding light of the sun. Then from where comes the urge of the perpetual prisoners to kill the fourth traveller? Plato does not say directly that the traveller has beheld the idea of the good. What are we to make then of the final journey, the beholding of the sun?

I would like here to suggest, at this point, that the cave may be seen as a transposition of the myth of Narcissus. In that myth, of which Plato would have been well aware, Narcissus takes his image as the Real; he takes symbol for reality. HE MISREADS the situation and thus is fixated. The natural setting of this myth is now transposed by Plato to another 'natural' setting, a cave, but a natural setting which now must be viewed as constructed, as a city, or polis, in which the Real and Image are confused as a result (whether conscious or unconscious) of human agency, of a group of persons who hold to a doctrine, the sophists. The image, now is controlled, though the cave dwellers through their innocent folly do not know this. But the artificiality of the image, unlike in the myth of Narcissus, is broken through by an action, which occurs 'by nature' (physei). Action is required, not only thought, in order to differentiate symbol from reality. Yet, within the cave, which is the only place that exists, there is always the incipient threat of narcissism/solipsism. More correctly there can never be a total escape from the narcissism/solipsism which is an aspect, if not THE ruling aspect of human subjectivity. Error is implicit in the human condition, which is the cave. This describes the finitude, limitation, or

ambiguity of human subjectivity, of opinion. There can only be movement towards objectivity, never absolute objectivity, absolute comprehensiveness of vision. To think otherwise is to think, like Glaucon, that philosopher kings are fit to rule because they have studied mathematics.

The cave is then a mirror or parallel to the outside of the cave; though it is essentially different. The inside of the cave is ruled by sophists; the 'outside' by philosophers. Sophists claim no truth whatsoever; philosophers, as constructed by the allegory, claim the truths of mathematics and dialectics. Inside the cave is the stillness of narcissistic 'fixation' on a shadow world; outside of the cave is the absolute fixation of a more arrogant narcissism — that of the philosopher who has worked hard and long for insight and has forgotten all irony; in Nietzsche's terms the 'outside' of the philosopher kings represents the spirit of 'gravity' and the spirit of 'revenge'.

The cave dwellers are held sway by two phenomena which prevent them from seeing through the manipulations of the sophists and poets. These are first, the fallibility of human subjectivity and second, life amongst others, in which opinions are hotly contested, but in which 'truth' must be sifted through a welter of opinions. The cave then is an image of human subjectivity with its ever incipient narcissism and solipsism. Secondly, it is an image of life amongst others in the political setting, with its incipient confusion, vulnerability to untruth through opinion, power and violence.

Out of this situation, Socrates offers to Glaucon two options for 'escape'. The first option is offered directly through their conversation. The second option is something which is pictured as occurring outside of the cave: the rigorous program of mathematics and dialectical reasoning, which according to the allegory, is pure and untouched by the inside of the cave, the realm of shadows. Glaucon, the impulsive, demonic man, chooses the latter. He at first chooses the philosopher kings, the only persons who can attain the indifference and objectivity about things so that they will not rule in the interest of power. This is where the allegorical nature of the cave allegory truly comes into play, for if the cave represents the polis, then there really is no outside of the cave. The best that Socrates can provide as an outside is the life of philosophy; but philosophy is the 'life which despises political offices' (521b). The philosopher is unsuited to rule, but is the only one who can rule without a selfish interest in personal power. Are we to assume that this is a solvable paradox? I agree with Allan Bloom's interpretation — that Socrates

is describing an untenable situation and an impossible regime, but I do not agree that Plato is demonstrating the absolute impotence of philosophy for political life and the necessity to maintain a concept of philosophy apart from politics. Philosophy which has a weaker political potency but does not shrink from truth is embodied in the dialogue between Socrates and Glaucon.

To provide evidence of this, one must ask why the cave dwellers do not speak, to each other and secondly, why there is so little speech anywhere in the allegory. This is because Plato in the two situations he describes inside the cave and outside the cave describes two situations which are extremes; inside, an extreme of solipsism and fixation (something akin to the modern T.V. addict) and outside an extreme of Truth, Reasoning and Philosophy. Herein lies Plato's brilliance as a dramatist. For we are led, along with Glaucon to take these extremes as real possibilities of life. Glaucon falls for the ruse; he is seduced by Socrates' poetic gift into believing in the possibility that philosophers who Socrates clearly states are unsuited to rule, can be efficacious if forced to rule. Running counter to these two extremes, as a counterpoint, is the moderate reasoning of the conversation, the dialogue, a conversation which is open to any person in all regimes, except the totalitarian.

Glaucon has been described as a 'demonic man', as an enthusiast for the trust and as ----- see above. Socrates vocation is to provide Glaucon with the choice of a more moderate view, with prudence. Thus he shows Glaucon the shadows and gently 'forces him to look at the 'fire' of Socrates truth — a fire which Socrates knows well, will confuse him and send him scurrying back to his chains. But Socrates is always there for 'remedial work'. In fact this is one thing we do know about Socrates' life — his great endurance as a learner and a teacher. He will never lose sight of his students and he will always be gently moving them towards a questioning of their comfortable illusions.

It only remains now to deal with the issue which is the most nagging and problematic for interpreters such as myself who do not view Plato as embracing a definite doctrine of truth in the mould of the forms or ideas. Are we not to take seriously the Platonic Forms as essential entities which exist apart from thought, as free **STANDING STRUCTURES WHICH DEFINE** the 'foundation' of Platonic realism? Is the cave allegory not a story of transcendence in which the

forms represent ultimate knowledge, and finally, we are told by Socrates that the cave represents 'becoming', while the outside of the cave represents 'being' or 'what is'. In fact Socrates asks Glaucon — 'What then would be a study to draw the soul from being to becoming' (521d).

First, there is no definitive answer to the problem of the forms unless one adopts the forms uncritically as eternal essences of 'being'. If this is the case, then philosophy, as Bloom and Arendt suggest, truly cannot have much to do with politics. For me, this is to read Plato far too literally. For instance, I sense in the discussion from 521a to 523a a tone of hyperbole and an irony of contradiction. At 521b Socrates states — 'who else will you compel to go to the guarding of the city than the men who are most prudent?' Yet Socrates had already stated several times that philosophers are the greatest experts at imprudence. Socrates had brought up prudence as a part of the allegory itself, at 516d, when he says clearly to Glaucon that what is most divine is the art of exercising prudence. Socrates had mentioned prudence more indirectly at 517c when he says that men 'who get to that point of philosophy, aren't willing to mind the business of human beings', — the latter phrase being a synonym for prudence. And again at 521b, Socrates mentions prudence indirectly, stating that the philosophical life is the only one which 'despises political offices'.

Interestingly, prudence is given three distinct but related meanings in most dictionaries. First, it is said to mean 'the ability to govern and discipline oneself by the use of reason'. This first definition is the surprising one. More commonly, I think, prudence is associated not with reason, but with practicality and particularly 'sagacity and shrewdness in the management of affairs'. Finally, a third definition seems to apply to the philosopher who returns to the cave: 'caution or circumspection as to danger or risk' (Websters Third New International Dictionary).

I would surmise, though I am not familiar with the specifics of Plato's use of the term in Greek, that Plato is engaging all three usages of the term in the passages discussed above. It is quite clear that it is not only the first definition which is meant, and therefore the one most closely associated with philosophy. Plato is speaking about justice and the kind of politics which can bring about justice. Plato here takes opinion seriously, as is prudential for any ruler or politician; but opinion is also a philosophic and educational starting point. Opinion is never 'transcended' in the sense of reaching a higher synthesis in which its importance is then decreased. The several 'confusions' within the cave represent the confusions of interpretation.

The truth in any absolute sense is never clear and certainly can never be communicated. There is an abiding finitude, a limitation of 'Dasein' in Heidegger's terms, which precludes any absolute transcendence.

Socrates, earlier in *The Republic*, contrasts two types of persons, the lovers of sights and spectacles (philothēamones) with the true philosophers. 'Socrates called the condition of the intellect of the true philosopher knowledge (epistēmē) and that of the philothēamones opinion, not ignorance. Knowledge depends on 'what is' and ignorance depends on what is not' (Platonic, 1991). Opinion then is neither ignorance nor knowledge but something which is somehow in-between these extremes. The cave allegory, then can be seen to teach Glaucon about a moderate way between ignorance and absolute certainty, a way which must respect opinion as a starting point of the educable person.

What then of the Idea of the Good, the ultimate 'idea' or 'form' which is introduced ONLY in *The Republic* and in no other dialogue. 'Almost all readings of *The Republic* that take it to be the work of a political idealist refer to the part of the dialogue that has come to be known as the cave allegory as the best evidence available in support of such an interpretation ... it (*The Republic*) is generally said to describe the possible political consequences of the theory of ideas ...' (Platonic, 1991). Interestingly, then, the 'ideas' or 'forms' are mentioned only once during the cave allegory proper, at 517c, yet in a very powerful manner:

... in the knowable the last thing to be seen is the idea of the good, but once it is seen, it must be concluded that this is in fact the cause of all that is right and fair in everything — in the visible it gave birth to light and its sovereign; in the intelligible itself sovereign, it provided truth and intelligence — and that the man who is going to act prudently in private or public must see it.

At 505a, in Chapter VI, Socrates states that:

... the idea of the good is the greatest study (megiston mathēma) and that its by availing oneself of it along with just things and the zest that they become useful and beneficial.

It is clear from these pronouncements that there is a strong relationship between phronesis, or practical wisdom and 'the good'. Is this not a powerful argument for the Platonic hierarchy: it is clearly stated that truth in the form of the idea of the good must be 'seen' before a person can act prudently; knowledge is the prerequisite for prudence; practicality, in order to be

effective practicality depends not only on knowledge, but on a kind of ultimate or sublime; other worldly knowledge, of the idea of the good. Knowledge and 'the good' are inseparable. We want not the seeming good but the real good. How can this be reconciled with my 'reversal', my attempt to see Plato as a thinker who is bound to phronesis and prudence in a much stronger manner than is usually thought.

Socrates, at the same time that he enunciates on the importance of 'the good', continuously and thoroughly denies that 'the good' can be attained as epistemic, (or scientific, or deductible) knowledge. For example, at 505a he states: 'And now you know pretty much that I am to say this, and besides this, that we don't have sufficient knowledge regarding the good.' Socrates makes similar statements at 505e, 516e, 509b, and at 509c, and finally at 533a — see the quote at the front of this chapter. At 509c, in fact, we learn from Socrates that 'the good' is 'beyond being' and intelligibility. In other words, according to Socrates, and I think that these statements are to be taken without irony, 'the good is not directly knowable'. 'The good is the source of the intelligibility and the being of what is intelligible, while not itself one of the intelligible objects' (Hyland, 1996).

In other words, we cannot know the good but only intimate its power. Socrates states at 509c that 'the good' is not being but is still beyond being, exceeding it in dignity and power'. We are left then with a very different 'epistemology' than is normally attributed to Socrates. It is one which absolutely cannot be described in terms of certainty, and must not be read through the lens of either Cartesian certainty or Christian otherworldliness. The cave allegory attempts a kind of transcendence in the form of increasing comprehensiveness of vision, but runs against the realities of finitude, of what can be articulated here and now in discursive language. This is why in the allegory, at every step of 'progress' there is a confusion which is a problem in articulation. At the limit points, at both the beginnings of philosophical exploration, and at the end points, language or the discursive, runs up against the unsayable, the noetic, which is in the form of an intimation, an 'intuition'.

For intuition, Socrates-Plato uses the word noesis, which may be translated as intuition or insight (Hyland, 1995). Noesis is nondiscursive and therefore Plato is forced, in the allegory and elsewhere to speak of his intuitions in terms of images and analogies, for instance in terms of 'seeing' something (Hyland, 1995). The Platonic honouring of noesis is what separates Plato

from Descartes where the true 'quest for certainty' begins and from Hegel, the philosopher of the absolutely discursive, where insight or intuition, that is noesis, will no longer be necessary. Plato's lesson is that pure dianoia or the purely discursive, is impossible. It is impossible because eros or desire is the infinite, uncertain, and noncognitive accompanist to all of our philosophic meanderings. Transformation, the cave allegory tells us, is possible, but transformation is always from a specific situation to another specific situation into which we are transformed. This again is the meaning of the meeting of two confusions which takes place several times within the allegory: there is never total universality, or objectivity, never a total transcendent escape from finitude. The most we can hope for is a difficult to comprehend noetic insight followed by the attempt at a discursivity, a dianoia, limited by both language and the social context within which those insights are expressed.

Interpreting the Cave

What is the cave allegory dealing with in very broad terms?

Shortly, I will apply four categories of understanding which, hopefully I am not imposing on Plato's schema, but which arises from it. But before risking such an imposition, I want to talk about the cave in very broad terms, since I think that the allegory speaks very eloquently and intuitively, about issues with which we are still struggling, not the least of which is 'what is truth', what is objectivity, are these possible; are these communicable; what are the dangers of education as well as benefits of educational transformation? What I want to stress in this discussion is the intuitive strength of the cave allegory; it deals with realities which are evident to the non-philosopher, but which are the starting points of philosophy: Am I correct? am I right? and how can I know this? How can I be certain that the way I think about things has validity — even for me. How can I really tell before I act, whether I am about to bring about destruction? Do my thoughts correspond to anything? Why are my friends' thoughts so different from mine? In the extreme — am I sane?

In short, the cave deals with both the uncertainties of subjectivity, and the confusions of life amongst others. Here I am suggesting that the cave stands for two limitations of being human. First, the 'imprisonment' of the human psyche within itself — a solipsism which can be overcome but which always threatens; and the movement of 'shadows' inside the cave is a metaphor for the fallibility of human subjectivity, human perception. The cave must be seen to

represent, in effect, the inevitability of error, not only in 'cognition' taken in the narrower sense of mathematical or philosophical error, but also in the sense of 'errancy' of being off the path, inauthentic — in Sartre, *Das Man* in Heidegger, 'fallen', in the Christian sense.

Second, the cave stands for life amongst one's equals, life amongst the everyday affairs of persons, in which conventions, or *nomos*, supersedes truth, in which, in Plato's context, there is no philosopher to show the way. This situation should result in politics — the argumentation, persuasion, wrangling, about both what is true and what is the best action. Plato argues in the allegory that without philosophy, the citizens, necessary limited and narcissistic, will live in a situation, which in its extreme, is moral terror, the lack of all standards, leading to the rule of the strongest or most cruel.

What is the intuitive reasoning behind Plato's demand that there be something more than 'mere' politics? If I and my fellow citizens are locked within our collective psyche, how can we escape (here I am still refraining from critique). The answer must then be outside, outside myself — perhaps in exploring the cave. But in the parable this is not a true 'outside'. The outside is only outside of the cave, — or outside of my psyche, or outside of my own perceptions. But how can I get outside of my own perceptions? I can go outside of the cave. Then I have a comparison between outside and inside. Plato in fact calls this stage in the divided line, 'trust', or natural consciousness (Bloom, 1968). Trust is the perception, not false (as in Descartes) but limited, of natural objects. Perhaps now, in the state of 'trust' I have a point of comparison with the inside of the cave and I can talk about this with the cave dwellers. But how do I know for sure that I am outside of my own perceptions. How do I know, like Descartes, that an evil demon is not playing tricks. There IS only one way to know for sure; there must be something outside of the cave that has nothing whatever to do with me, that is completely separate from myself — something 'free standing' that does not depend on human reality. And there IS this thing, at least in the cave allegory. It is the Idea of the Good. Only this IN-FORMS me, that I am right, that there is a correct structure 'out there' which for it to be out there, must IN-FORM me as I 'see' it that it has nothing to do with my perceptions, or rather my misperceptions, my error. It can be a corrective for me only if 'it' is completely apart from me, in 'reality'.

As Whitehead suggests in *Adventures of Ideas* we must not disregard Plato's intuitions. One of these, if not his strongest, is that there is a more or less 'natural' (though postmodernists

choke on the word) inclination towards objectivity, which is part of 'human nature', or at least a strong inclination towards objectivity in our 'western culture'. Stated in another way, a crucial difference between 'tribal' cultures which are ritualized and whose rituals and 'knowledge' follow the rhythms of nature and 'western cultures' or 'philosophic-scientific cultures' is that there is an outside to the cave. Plato must be seen as not only exploring this realm of the seeking of objective truths, but of creating and initiating the conceptual, if not the scientific framework, on which this impulse hangs.

The desire to overcome mere appearances, or error, or human fallibility is the reason, the cave allegory tells us, for this inclination. We now have a name for the above line of reasoning called 'metaphysical realism' about which there is much argumentation, but I think that Plato outlined the impulse towards science — in fact, a kind of manifest imperative towards science — the overcoming of the cave, which has guided both philosophy and science. This overcoming, metaphysical realism, has operated as the conceptual framework of science for 2500 years. Only recently has the notion of objectivity begun to break down — but the impulse has not, because it is tied in to a complex of motivations — power, intellect, exploration, the desire to see oneself or culture from new perspectives — but above all, the quest for absolute certainty.

Plato is far from sanguine about the project of transcendence. As Whitehead points out, he wavers between a complex immanence and an uncertain and confused transcendence (Whitehead, 1933). The cave allegory states the case strongly for both. In so doing Plato shows the importance of education not only as transcendence of the cave but as a ladder which must negotiate itself between abstraction and concreteness, between the universal and the particular, between the strivings of eros for wholeness and the necessary blindness of action. In all of this Plato never domesticates education; he is aware of its dangers.

DANGERS OF EDUCATION? Can education involve dangers? We, in our democratic zeal for 'equality' have fetishized education — 'education' is all and everything — something one gets and finishes. The allegory of the cave is probably the first and most powerful treatment of the notion of education as TRANSFORMATION. The cave dweller having 'seen' the Idea of the Good is radically transformed; he doesn't wish to return, he must be forced to do so, etc. Plato at least does not domesticate the power of education, of learning and seeing new vistas and he does not underestimate the difference this makes in the lives of persons — being regarded with

ridicule, laughter, envy, fear, murderousness, though having knowledge which is crucial for political or public life. This is a current empirical reality for any 'intellectual' who confronts the right wing rancour of say, middle America, or the suspicion of 'philosophy' and the anti-intellectualism of the 'frontier' and 'colonial' mentality inherent in Canadian survivalism.

Plato, like Nietzsche after him, has taught us not to underestimate the conflict between equality and excellence, and therefore not to underestimate the differences amongst people, particularly differences in intellect, intelligence, ability to learn, and to transform oneself. I cannot at all agree with Arendt when, speaking of the cave dwellers, she states, 'Plato offers no explanation of their perverse love of deception and falsehood' (Arendt, 1954). Here she is speaking not of the everyday quality of rationalization and illusion, but of the desire to kill the truth teller; but Arendt, surprisingly, underestimates both the violent and intense threat involved in exposure before the truth, as well as the 'pathos' of envy involved in the transformations of our families. The cave allegory is as much about habit and the relationship of habit, what we are accustomed to, as it is about illusion, living in 'the shadow of appearance'. This is eloquently shown by Plato's stress on the 'confusions' which arise from the transitions to and from the cave.

The one certainty of the allegory is the mixture of conflict and confusion aroused by the transformation of the truth traveller. Even if the truth found IS still illusion, SOMETHING has changed and the cave dwellers, who are all of us, can wonder as Plato aptly and clearly points out, just who IS the possessor of truth? It seems as though Plato has an extremely modern insight, one into what Castoriadis calls the social imaginary, one which is explored in depth by Lacan, R.D. Laing, and Castoriadis himself, but which says submerged within the orthodox tradition's obsession with objective and absolute certainty. The orthodox tradition must always maintain the 'outside' of the cave in the form of the apriori (for example, Descartes 'I think' or Kant's a priori of space and time). The cave itself can only be explored from a position, from a standard, which is outside the cave. The need to maintain this 'standard' which overvalues a kind of thought which is related to purity, with avoiding the contaminations of the cave, has defined, since Plato, philosophy itself. With the breakdown of the concept of objectivity, paradoxically through modern science itself, the project of orthodox philosophy has been thrown into question. Now we are witnessing, in the dominance of both literary theory and science, a combination

which has a striking resemblance to presocratic philosophy, in which science, philosophy and religious thought had yet to be differentiated.

The Philosophic Context of the Allegory

1. Parmenides and Gorgias

I wish to start from the commonly recognized notion that Plato here is struggling with Parmenides thesis of the unity of thought and being, and that the cave allegory describes a variation of this thesis. Parmenides maintained that Being exists in a kind of fullness which includes thought. Being IS and that is all there is (Bercarich, 1997). Thought does not REPRESENT Being in the Cartesian or modernist sense, nor does thought CORRESPOND to truth, as in the correspondence theory. Without dealing here with these enormously complex epistemologies, suffice it to say that Parmenides thesis attempts to cut through both epistemologies with the simple but elegant theory that 'thought and being are identical'. This has been coined by some recent commentators as hylomorphism (Rorty, 1979) — the identity of subject and object in which the 'object' is truth itself.

Parmenides is not to be misunderstood as anti-philosophical in the sense of 'describing' a perfect unity between thought and being. In such a world neither thought nor philosophy would be required. Parmenides is asking what kind of thought would be required to grasp this unity. Plato's answer though with ambivalence, is that mathematical thought is required, as the ultimate in a kind of purified abstraction, and the only kind of thought in which paradoxes and disunities dissolve to create harmony. The harmony required is that between inside and outside the cave. Yet Plato is clear that this is possible only for the philosopher. Transcendence of the cave is available only for the few; this is absolutely clear. Ugliness and ignorance can never be overcome entirely (Bloom, 1968; Rosen, 1979). This differs from the enlightenment ethos which makes the much more radical claim that ignorance can be overcome, and that there can be a genuine equality, based on knowledge.

It is clear that the cave allegory so far as it follows Parmenides thesis concerns the absolute necessity to posit truth as transcendence. Gorgias, Parmenides' rival makes no such claim. Gorgias in his book *On Non Being* maintained the more disturbing view that Being is not, does not exist and if it did exist, it would be unknowable and even if knowable would be

impossible to express. (The strand of epistemology from Gorgias to the Sophists, the rhetoricians to Vico, Nietzsche, through to the later Heidegger, Wittgenstein and finally to Richard Rorty may be dubbed the poetic, the gnostic, or the relativist positions. The strand originating with Parmenides and continuing with Plato, Aristotle, Descartes and Kant may be called the realist tradition).

For Gorgias there IS no outside of cave; there is no way in which philosophical-scientific activities of transcending, naming, classifying, or striving for any kind of objectivity can be said to take one outside the cave; there is no outside, except perhaps in the form of a void which gives no useful information. Gorgias, like other sophists of his time, was a rhetor, and taught the art of rhetoric believing in the notion of relativism of opinion. This included basically two notions — that there is nothing outside the natural order by which *nomos*, or the conventional reality of the cave may be judged and, secondly, that there is therefore no basis, outside of the cave, or conventional society, for morality. (Note the similarity to Nietzsche who I will argue later can be seen to revive this position which has been quite familial to western culture, but to which Nietzsche gives a darker turn). In *The Republic*, Thrasymachus (an actual historical sophist) argues that 'since it is contrary to self interest to accept the constraints of morality, immorality is a virtue and morality a defect' (Honderich, 1995). In the *The Gorgias*, sophism takes an even more radical (and more Nietzschean) position; he maintains that morality is in fact a form of injustice since it attempts to deprive the strong of their natural right to exploit the weak (Honderich, 1995). Generally speaking, the sophists were critical of all conventional moralities, but refused to provide any either religious or philosophic-theological framework through which these moralities can be criticised.

In the cave allegory Plato is saying that there is and must be more than rhetoric and that if the cave represents *nomos* or 'mere' convention, that it is absolutely essential that these be transcended, or understood from a critical perspective somehow outside the cave. In his description of the cave Plato shows that he understands the sophist position and its dilemmas. This is particularly evident in the two blindings which occur during the transition phases to and from 'knowledge'. These blindnesses can be seen to represent Gorgias position and claim of non-being. But Plato sees this as only a temporary state. Of utmost importance is the critical perspective — even if it comes at the expense of a certain understanding which the cave dwellers

perhaps now have, but which the philosopher has lost. Call this the 'absent minded professor' syndrome or the problem of the ivory tower. It is a price which, Plato says, may have to be paid for knowledge to occur. Call this capacity for criticism 'reason' and it is the method necessary for the reconciliation both within philosophy of various doctrines, and with the cave, the city, convention. Whitehead states 'according to Plato, the distinguishing mark of the philosopher in contrast to the sophist is his resolute attempt to reconcile conflicting doctrines, each with its own solid ground of support' (Whitehead, 1928). Plato provides the first and most telling account in western philosophy of the absolute necessity for critical distance and of perils involved in such distance for both education and politics.

In so doing he both affirms and disturbs the Parmenidian thesis. He affirms it in that thought, in the form of reason and intellect is still the dominant 'route to reality' to being. Thought is superior to both imagination and to the apprehension of reality through the senses. Yet the Parmenidean thesis is disturbed and problematized because there is always in Plato, and thereafter, a disturbing gap between thought and its communication, and therefore, between thought and its very efficacy. Now, with Plato, the question is not only what kind of thought apprehends being, but, since the cave can never be infused with thought, how can thought negotiate itself with both power and the ignorance of the non-philosopher.

It must be concluded that Plato makes philosophy itself, as the conduit of the 'outside' even more important than the Forms. Only the philosopher can give testimony to the 'out there' beyond the cave; and whether the 'forms' exist is, in effect, according to Plato's own schema, the privileged information of the philosopher. This information, to be sure is based on a cosmic truth — the apprehension of the form of the good. But the parable teaches us that this cosmic is only partially cosmic — there are realms such as *nomos*, characterized by speech and action (Arendt, 1954) which are characterized by unreason, by disorderliness, by chaos.

Reason, for Parmenides, is a cosmic principle; it is in the world. Insofar as it is a human faculty as well, it partakes of this cosmic nature. Plato, as well, gives priority to reason as a cosmic principle — but only up to a point. The cave is exempted from the Greek principle of cosmic reason, and thus order and intelligibility. It is the sensual world of imagination, chaos, transience and 'becoming' — ultimately a world of nihilism.

Given the undeniable (for Plato) relativity, if not nihilism, of what for Plato is politics, how can reason be restored so that it informs this realm. Plato, in the parable, makes philosophy and the philosopher the conduit, the necessary link, without which reason, as a cosmic principle, would be impotent in the affairs of persons. But in order to do this Plato must invent philosophy as direct intuition of reality — a realm which is apart from speech. Plato grounds philosophy in the speechless realm of direct intuition, initiating the orthodox tradition of philosophy. In other words, Plato, even with all of his telling intuitions about the darkness, the cave-like nature of human affairs, will not see an exploration of these affairs as what is most essential. Rather it is the outside, guided by reason, which must be the ultimate arbiter of the political realm. This outside, translated in terms of 'a prioris' has guided philosophy ever since, so that the realm of speech and of action (Arendt, 1954) the world in other words, in which we live and breath, has been seen by the orthodox tradition of philosophy, as an epiphenomenon, as secondary. Political thought, then, must be seen as secondary to philosophy; this, under the enormous influence of modern science (where the truth exists) has devastating effects on political thought; witness the incredible lack of imagination, of backbone, of creativity, in contemporary politics.

The cave dwellers, one MUST, notice, are chained so that they cannot see each other; they see only images — or rather they only see and are interested only in 'seeing'. Plato puts the possibility of both speech and action out of play. What if the SPOKE to one another. Speech is the first and most important form of action. If they would or could speak would they release themselves from bondage? Could they, themselves, create the conditions of their freedom? THESE options, Plato does not allow. The citizens are speechless in their ignorance as is the philosopher, in his wisdom. Curiously, the greatest contribution of classical Greece, the notion of a self-determining, self-creating, sphere of politics, in other words, democracy itself, remains invisible to Platonic philosophy.

2. Homer and Greek Tragedy: The Poets

In the parable of the cave, Plato is engaged in the formulation and definition of philosophy as a new discipline (Klein, 1996). Possibly his greatest adversaries in this endeavour are Homer, and the Athenian tragedians. The exile of the poets in Book X of *The Republic*, must be seen against the backdrop of the *nomos-physis* distinction, which is outlined in the cave parable. The poets Plato argues are representatives of *nomos*, of convention. Their works

constitute a mere copy of a copy, artifacts, like those in the cave which are twice removed from the 'original', the archetype, which exists as physis, or nature, outside the cave. Works of art are shadows of appearances. Plato's theory of aesthetics, then, is based on the metaphysical or epistemological imperative. In short, truth comes first, and is essentially unrelated to art. Art is composed of speech which are essentially conventional and subject to doxa, opinion, with no guidance from a higher source — and therefore subject to a welter of opinions and confusions.

Art, however, is different and more dangerous than speech and action. It is powerful because it gives the powerful illusion of a perspective of truth derived from nature. It gives the illusion of universality without having to think about its relation to society. In other words, beauty may have nothing to do with truth, but gives the illusion of truth. In *The Symposium*, the ultimate Form is Beauty. Plato only introduces the Form of the Good in *The Republic*, the book about the organization of society or the state. Beauty, or its representation in art may be oblivious to this organization, may in fact undermine such organization, through its irreverence and through its audacity. From the standpoint of the cave parable, art deals with transience, time, illusion, appearance, and is therefore inferior to philosophy. Art feeds and encourages the relativism and ultimately the nihilism which occurs without the guidance of reason.

The realm of desire, of appearances, is from the viewpoint of *The Republic*, chaos. Being, for Greek tragedy, is chaos; it neither can speak to us, nor offer a model in the form of reason. The cosmic principle of reason is a late development of a declining Greek world, as Nietzsche points out, in *Twilight of the Idols*.

The cave then is a transposition of the world view of both Homer and Athenian tragedy into the 'other' of philosophy. Plato places chaos within the cave; he packages it, so to speak, a little too neatly, so that it can be measured and sized up against the 'ratio' of the Forms. And only the philosopher, as expert, can provide this knowledge of the ultimate destructiveness of chaos, through its comparison to the ultimate order.

The above description does not yet capture the significance of Plato's argument with the poets. Poetry, particularly in its Homeric form, is allied to piety, to Homeric religion. This alliance is terribly powerful, Plato knows, in bolstering a pious acceptance of the world as chaos, illusion. I would agree with Castoriadis (Castoriadis, 1989) that Plato, in order to defeat this powerful alliance, must push philosophy (actually create philosophy) to its extremes, as

combination of theology and philosophy. Only the Forms can fulfill this function, and in *The Republic*, only the Form of the Good, which unites truth with morality, can overcome this powerful alliance. Ultimately, since that Forms can only be 'seen' through an arduous journey of both dialectic and mathematical reasoning, reason itself, pushed to extremes as both a human faculty as a cosmic order, pushes aside, both Athenian tragedy, and Homeric religion.

CONCLUSIONS

Plato must be viewed as the creator of a philosophic tradition which purifies philosophy through viewing reason as ultimately divine. In this way he creates a new vision, a new 'discipline' — that of philosophy. The parable of the cave plays a major role in this advocacy of reason as THE principle of thought — as essentially superior to both poetry and politics, both of which deal with human affairs, and thus human fallibility. Nietzsche's indictment, that Plato denigrates the only world which we know, that of appearances is correct — up to a point. For Plato has provided us also with an essentially 'this worldly' activity — that of critical thought itself. Not only is Plato the first to outline the importance of the 'outside' of the cave in the form of critical thinking, he is the first to describe its perils. Thus Plato has left us with an essential paradox which cannot be overcome. This paradox is exemplified in the work of Nietzsche's exploration of a nihilism which, he thinks, begins with Plato, is dependent on the same distancing, the same use of critical reason, the same journey between outside and inside, outlined in *The Republic*. Nietzsche discovered that there is no turning back from critical reason and therefore, in this sense, no turning away from Plato.

CHAPTER THREE

Nietzsche's Anti - Platonism

In this chapter I will describe and evaluate Nietzsche's anti- Platonism. First I will rehearse Nietzsche's anti-platonism, which first is his attack on the Platonic notion of 'Being'. Secondly, I will show how in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche's anti-Platonism becomes integrated into Nietzsche's history of the orthodox tradition. Finally I will relate Nietzsche's anti-Platonism to the allegory of the cave through a discussion of Arendt's 'reversals'.

Nietzsche's focuses his attack on Plato on the notion of 'Being' which, for Plato, is the term which describes ultimate reality, 'what is always' (*Republic*, 527b). In Plato 'what is always' is contrasted to 'what is at any time coming into being and passing away'(527b). In Plato's *Republic*, at the end of the allegory of the cave and during the discussion of educational practices, Socrates is describing the practices which could lead "men up to philosophy" (529a) which could draw the soul from becoming to Being, which could 'grasp things by argument and thought, not sight" (529d). Near the end of this discussion is a re-iteration of the metaphysics of the divided line:

Then it will be acceptable...to call the first part knowledge, the second thought, the third trust, and the fourth imagination and the latter two taken together, opinion and the former two, intellection. And opinion has to do with coming into being and intellection with being; and as being is to coming into being so is intellection to opinion; and as intellection is to opinion, so is knowledge to trust and thought to imagination (*Republic*, 534a).

It is dialectics which is the educational method for the grasping of these strata of intelligibles -'unless a man is able to separate out the idea of the good from all other things' (534c), he cannot 'grasp the reason for the being of each thing' (534b). Again, "the power of dialectic alone could reveal it to a man who is experienced...(533a). It is clear from these passages that dialectical reasoning is THE educational method for the approach to the highest knowledge, knowledge of the 'good'. The 'good' or the Forms or Ideas, exist for Plato as 'abstract entities, as universals which exist separately from the particulars which instantiate them' (Honderich, 1995).

Nietzsche views this Platonic separation of Being from becoming as an a re-inauguration of metaphysics, of the Parmenidian thesis of the unity of thought and Being. Metaphysics and the dialectical reasoning which supports it is always based, for Nietzsche on the illusion that there are

static ahistorical entities, (what Plato calls 'Being') which can be grasped by thought. For Nietzsche such entities are simply illusions, errors which are the products of a "tropological exchange of an effect and its cause. We perceive an effect, and as a means of making sense of it project a cause behind it" (Klein, 1995):

The abstracta evoke the illusion that they themselves are these essences which cause the qualities, whereas they receive a figurative reality only from us, because of these characteristics. The transition from the 'eide' to 'ideai' by Plato is very instructive; here metonymy, the substitution of cause and effect is complete" (Description of Ancient Rhetoric, 59).

Metonymy is "a figure of speech in which the name of an attribute or a thing is substituted for the thing itself." Nietzsche is saying that figures of speech, such as metonymy, figurative language in general, is unavoidable, is part of our very 'grammar' and way of thought; there is no possible way in which thought can exist outside of this grammar; there is no possibility of the pure apprehension of universals outside of what may be called an economy of narcissism or 'contamination'. It is a result of the narcissistic inflation of the power of human thought to think that such pure apprehension can exist. Nietzsche therefore thinks that the rhetorical or poetic tradition of philosophy, exemplified by Vico, by the sophists, and by the Greek tragedians, should be brought to bear on the orthodox tradition which thinks such pure apprehension is possible.

This denial of the truth of metaphysics and the avowal of the importance of figurative language leads Nietzsche towards the thesis of hermeneutic essence of philosophy: "there are no facts, only interpretations", a reversal of the realist position of Plato. This will leave Nietzsche open to the charge of nihilism as 'relativism'. I will argue however, that the process, the historical process by which the 'real' world of Being became a fable is that to which Nietzsche is drawing our attention, and that Nietzsche therefore should not be judged by the same criteria, by the same a-historical correspondence or lack of correspondence of thought to the Being which he, in the first place disavows in Platonic metaphysics. But first we must examine more closely the nature of Nietzsche's anti-Platonism.

For Nietzsche the separation of the world into a 'true' world and a world of appearances is the nihilistic act par excellence (Haar, 1996). The act of separation is nihilistic because it leads to a denigration of THIS (pre-philosophic) world, the world that we know and in which we live. Plato's separation of the two worlds MUST lead to this denigration, since, according to the epistemological

imperative of the orthodox tradition, the world of BEING, pictured as outside of the cave in the parable, becomes the standard, the truth, by which the world of becoming can only be viewed as false, as unreal, and therefore as unworthy, or in Christian terminology "fallen". The 'true' world, on the other hand, possesses all the attributes that life does not have—"unity, stability, identity, happiness, truth and goodness." (Haar, 1996)

For Nietzsche there is only one world and that is the world of becoming, of change, of chaos, of appearances, of sensual reality. There is only one world, the world which we know by our senses and through the activity of living our lives. Knowledge is not knowledge of BEING; there is no such entity for Nietzsche. There is neither Being, God, nor abstract philosophical entities such as 'Forms' or substances (for example, Descartes cogito, or 'thinking thing'). Nietzsche's enduring perspective is that of a radical atheism, which denies the existence of all entities which hitherto have been associated with the notions of God or Being. (Schacht, Haar, Heller, Deleuze)

Nietzsche's atheism, his rejection of both the God hypothesis of Christianity and the 'Being' hypothesis of Platonic philosophy, necessarily amounts to a re-evaluation and redefinition of the task of philosophy. Philosophy has been guided by the nihilistic tendency to create a 'true world' (for Nietzsche, a false world) by way of a projection onto that world of many of the qualities of this life. As a result we don't know this life in all its dimensions of good and evil. What we have deemed 'good' has been projected onto God, what we have deemed 'evil', onto the 'devil'. Philosophy has continued and taken over where religion has left off by creating transcendent entities such as Platonic ideas, transcendental egos, (Kant) 'substances' (Descartes), which are transformations of the God hypothesis (Dewey, 1941). As well, philosophers from Plato to Kant have invoked more directly the gods or God as essential aspects of their thinking (Dewey, 1941; Shacht, 1995). For example, Descartes invokes God as the bridge which connects the cogito to the world of the senses. In the cave allegory Socrates calls the activities of the philosopher outside the cave "divine contemplation." (Bloom, 1968)

Philosophy as the search for truth has been so imbricated with the God hypothesis that a re-evaluation of the very notion of truth is required. We barely know truth or philosophy outside of these hypotheses and Nietzsche sees it as his task to perform this re-evaluation. His anti-Platonism is part of this project. To perform this re-evaluation, though, Nietzsche must not only critique Platonism, but 'overturn it' — eradicate Platonism (which Nietzsche, perhaps takes too simply to be

the hypothesis of two worlds) from philosophy. This will amount to a new vision of philosophy as historical, as naturalistic, as interpretative and ultimately as the will to truth. As well, it will result in a devaluation of reason as a cosmic principle or as an aspect of nature.

Nihilism and Reason in *The Will to Power* and the *Twilight of The Idols*

Nietzsche's attack on Socrates-Plato is not found in any one volume of his work but is scattered throughout his writings. In his late work, *Twilight of The Idols*, published in 1888, and his posthumously published *Will to Power*, Nietzsche is more explicit than in his other works regarding the relationship between his critique of metaphysics and Christianity and his understanding of nihilism. There is abundant evidence from Nietzsche's private notes, some of which went into the making of *The Will to Power*, that an understanding of the way the western metaphysical tradition fostered nihilism was a central preoccupation of Nietzsche's until his breakdown in 1890.

It is not until *The Twilight of the Idols*, in fact, that Nietzsche fully thematizes nihilism. Later in this thesis I will argue that nihilism was Nietzsche's preoccupation from the beginning—that *The Birth of Tragedy* itself is an answer to the problem of nihilism. The first book of *The Will to Power* is entirely devoted to the theme of nihilism and though I use this book in my discussion here and elsewhere in this thesis I will argue in the last chapter that Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power can easily be misconstrued when *The Will to Power* is taken as Nietzsche's definitive statement of his doctrine of will.

I will quote briefly from *The Will to Power* and *The Twilight of the Idols* to exemplify the way Nietzsche views the connection between metaphysics and the denigration of life. *Twilight of the Idols* also reintroduces the theme of tragedy in the form of the Socratic replacement of 'reason' for tragedy. This shows Nietzsche's anti-Platonism to be not only an objection to the concept of Being but an historical thesis regarding the replacement of tragedy by philosophy, a theme which was introduced earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*. It is important to note this re-introduction to support my thesis that the central preoccupation of *The Birth of Tragedy* is nihilism, a theme I will pursue in later chapters.

From the *Will to Power*: the true world is "the great inspirer of doubt and devaluator in respect of the world we are: it has been our most dangerous attempt yet to assassinate life" (WP 583B). It is dangerous, for Nietzsche, not only due to its practical, harmful consequences, (i.e.

nihilism) but because it is simply wrong, an incorrect invention of the human intellect (Schacht, 1983). "Being is an empty fiction" (TI 111:2). "The 'true' world is merely added by a lie to our world of becoming, passing away, and change" (TI 111:2). Nietzsche advocates that we abolish entirely from our thinking the 'true world'. "The apparent or sensual world and the world invented by a lie-this is the antithesis. The latter has hitherto been called the 'real world', truth, God. This is what we have to abolish" (WP 461). "Whatever philosophical standpoint one may adopt today, from every point of view the erroneousness of the world in which we think we live is the surest and firmest fact that we lay eyes on." (BGE 34)

Nietzsche's unwillingness to acknowledge 'Being' necessarily leads him to a re-evaluation of reason as it has been thought in the orthodox tradition. The creation of another world of Being is very much tied in with the notion of reason as either divine, cosmic, or 'natural'. This, as we have seen in Chapter One, is the Platonic notion of reason. Reason, for Plato, is both a faculty and an aspect of the cosmos, so that thought 'partakes' of Being. Reasoning correctly aligns us with Being (Taylor, 1989). This is Plato's use of the thesis of Parmenides. In the allegory of the cave, as I have mentioned above, Parmenides thesis is problematized but nevertheless still powerful. Mathematics and dialectics, the forms of 'reason' most valued by Plato, are viewed as divine activities, or at least as activities which link the philosopher with the Truth. Therefore, for Nietzsche, since there is no such thing as 'Being', or the 'Divine', reason has been misconstrued ever since the thought of Parmenides (who held to the correspondence of Thought and Being) and of Plato.

Reason for Nietzsche, rather than being cosmic or divine, is a faculty which we have developed 'in the service of our needs' (Schacht, 1983), rather than in the service of some impulse to apprehend the actual nature of the world. "Not only our senses, but also our organs of knowledge, OUR REASON INCLUDED, have developed only with regard to conditions of our preservation and growth" (WP 507). When we reason, therefore, argues Nietzsche, we are not participating in something called Being which is transcendent, which is greater than, but inclusive of, ourselves. Reason must be thought more scientifically and biologically as a faculty which facilitates our responses to demands for coping with our environing world (Schacht, 1983). Philosophers have laboured, since Plato, (one could argue, particularly since Descartes) under the assumption that 'sound logical reasoning' and the principles of logic relate to 'reality' or 'what is', while desire, for example, or need, or emotion, relates to a 'lower' order of 'reality'. Nietzsche seems

to reverse this hierarchy; I say 'seems' because Nietzsche values both truth and truthfulness above all other values. Nor does he abandon reason. He abandons all systematizers, such as Plato and Hegel who view reason as an aspect of the correspondence between Truth and Being; he respects the existential authenticity of Socrates SEARCH for truth but at the same time sees reason, as it is transformed into 'dialectics' for both Plato and Socrates as a life denying and therefore nihilistic force. This is so because dialectics, for both Plato and Socrates are 'eudaimonistic' — related to the achievement of happiness or self improvement which can come only at the end of a process of reasoning which leads out of itself into a spurious and abstracted, or lifeless perfection, either of the soul or of the state. This means that reason, rather than being a RESPONSE which is alive to a perceived need or demand of 'culture' or the environing world, is viewed by the orthodox tradition as in some sense pre-ordained and therefore in some sense 'dead', already guided by imperatives which are known in advance. These imperatives already define what reason should be—dialectics- a movement towards what is already thought to be known-for Plato, the Ideas or Forms, for Christianity, God, for Hegel, the perfection of reason itself.

This attitude towards 'reason' in philosophy and its relation to nihilism as life denigration is made very clear in 'reason in philosophy', the second section of *Twilight of the Idols*:

...the idiosyncrasies of philosophers? ..there is their lack of historical sense, their hatred of even the idea of becoming, their Egyptionism. They think they are doing a thing HONOUR when they dehistoricize it, sub specie aeterni — when they make a mummy of it. All that philosophers have handled for millenia has been conceptual mummies. They kill, they stuff, when they worship, these conceptual IDOLATERS...death, change, age, as well as procreation and growth, are for them objections — refutations even. What is, does not become; what becomes, IS not....Now they all believe, even to the point of despair, in that which is. But since they cannot get hold of it, they look for REASONS (*italics mine*) why it is being with from them. It must be an illusion, a deception which prevents us from perceiving that which is; where is the deceiver to be found? — we've got it, they cry in delight, it is the senses!

For Nietzsche, then, reason, as it has been thought in the orthodox tradition of philosophy, that is, the tradition which views reason as the exclusive path to truth or Being, is crushed. Nietzsche's problem then becomes no less than to rethink not only reason, but the entire orthodox tradition which has valued truth above all.

Yet as I said, truth, or at least truthfulness occupies the very highest position in the ordering of values for Nietzsche. Above all, truth must serve 'life' and not deny 'life'. (I will argue that Nietzsche pursues 'truthfulness' as a value apart from metaphysical or absolute concepts of truth). But truth at least as it has been related to metaphysics has been a life denying and therefore nihilistic principle in the history of philosophy.

Again from 'Twilight':

To invent fables about a world 'other' than this one has no meaning at all, unless an instinct of slander, detraction, and suspicion against life has gained the upper hand in us: in that case, we avenge ourselves against life with a phantasmagoria of another a better life.

And again from The Will to Power:

Contempt, hatred for all that perishes, changes, varies — whence comes this valuation of that which remains constant?...obviously the will to truth is here merely the desire for a world of the constant...what kind of man reflects in this way? an unproductive, suffering kind, a kind weary of life, ...such a man seeks .. a world that is not self contradictory, not deceptive, does not change, and moreover, a world in which one does not suffer: contradiction, deception, change — causes of suffering... to imagine another, more valuable world is an expression of hatred for a world that makes one suffer: the resentment of metaphysicians is here creative (WP 579-585A).

Nietzsche is clear in Twilight of the Idols that it is Heraclitus who has 'gotten it right'. It has also become clear to me that it is precisely Heraclitus who is (conveniently) missing from the Allegory of the Cave, as well as from Plato's work in general. Homer, the sophists, other poets, are all there either implicitly or explicitly; Heraclitus is far too dangerous to Plato, apparently, to deserve mention.

From Section Two of 'Reason in Philosophy', Twilight of the Idols:

I set apart with high reverence the name of Heraclitus. When the rest of the philosopher crowd rejected the evidence of the senses because these showed plurality and change, he rejected. Their evidence because they showed things as if they presented duration and unity. REASON is the cause of our falsification of the evidence of the senses ... In so far as the senses show becoming, passing away, change, they do not lie...Heraclitus will always be right in this, that Being is an empty fiction. The 'apparent' world is the only one; the REAL world has only been LYINGLY added. (TI 36)

But when Nietzsche says the 'apparent' world is the only one, he can only use the same Platonic, metaphysical, vocabulary that is based on the very distinction between 'apparent' and 'real', the very dualisms, which he is trying to eradicate. For this reason Heraclitus cannot be seen as a 'solution' to the problem of nihilism but, like Dionysus, a only a pointer which keeps open what for want of a better word may be called the abyss, the importance of an 'indeterminacy' which is absent from the orthodox tradition. For the senses, becoming, chaos, cannot be considered as anything like the 'thing in itself' for Nietzsche. Heraclitean 'chaos' is rather a term for the impossibility of being able to designate, in language, the 'Real', the thing in itself.

This leaves Nietzsche with a greatly 'weakened' sense of what thought can do. But 'weakened', a term used by Vattimo, should not be taken too literally; it means that thought cannot grasp 'Being' but only the history of Being as error, as, to use Heidegger's term 'the errancy of metaphysics'.

Nietzsche expresses this in *Twilight of the Idols*, *How the Real World at Last Became a Myth*: The history of an error. This is no less than the history of the orthodox tradition, or in other terms the history of Being, in six statements. This history culminates in proposition six which perhaps is Nietzsche's bitterest statement in all of his writings:

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?
...But no! WITH THE REAL WORLD WE HAVE ALSO ABOLISHED THE
APPARENT WORLD!

In other words, the thinking of the orthodox tradition which begins with Being as the 'real' has resulted, when Being is seen to be an illusion, in the disappearance, the hollowing out, of not only 'Being' which in the first place Nietzsche views as illusion, but of the 'apparent' which was viewed as its mirror image.

The Platonic distinction of 'apparent' and 'real' as presented in the allegory has resulted in this particular history, the history of the disappearance of the categories within which we have thought about the world. The fabling of the world is a historical process which BECOMES historical because reason, as the sense of Being, weakens, becomes its own end. Reason, no longer related to a cosmic 'ontos' becomes pure process, pure willing. In Descartes, the pure willing of reason as method, as process, completely dominates the sense of reason as related to Being. This develops into Hegel's attempt to view reason itself as the 'real'. Finally, and paradoxically, with the failure of the Hegelian system, that is the realization that the ends of teleology are themselves

ultimately illusory, reason becomes a free floating entity, an unattached process. In other words, and strangely, reason again becomes Socratic in the sense, that in modernity, the will to truth, the Faustian search, becomes the dominant ethos of a culture of infinite search without end and without any demonstrable goals. We are left with the sense of reason as an external force of culture which, as Foucault points out, is detached from the irrational, which, in the sense in which Nietzsche sees it, IS culture itself. Reason becomes Socratic then in its demand for reasons, reasons which Nietzsche thinks places us outside of any meaningful community by judging that community by standards through which it is necessarily denigrated.

Re-visiting the Cave From the Perspective of History

Taking my cues from Nietzsche's comments above regarding the ahistoricism of philosophers, from Arendt, and from Heidegger, I would like to return briefly to the allegory of the cave, in order to show what an historical glance at Plato may provide — what Nietzsche's inclusion of history provides the allegory. In *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche makes himself clear that in his 'deconstruction' of western philosophy he is telling a story. That story is that of the philosophic evolution of nihilism. He calls this story "How the Real World at Last Became a Myth", subtitled 'History of an Error'. In that story, which is the story of both western philosophy and nihilism, Nietzsche, in the space of one page, describes how the 'highest values', the fictitious 'real' world created by philosophers, beginning with Parmenides and the Eleatic Presocratics, has now become fictitious, is now opened to being interpreted as an aspect of the death of God. In other words Nietzsche is describing a situation which requires a response, a situation which for Nietzsche is a modern situation, but a dilemma which must be viewed historically. Nietzsche's self-awareness of his 'untimeliness' is an awareness (owing a debt to Hegel), that ancient philosophy is not over, is present in modernity.

Plato's so called anti-Platonism is part of Nietzsche's project of the understanding of modern culture, that is the culture which must deal with the death of God. Nietzsche's problem, as I have outlined it in the introduction is one of response. How should Nietzsche, personally and as a philosopher, deal with THE event, which for him defines modernity, the death of God.

I have suggested that one way in which Nietzsche thinks he should NOT respond is to 'overcome' Plato-to show- that Plato is anachronistic. This seems a difficult point to argue, since I

I have suggested that one way in which Nietzsche thinks he should NOT respond is to 'overcome' Plato—to show— that Plato is anachronistic. This seems a difficult point to argue, since I have just shown that Nietzsche thinks that Plato is simply wrong in his assessment of the importance of Being. But, stated briefly here, error for Nietzsche is precisely what must be re-integrated into philosophy. The fact (for Nietzsche) that Plato is wrong, is in error, does not require Nietzsche to overcome and defeat Plato in the interest of a new or correct theory. This would be a misunderstanding of Nietzsche's project, one that is gladly embraced by commentators who wish simply to view philosophy as being at an end in the interest of viewing, say, literature, as a more vibrant or relevant discourse, or who stress the Dionysian or art as Nietzsche's true metaphysics, a metaphysics which is truer than Platonic metaphysics.

Instead, Nietzsche is telling a story — the history of nihilism. In this story, Plato-Socrates figures importantly in modernity as embodiments of the will to knowledge, which as I outline in chapter Nine, Nietzsche views as a destiny for 'western culture'. From the standpoint of Nietzsche's *Urgeschichte*, knowing itself, the will to know, is the fatal step that leads from Socrates to modernity. Nietzsche argues that "our whole modern culture is entangled in the net of Alexandrian culture. It proposes as its ideal the theoretical man equipped with the greatest forces of knowledge, and labouring in the service of science, whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates" (BT 110). Greek antiquity is a classical collection of examples for the explanation of our whole culture and its development. It is a means to understand ourselves, to judge our times (PATG 8:97). Nietzsche argues that it is Socrates, not Plato, who is a destiny for modern culture. This is because Socrates does not simply equate truth with Being, but engages in an authentic-existential quest for truth, the will to truth, which Nietzsche sees as fateful. Socrates as both a figure of scorn (Nietzsche's early and late periods) and as a figure of reverence, (Nietzsche's middle period) must be distinguished from Plato and Platonism. Thus in the following story of Arendt--the story of the displacement of the Homeric world view by the Platonic, Socrates cannot too simply be lumped with Plato as part and parcel of Platonism.

In keeping with the theme of this chapter-anti-Platonism- the story I am about to tell emphasizes the way the Homeric world view displaced the Platonic. This is a story which stresses the nihilistic implications of this displacement. This is Arendt's story. It is very useful to understand the way in which Nietzsche, as well as Heidegger, saw the history of western thought in terms of a

decline which begins with Plato. This story IS Nietzsche's story, but is a history which also needs to be stated in a different way, in a way which deals with Socrates as an untimely modern influence. THIS story I will tell in Chapters eight and nine when I discuss Greek tragedy and its displacement by Socratic reason.

Homer and Plato According to Arendt

Whoever reads the Cave Allegory in Plato's republic in the light of Greek history will soon be aware that the periagogue, the turning about that Plato demands of the philosopher, actually results from a turning about of the Homeric world order (Arendt, 1958).

One of the motifs of the last chapter is that Plato engages in a purification of philosophy (Klein, 1995) which is required by Plato's desire to formulate philosophy as a new discipline of study. The references in the Republic to philosophy becoming conscious of itself in such a manner are numerous in The Republic.

More specifically The Republic is the first and only of Plato's dialogues to mention The Idea of the Good, what is apparently the ultimate 'Form', in Platonic epistemology. Plato, in fact may be considered the first epistemologist who systematically, particularly in the famous divided line which precedes the Allegory, defines knowledge and the Real as eternal essences, as 'Being', as something which transcends everyday existence. In this account reason becomes the prime mover of philosophy and the close relationship between reason and the 'good', begins to define the 'ascetic ideal' (an important concept for Nietzsche) in a manner which closely associates this ideal with philosophy itself.

The ascetic ideal, or the uniting of reason and the 'Good' has become, for Nietzsche, a reactionary force. The creation of the fiction of Platonic essences, of God, in Christianity, of the perfection of reason in Hegel, of the moral imperatives in Kant, have created unreachable standards and forced upon humankind a denigration of the realities of human subjectivity which is fallible, in error, limited, partial belated. The educational implications of this kind of thinking have been profoundly nihilistic. It has educated humankind to bad conscience, resentment, the spirit of revenge, which have been created by these very measurements which require perfection. It is not Plato which Nietzsche wishes to overcome but bad conscience, resentment, the spirit of revenge, which eternally resurrects Platos, Gods, Ideals. These are resurrected not out of the thrilling

possibilities of human potential but out of the infantile wish to be measured by a standard which forces upon us commiseration, equality of suffering, rather than joy or the frightening possibilities of separation and differentiation through the achievement of independence or excellence.

This formation of the ascetic ideal on Arendt's account has as one of its inaugurating moments the Platonic shoving aside of Homeric poetry and Athenian Tragedy:

Not life after death, as in the Homeric Hades, but ordinary life on earth, is located in a "cave" in an underworld; the soul is not the shadow of the body, but the body is the shadow of the soul; the senseless, ghostlike motion ascribed by Homer to the lifeless existence of the soul after death in Hades is now ascribed to the senseless doings of men who do not leave the cave of human existence to behold the eternal ideas visible in the sky. (Arendt, 1958)

The allegory of the cave is the most evident site of this reversal of the Homeric world order. Here, Arendt is arguing first, that the historical movement from Homeric religion to Platonic reason has necessarily involved a progression from a full bodied, this worldly, life to a rather desiccated, shadowlike existence. Secondly, she argues that Plato's definition of life as essentially reasonable, involves a historical decline. And finally she views Plato as vying with Homer and having to, in some sense, defeat his 'world view'. It is perfectly clear for Arendt that the cave allegory constitutes a denigration of politics and therefore should be implicated in the history of nihilism or what Arendt calls world alienation.

Nietzsche makes an almost identical argument only using pre-Socratic philosophy and Athenian tragedy as foils to Platonic reason. Nietzsche early in his first major publication, *The Birth of Tragedy*, describes Greek tragedy as embodying a tension between the Apollonian and Dionysian. At the heart of his argument is that in Greek philosophy, since Plato, this tension is given up in favour of making life reasonable, in 'giving account' for all actions.

Both Arendt's and Nietzsche's histories (as well as Heidegger's) of ancient thought place, Plato at the centre of the nihilistic tendencies of ancient thought. Arendt notes that "Plato's originating reversal of the Homeric tradition "determined to a large extent the thought patterns into which western philosophy almost automatically fell" (Arendt, 1958). What I think Arendt is identifying is what I have described in the introduction as 'overcoming', and the connection of the notion of overcoming to the idea of progress; these ideas are, in the history of philosophical thought, normally taken to be modern ideas, characteristic of the post Cartesians. Both Nietzsche

and Arendt think otherwise; they are aware that the nihilistic patterns of displacement and 'progress' began within transformations of the ancient world.

Both Arendt and Nietzsche see that metaphysics which is 'always led by the question of logical truth and the use of reason' (Vattimo, 1988) itself has a history which undermines the strong sense of metaphysics. Metaphysics' stable entities, such as the soul, are now seen to be possessed of both stability and grandeur, only on the condition that these stabilities are seen apart from history, and therefore on the condition that they perform an act of moral judgement on life.

CHAPTER FOUR

Nihilism as Absolute Transcendence

Introduction

In Chapter One I tried to show the way in which the Allegory of The Cave problematizes Parmenides thesis of the unity of thought and Being. To think that Parmenides' thesis is merely affirmed by Plato is to believe that the Form of the Good, which is the ultimate form, existing 'outside the cave, provides finality in the sense of absolute certainty, a form of knowledge which can be expressed and communicated discursively. But Plato is very clear in the allegory that such discursive treatment is very problematic. Moreover, as Stanley Rosen points out, there is no clear explanation in Plato of the idea of forms or ideas (Rosen, 1979). There is no clearly set out program of transcendence; rather there is a 'finite transcendence', (Hyland, 1995) limited by the context of the allegory. It is modernity's scientific imperative which extracts Plato's forms from the context of the dialogues in order to see the forms as the ordering principle of a 'command science' (Madigan, 1978). Heidegger, in Plato's Doctrine of Truth (Heidegger, 1953) is guilty of this kind of interpretation, reading Aristotle and Descartes backwards into Plato (Vattimo, 1989).

Plato in the allegory describes an unstable equilibrium between inside and outside, *nomos* and *physis*, opinion and truth. It may be true that Plato is attempting to purify and define philosophy as different from appearance convention, or opinion. This is, roughly speaking, the thesis of both Heidegger and Nietzsche. But to refine is not to exclude. Philosophy, as described in the 'allegory' exists neither inside nor outside the cave, but in the *logos*, the opening to speech which is 'provided' by an intelligible order. (The Greek '*logos*' signifies both speech and reason). Such order exists as the order of the 'whole', as inclusive of *nomos* and *physis* and is represented in Plato not by any particular content, image, or allegory, but by the dialogue itself, and in particular in Socrates attempt to educate to prudence and *phronesis* the young and impetuous Glaucon.

As the allegory points out, 'true' speech, in terms of absolute certainty is unattainable. Philosophy cannot devour *techne*, or the artifactual, or humanly made nature of its endeavour and escape into an outside of pure nature or truth. But neither can philosophy justify itself as a *techne* without intelligible order. Philosophy is an intermediate between *techne* and *physis*; it is the words which mediate between the two, which maintain, in Heidegger's words the Being of being.

Philosophy begins in the attempt to distinguish between nature and convention, or opinions about nature (Rosen, 1969). The motor of philosophy is this tension between nature and convention, or stated otherwise, between truth and opinion. Another way to state this is that philosophy, at least in Plato, attempts a finite or limited transcendence of opinion or subjectivity, while at the same time knowing that absolute transcendence is impossible. This is philosophy as *sophia*, wisdom, a mediate language, not a final one.

Within the orthodox tradition of philosophy, these tensions are presented in varying forms. For Plato there is an attempt to harmonize the tension between subjectivity and objectivity, opinion and truth, through the notion of the Forms or Ideas. Even as the forms are seen as limits to discursive knowledge, there is still the idea in Plato that sense reality is encompassed by intellect, that truth exists most strongly when sense reality is absorbed into the intellect. With Nietzsche this order is reversed; intellect can never encapsulate the senses. If in Plato there is an exploration of the possibilities of transcendence (problematized in the cave allegory by interpretative confusions) resulting in the thesis of the importance of reasoned argument, in Nietzsche there is an exploration of the possibilities inherent in finitude, including the attempt to transcend the limits of finitude, resulting in the tragic or poetic insight into oedipal blindness, the tragic plight inherent in 'dasein'. It can be said assuredly that while Plato veers towards philosophy as truthful activity though it is evident that he presents dialogues as dramas, Nietzsche veers towards art as truthful activity, though he at the same time presents 'truths' in the form of the Will to Power and the Eternal Recurrence. If for Nietzsche reality is essentially chaos, Nietzsche still thinks that there is an importance to the concept 'philosophy', as intelligible words which describe, if not the reality of chaos, than at least 'the good' in terms of possible reactions to that chaos — which is first and foremost to not evade its tragic implications. As I attempt to show later in this thesis, Nietzsche attempts to integrate tragedy into philosophy, to make tragedy an ontological category, though with the obvious difficulties in such an endeavour (since the orthodox tradition always resurrects universals and evades tragic insight).

With Descartes, the dialectical tension between subjectivity and truth as transcendence, disappears. No longer is there philosophy as speech about an intelligible order; instead there is pure *techne*, or *praxis*, defined by a mathematical order which is mute or speechless because it is defined through action, or will (*praxis*) rather than through thought or theory (Rosen, 1989). The classical notion of theory or philosophy breaks down with the Cartesian epistemology of representation in

which the creation of the ego cogitans is inseparable from the representation through which the ego cogitans is created (Heidegger, 1961). Thus the creation of the Cartesian 'subjectum', as Heidegger calls it, is co-terminus with the representation of 'objects' to the mind, or ego. But these 'objects' are represented as mathematical objects, or symbols, the only objects for which Descartes can obtain certainty. Reason, which for Plato is logos or reasoning speech which is reasonable because it is part of the whole, viewed as 'ontic logos' (Taylor, 1989) which is itself reasonable, becomes in Descartes the objects of mathematical reasoning which gain their certitude through representation in the mind.

In sum, reason, which was in Plato was both a metaphysical principle, and a practical necessity, becomes in Descartes, a method, defined as an epistemology designed for the creation of certitude. This method, supported in the *Meditations* by a metaphysics of representation is reduced to a mathematical principle which at once defines mind, certitude, and subjectivity. Further to attain this radical certitude all authority and thus all nomos, convention, opinion, including the illusions or errors of previous thought, must be placed in suspension.

Here the nihilistic implications of the necessity to posit freedom as an absolute principle sundering all ties with tradition become obvious. Philosophy always had maintained these hermeneutic ties before Descartes; the sundering of all tradition is at once the end of philosophy, or intelligible thought about the whole, and the insurgence of nihilism, which amounts to the same thing. And finally, Descartes' invocation of God as the unifying principle between the Cartesian idea and the world of physical matter is necessitated in the first place by a metaphysics which reduces the world to certitude in representation. In Plato's terms, the bridge between the outside and inside of the cave is sundered, and then healed by a notion of God as a uniting the world of mind and the world of nature, or in Descartes terms the mind as 'res cogitans' or thinking thing and the world as 'res extensa'.

In Plato, as we have seen, there is no such radical break between opinion—convention and 'truth' but gradations of opinion, corresponding to 'types' — the 'perpetual prisoners', the inhabitants of our 'common home', still the cave, but the cave transformed by the natural traveller who ventures to gain knowledge, and finally the cave as transformed by the ultimate traveller. In Nietzsche there is the attempt at an exploration of finitude, of opinion and appearance, of sense reality, but still within the context of a hermeneutic tension between 'tragedy' or finitude and its 'overcoming'. As in

Plato, Nietzsche has a concept of nature, both as 'forces' which dominate any sure concept of identity, and as human nature, which sets the tragic limits of 'dasein'.

Descartes, UNLIKE both Plato and Nietzsche, attempts to transform philosophy into pure science, excluding 'finitude', context, limit, and speech, in the interest of 'transcendence'. Descartes, in effect has neither a concept of nature, nor of speech. This results from Descartes' radical attempt at complete transparency, to make nature totally intelligible for the purpose of praxis without thought; or in other words nature becomes defined for Descartes as that which, because it is "represented", can now be totally dominated, controlled (Heidegger, 1961). These are not two separate movements—nature is thought AS REPRESENTATION for the purpose of domination. Therefore nature becomes a construct: it is an aspect ultimately of will and desire and therefore subjectivized. In a totally constructed or represented world there is no critical or ethical standard by which to measure thought. In fact it can be argued that in the sense of philosophy as a 'vision of the whole' or as speech which mediates between 'opinion' and the 'divine' as in classical thought, there is no philosophy at all in Descartes but a pure praxis whose aim is the domination of nature. In fact Descartes states clearly several times that his avowed purpose is the conquering of nature in the interest of mankind.

Descartes Disengaged Reason and Mathematical Thought

In this way Rene Descartes is the initiator of a nihilism more virulent than imagined by Plato in the Allegory of the Cave. Descartes becomes a major target for Nietzsche's attempt, in *The Gay Science*, to de-divinize and naturalize-reason and nature. Descartes' is a nihilism created by a new concept of mathematical reason in which a universalism of mathematical symbols overpowers all 'mundane' concepts of reality. Reality, reduced to mathematical symbols, now are objects within the mind, rather than within a 'cave' or the 'social' world. In this way the cave allegory persists, in Descartes, in a manner which makes Plato curiously prophetic. First, in order to formulate a certainty in which 'objects' present to mind can be validated as 'real' Descartes creates a primitive psychology in which the mind is pictured as a kind of movie screen in which the objects of the outer world are seen to be 'represented'. This is the cave reduced and transformed to the human 'mind'. Secondly, the human mind, in Descartes, having been defined as "thinking substance" disengaged from the external world, is essentially solipsistic, alone with itself,. The image, in the Allegory, of prisoners tied so that they can look only forward without speech is a prophetic image

of such solipsism. In this chapter, then I will follow Descartes journey, from the optimistic initiation of a science of certainty to the unforeseen creation of the seeds of a virulent nihilism, in which speech, and in particular philosophic speech, is reduced to silence.

Descartes' Originating Impulse and the Relationship to Scholasticism

Descartes, who along with Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Francis Bacon, was the originator of the enlightenment tradition, looked back upon the 1000 year reign of Platonism-Christianity with the sense that philosophic knowledge, as 'approximation' was deficient vis-a-vis the burgeoning new physics and mathematics of Galileo. Before the enlightenment, one of the basic principles of traditional epistemology was the belief that Truth could only be known by approximation through the imperfectly understood symbolic emblems and rituals of the Church. The world of the everyday was itself but a screen that separated the fallen self from the truth of a higher divine reality. Truth, as mythological truth, had a binary nature as exemplified by the concepts of figure and form. Figure represented 'a posteriori' knowledge' that was given its meaning by its cultural and associative context. Form represented 'a priori' knowledge that had an absolute meaning that was unchanging and immutable. It was the function of rhetoric, or philosophy, to resolve the contradiction between figure and form by persuading the individual to perceive the reality of the Absolute beyond the mask of everyday events and sensations. Truth was a truth of persuasion, uncertainty and error and the individual was capable of only a limited and imperfect awareness. Reason was severely restricted and subservient to the dogmas and doctrines of the ancient authorities. As Anselm wrote concerning the resurrection of Jesus Christ, *credo ut intelligam*: I do not endeavour, O Lord, to penetrate thy suability for in no wise do I compare my understanding with that; but I long to understand some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe, but I believe in order that I may understand.

When Descartes surveyed the philosophical arena at the beginning of the seventeenth century, he was appalled at the confusion and began to strive towards a reduction and revision of philosophy and metaphysics towards a precise, powerful and mathematical structure free of dependency on rhetoric and scholasticism. It was to be, in Descartes vision, a metaphysics of utter transparency and certainty, in which any contradiction between the subjective and the objective, between figure and form, would dissolve. In so doing Descartes devised a system in which all vestiges of the 'ontic logos' of Plato was dissolved:

First in relation to Plato, Descartes offers a new understanding of reason, and hence of its hegemony over the passions, which both see as the essence of morality. For Descartes, the cosmic order was no longer seen as embodying the Ideas. Descartes utterly rejected the teleological mode of thinking and abandoned any theory of ontic logos. The universe was to be understood mechanistically, by the resolute-compositive method pioneered by Galileo...the account of knowledge which ultimately emerges on the Galilean view is a representational one. To know reality is to have a correct picture within of outer reality. (Taylor, 1989)

Descartes original and abiding inspiration was that the merely 'approximate' thinking of the ancients and the medievals could be upgraded via the certainty of mathematical thought. Descartes wanted to apply the new mathematical techniques of Galileo to the study of nature with the intention of its ultimate mastery (Rosen, 1989). Galileo, in 1623, spoke of nature as a "grand book...written in the language of mathematics, its characters...triangles, circles, and other geometrical figures without which it is humanly impossible to understand a single word of it" (Crosby, 1988, quoting from Assayer, 1623). Galileo's guiding principle was the belief in the "absolute uniformity of nature whose constitutive physical substances were everywhere the same, mathematical and quantitative in their essential nature (Crosby, 1988).

This stress on scientific method and particularly on a method that was conceived for the purpose of the domination and control of nature, amounts to the beginnings of what Heidegger has called the end of philosophy and contains the seeds already of Karl Marx's famous dictum "the aim is not to understand the world but to change it." For Descartes project was not one of the seeking of the First Cause of things, or if it was, this project itself, call it the epistemological one, was so ruled by Descartes concept of science as practical impactive and powerful activity, so as to render it (the epistemology) secondary . Even commentators such as Copleston, who fail to see the radicalness of Descartes replacement of philosophy with scientific praxis, must acknowledge Descartes avowed aim to make philosophy practical, since such statements are liberally sprinkled through his early works, the 'Rules' and the 'Discourse'.

This project of mastery it need be stressed is an audacious one; the word extremist certainly applies. But its extremism is only evident to us in the hindsight of its failure; Descartes firmly believed in the possibility of its success. That is he firmly believed in the possibility of finding mathematically certain truths through which absolute mastery of nature could be attained. This is indicated from his early work *The Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, in which thought is already circumscribed by method.

"We reject all such merely probable knowledge and make it a rule to trust only what is completely known and incapable of being doubted" (Rule 11, Haldane, 1911).

But beginning with method, the main principle of which is to doubt all things in the interest of absolute certainty, Descartes, unwittingly extends and diffuses method itself throughout the body of his work so that his investigations turn ceaselessly on the axis of a scientific method without content. Method then, of which his early specific ones are doubt, intuition and deduction, found wanting in the interest of certainty, becomes a matter of a wilful doubting which also extends throughout the length of his thinking. In this sense he begins with methods or rules in the interest of doubt and ends with doubt held sway only by the will to mastery.

The Discovery of the Ego Cogito

Descartes, thus from the very beginning viewed philosophy as a practical activity (Copleston, 1954). And as can be seen from a reading of only the first few pages of Rules for the Direction of the Mind, Descartes wants nothing less than to construct a complete science based on mathematics. Whence, then the "ego cogito, ergo sum". In fact, the ego cogito was NOT an early intention of Descartes, but was a necessary 'discovery' which Descartes needed as a principle of certainty when it became evident that "intuition", the "undoubting conception of an unclouded and attentive mind ... springing from reason alone" (Rule 3, Haldane, 1911) was found lacking as a principle of absolute certainty (Baldz, 1956).

Descartes came upon his first principle as a metaphysical justification for his use of mathematics, or stated differently, for the purpose of transforming philosophy or theory into a science of absolute certainty. In this way Descartes became the progenitor of the modern concept of subjectivity. In so doing he became caught in the contradiction that the evidence he sought through 'deduction' and 'intuition', his two first principles of reasoning, introduced in his 'Rules' had to be filtered through the principle of the 'subjectum', as Heidegger calls it, subverting what Descartes thought was a direct path, through intuition, to 'first evident truths" (Copleston, 1954). This will lead Descartes directly into his theory of 'representation' which, as Heidegger states, is the essence of all modernist theories of subjectivity (Heidegger, 1961).

Intuition and Deduction Found Inadequate

Descartes thought is comprised of two movements. The early Descartes, before the 'discovery of the ego cogitans and the later Descartes of the Meditations. The stress on mathematical certainty spans these movements. It is Descartes' first inspiration and enduring project — to construct a science of absolute certainty based on mathematics. Early in this endeavour, in *The Rules for the Direction of the Mind* and *The Discourse on Method*, Descartes stresses the laws of intuition and deduction. But these do not provide the absolute certainty which he requires. He finds this certainty later in the 'ego cogito ergo sum' of his *Meditations*. My interpretation of Descartes, in which I stress Descartes' concept of will and doubt, stresses the cogito as a metaphysical principle which finds itself in a curious contradiction to his two other Archimedean points, that of mathematical science, and God.

Descartes, in his quest for certainty, wishes to put out of play any reliance on the senses and the imagination. In this sense Descartes seems to be within the Platonic tradition. But neither Plato's nor Aristotle's quest was for absolute certainty, but rather for a disposition, or 'tuning' as Heidegger states it, which would put us in touch with truths of both nature and reason; these truths are both 'beyond' us and something in which we partake. Even in his early thought Descartes 'brackets out' our participation, as natural beings, in nature or in nature conceived as a structure of reason, in the interest of 'judgements' through which the absolute certainty of what presents itself to mind may be ascertained.

Descartes names two fundamental 'operations' of the mind intuition and deduction "two mental operations by which we are able, entirely without any fear of illusion, to arrive at the knowledge of things." Of these concepts intuition is more fundamental; it is the "conception without doubt, of an unclouded and attentive mind, which springs from the light of reason alone". (Copleston, 1954, p73 quoting from *Rules for the direction of the Mind*) Copleston notes "by intuition .. is meant a purely intellectual activity, an intellectual seeing or vision which is so clear and distinct that it leaves no room for doubt. Deduction follows from these clear insights. The *Rules for the Direction of the Mind* provide the method or rules for the use of these principles of intuition and deduction. In brief, this method consists in 'analysis', or the breaking down of complex ideas into their simplest forms so that once this operation is complete there can be no doubt as to their validity. The second important rule is 'synthesis' or the building up again, by deduction, of the

intuited truths, in "an orderly fashion, so that no steps are missed, so that each succeeding proposition really does follow from the preceding one." (Copleston p76, quoting from *Principles of Philosophy*) building an inverted pyramid of certain truths.

At this point several comments are in order. First, by invoking 'intuition', Descartes places himself within the Augustinian- Neo Platonic tradition. Truth is still conceived as part of an order of reason which informs the cosmos. But this undermines Descartes quest for certainty. Intuition invokes 'eternal truths' or truth 'by approximation'; but Descartes is not interested in eternal truths but in what is 'close at hand or certain'; his method of analysis and synthesis concerns these. Therefore at this early juncture in his thought, there is a disjunction between his method and his concept of truth which is still Platonic. It is far from clear at this point in Descartes thinking whether the truths he is concerned with are truths of 'mind' or representation, or truths of an 'outside' order of reason or of God (Rosen, 1989).

Therefore Descartes has no bridge between the realm of eternal truths, thought of as mathematical truths and the senses which provide the 'data' upon which mathematics performs analysis. In terms of the parable of the cave there is no connection between the inside and the outside of the cave, the eternal truths of mathematics and the inside of the cave, the world of the senses. Paradoxically, such bridge is provided by the imagination (Gillespie, 1995).

To summarize, first Descartes wishes to put the imagination totally out of play in the quest for certainty using only mathematical reasoning. Secondly, because Descartes has not completely let go of the Platonic-realist notion of truth it is still unclear whether he has chosen the truths of mathematics as representation or correspondence to some cosmic order of things. We know that he wished to make mathematical truths primary and that these would be truths of 'mind'. But how can these truths be seen as certain; to what are they compared, if Descartes gives up entirely on the neo-Platonic concept of truth. Descartes solves this problem by invoking, curiously enough, the imagination. Imagination is the "common ground on which the raw material of sensation and the concepts of the intuition meet to form ideas ... intuition is the basis of Descartes universal science but the figural representation in the imagination of the truths made available by the intuition is the crucial link between the intellect and the senses that makes this science possible" (Gillespie, 1995, p37, quoting from *Oeuvre de Descartes*, p77).

"Only the intellect knows but it employs the imagination's powers of representation as an aid to understanding" (Gillespie, 1995). The basis for judgement is the conjunction of intuition and

sensation in the imagination. But imagination must always have reference to intuition as a check and this is problematic, for intuition is inadequate to the task of absolute certainty. This is so because intuition in which Descartes invokes the "unclouded mind" implies a receptivity to 'objects' and thus the notion that these objects exist, as in Plato, as separate from mind. In the middle ages and in antiquity intuition was seen as passive and thus as an act of contemplation. Thinking was a reflection of nature or the eternal forms. Descartes completely rejects the notion of thinking as a species of contemplation (Gillespie p49). Every act of thought is an act of SELF consciousness. In essence, the mind reflects itself, not the forms or nature. All thinking is self thinking (Gillespie, p50). This extreme reflexivity will be tied in with the discovery of the ego cogito of The Meditations.

The Descartes of the Meditations

In the Meditations Descartes solves the problem of the disconnectedness of thought (seen as purely mathematical) and the spatio-temporal world) with the discovery of the ego cogitans. The ego cogitans becomes the middle term between mathematics and spatio-temporal particulars (Rosen, 1989). He was driven to this conclusion by the "project of rigour" the imperative to doubt everything, to enlist skepticism in the name of certainty. This radical doubt was driven by a concept of God as a deceiver God. Gillespie shows that Descartes, ultimately wishes to replace God with man, who will ultimately attain a total mastery over himself as well as over nature (Rosen, 1989; Gillespie, 1995) .

This contradicts a more traditional interpretation of Descartes which views him as invoking God as the middle term, connecting mathematical forms, to sensuous reality. This interpretation suffers from not acknowledging both the radicalness and rebelliousness of Descartes project. It also results from the orthodox tradition's insistence on viewing 'truth' as external and prior structures of 'Being' or in other words as totally separate from human intentionality, and subjectivity. In Nietzsche's terms, interpreting Descartes in a manner in which he is seen as seeking truth, rather than developing a praxis, is a result of the predominance of the 'God' hypothesis or the 'Being' hypothesis, both evasions of human subjectivity. It is not that Descartes, himself, did not evade human subjectivity; but this is a result of his interest in a total praxis without theory. The success of his project, like all praxes which aim for a perfection in the dissolution of the gaps between human

subjectivity and objective truth, would have obviated the need for both 'theory' and a concept of 'subjectivity'.

Again, Descartes tells us that his avowed aim is to conquer nature and to gain full self mastery as well as mastery over nature. This does not sound like the project of a theist. As Gillespie, Rosen and others argue, Descartes, in his later writings, increasingly invokes the concept of will. Will replaces imagination as the connecting link between mathematical forms and spatio-temporal reality. But will, or ungrounded acts of self assertion are not, in essence, different from the ego cogitans, as we shall see. Descartes must invoke will because, he must struggle with a concept of God which is increasingly 'nominalist' and therefore all powerful, a God whose acts, like the gnostic God, are without order or reason, but are arbitrary, or wilful. Descartes must invoke the concept of will, then to counter the power of a God who threatens chaos rather than provides order.

The notion of intuition which dominates Descartes earlier thought is replaced by the 'ego cogito ergo sum'. The ego cogito is a 'discovery' of Descartes which results from his reasoning in the Meditations. An important part of that reasoning is Descartes radical doubt. We know that radical doubt was necessary to find indubitable truth. But the origins of radical doubt must be seen in relation to a deceiver God- a notion which does not often enough strike the reader of Descartes in all its strangeness. Does not Descartes invoke God as the only being who can ensure the doctrine of innate ideas? Which God then is Descartes', a deceiver God or a God which ensures the doctrine of innate ideas. Is God, for Descartes, a God of a divine order, or a God which deceives?

Descartes skepticism was itself a by-product of the nominalist doctrine which became prominent in the late middle ages, of the arbitrary omnipotence of God. In such a world there could be no certainty. Descartes devises or describes a rather primitive psychology which exacerbates the possibility of error. According to this, sense impressions cause images in the imagination, pictured as a screen at the back of the brain. This is of course unreliable to produce knowledge. Only reason can produce knowledge;

"we conceive bodies not with the senses or the imagination, but only with the intellect. The sensing faculty is passive and useless without the faculty for PRODUCING IDEAS (Meditations 2:55).

NOW unlike in his earlier thought judgements are performed by the will, rather than by the understanding, which is now viewed as passive.

The Will in Descartes later thought is related to Descartes' more developed view of thinking itself. The result of this will be that thinking will increasingly, by Descartes, be seen as a form of willing, and therefore as human production. Intuition, a key concept in Descartes earlier work, is replaced by willing. Then how does the cogito fit in as THE key concept of Descartes thinking? Descartes 'discovery' of the cogito in the Meditations must be viewed rather as Descartes necessary basis for human willing (not thinking) as a project of certainty. This is related to a way of thinking about Cartesian doubt in a way which differs from the traditional accounts. Cartesian doubt is NOT dissolved by the proposition cogito ergo sum. Doubt is an ever present necessity of the search for certainty:

"Every cogitare is essentially a dubitare...representing is a securing. Thinking, which is essentially deliberating, accepts nothing as secured and certain — that is as true — which is not proven before thinking itself to be the sort of thing that has the character of the doubtless (Heidegger, 1961)

Doubt, in the Descartes of the Meditations is an aspect of willing; as long as Descartes is doubting, then his will is powerful and can be used in the service, not of understanding the world, but in recreating the world in such a fashion that it can be manipulated in the interest of controlling nature. "The will as doubt seeks its own negation in science in order to reconstitute itself in a higher and more powerful form for the conquest of the world. Science and understanding ... become mere tools of the will (Gillespie, p43) ... the will in this way asserts its total freedom from God and his creation." Essentially, the world itself is rejected so that it can be reconstituted as representation in the cogito. In this way Descartes gives to humanity a power greater than even God — the power to destroy as well as to create. But in so doing Descartes' legacy of such total freedom is really a nihilistic one — it is the legacy of the freedom of the void!

This is the point at which we are left in the second meditation. All deception has been supposedly shattered, but at the same time the world itself has been lost or shattered. Descartes acknowledges the danger of the situation. It is at this point that the ego cogito ergo sum emerges — not as a syllogism nor as an intuition but as an act of will. Descartes himself characterizes the statement of the cogito in the Discourse as an act of will. Earlier as he is formulating the statement he calls it a "necessary conclusion." (Meditation # 2). It is not a statement of logic but a "self grounding, self-validating act of the will". (Gillespie, p46). We have seen above methodical doubt as a motor of will. As long as doubting is taking place, FREEDOM IS CREATED FROM

DECEPTION AND ERROR. BUT THIS FREEDOM IS CREATED ONLY BY A NEGATION OF BOTH GOD AND THE WORLD. BUT AT THE HEART OF THE COGITO ERGO SUM IS THE IDEA THAT IN MAKING THIS STATEMENT THE WILL CANNOT DOUBT ITSELF, BECAUSE SUCH A NEGATION WOULD IN FACT REALLY BE A SELF AFFIRMATION. THUS ONLY THE ACT OF WILL IMPLICIT IN THE COGITO, OR RATHER IN ITS SELF GROUNDING DECLARATION is invulnerable to deception because it only could be reborn from its own ashes.

The cogito then is Descartes redefinition of thinking as an extreme of self grounding, self-referring reflexivity. As I have mentioned above, for the ancients thinking consisted in repeating in oneself the actual connections between things in the world. But in Descartes there are no such immediate connections with the world because these would not be connections of certitude. It must be understood, as Heidegger reiterates, that for Descartes thinking IS certitude, not approximation. The world, for Descartes does not present itself as truth or certitude. The world then must be transformed as symbolic or mathematical objects. Thus at the same time the world becomes *res extensa* and the mind becomes *res cogitans*. The mind creates itself as *res cogitans*, as thinking substance, in the self reflexive act by which it creates the world as *res extensa*. These acts are co-substantial or co-extensive.

Thus the mind which Descartes discovers is the mind of representational thinking, the mind of certitude; there is no mind of uncertainty, because such would not be mind. Mind is certitude in representation. "What is new in the definition of the essence of truth consists in the fact that truth is now certitude, which becomes clear to us only in connection with Descartes guiding principle" (Heidegger, 1961). Descartes guiding principle is *cogito me cogitare*. *Cogitare* means not merely thinking as we know the word: "And thus not only are knowing, willing, and imagining but also sensing, the same as what we call *cogitare*" (Principles of Philosophy, quoted by Heidegger, 1961).

In this respect Descartes often substitutes for *cogitare* the word *percipere*, to take possession of a thing, to seize something. *Cogitare* must be meant then in its most active, not contemplative sense, as a taking hold of a securement. That every *cogitare* is essentially a *dubitare* says nothing other than this representing is a securement (Heidegger, 1961).

By securement Heidegger means that consciousness as certainty is self-consciousness-the consciousness of things cannot be separated from self-consciousness. The implications of this theory of consciousness is that the self recreates the world so that it is always in its very being MY

world (Gillespie, 1996). In this sense all thinking is 'poesis' poetic a formative willing of the world. The object is in a sense lost in the subject, abstracted from its natural surroundings and established in an artificial realm of the self's devising (Gillespie, 1996). The will takes possession of the world on the most fundamental level by recreating it so that it is always an aspect of the subject. The self becomes the essential ground for the representation of the world.

Conclusion: Absolute Transcendence and the Abandonment of Finitude

In the introduction to this chapter, I have tried to describe philosophy as a 'mediate' language which exists as the words of reason which fend off nihilism in the form of 'hermeneutics' or absolute relativity (here I am using the word hermeneutics in the pejorative and unqualified sense — "there are no facts, only interpretations") on the one hand, and nihilism as absolute truth or 'metaphysics' (again meant in an absolute sense) on the other hand. In the 'absolute' sense that I am using these words, hermeneutics is a good descriptor of the interpretational conflicts and confusions which occur 'inside' the cave. Metaphysics, I suggest, is a good, descriptor of the 'idea of the good' which occurs 'outside' of the cave. The conversation between Socrates and Glaucon is the mediate language which binds and modifies these two extremes. This is the real action of *The Republic*: speech itself. Speech indeed, for any post-Homeric culture in which the glorious deeds of war are replaced by the peaceful negotiation of opinion, is the most important form of action (Taylor, 1989; Arendt, 1954).

This speech, as *The Republic* shows, will always veer either towards 'hermeneutics' or towards 'metaphysics', towards finitude or towards transcendence. Descartes, I would suggest, by embracing a real absolute (not meant here as an exaggeration) of transcendence, reduces speech to silence by transforming philosophy from the 'approximate' speech of antiquity and medieval scholasticism, to the exacting speech of a philosophy in the form of mathematics and Galilean physics. Philosophy, for Descartes, is now no longer related to wisdom, phronesis, or prudence, nor is it motivated by wonder or awe, called by the ancients the *arche*, or guiding principle. Rather, with Descartes, philosophy wishes to become the ground, or guiding principle for science, for episteme, for knowledge which can be deduced and demonstrated, and thus as Rorty points out, the foundational discipline for all further thought.

With Descartes, speech is reduced to silence in the interest of the absoluteness of the certainty of mathematics. Reason itself, then, is redefined as identical with or modelled after the

paradigm of mathematical reasoning (Rosen, 1969, *Nihilism, A Philosophical Essay*). This leaves reason with no way to account for itself; mathematical symbols, as we know, are 'value free'. With the beginnings in Descartes, of the use of the paradigm of mathematical reasoning as the ultimate kind of reason, values and valuation are relegated to a cultural fuzziness which must take a back seat to the precision and efficacy (for the manipulation and prediction of 'nature' now seen as 'matter') of mathematics and physics.

This is what Nietzsche viewed as leading to the selflessness of the scientific world view, the omega-scientists for whom truth was measured in a test tube; this also led Nietzsche to stress the importance of valuing and valuation, seeing that each 'world view', including the scientific, had behind it its own implicit valuations, and its own perhaps even less explicit concept of personhood.

This form of mathematical reasoning is discussed, in the allegory of the cave, as part of the 'longer way', the mathematical training of the guardians. But unlike Descartes, Plato never ignores the finite immanent, and existential-authentic starting points of philosophy, i.e. opinion and subjectivity as historically conditioned platforms from which philosophy must, at least begin. Descartes, in creating the cogito as substance, in order to find certainty of an absolute sense in its 'cogitations', creates the self as an abstraction, universal, and specially and temporally abstracted. Descartes must invoke for his cogito a scholastic notion — that of substance — in order to create the Archimedian point from which the world of nature could be conquered. In doing so, Descartes renounced all notions of worldly immanence, of finitude, of human context, to create the disengaged (Taylor, 1989) and unencumbered self that was to become the paradigm, not only of the 'objective', 'scientific' person, but of the liberal- rational self, as well.

It is against such notions of self, substance and mind, that Nietzsche will argue, over 200 years later. How these notions were kept alive particularly in the thought of Kant is not within the purview of this essay. In the next chapter, I will discuss Nietzsche's 'deconstruction' of these concepts. Basically, Nietzsche will argue that these concepts keep alive the notion of 'Being' that had begun with Plato, only a notion of 'Being' now used in the interest of 'efficient' causality. I will argue particularly that Nietzsche does not argue against ALL forms of causality, ALL forms of self. Rather he views causality, substance, and self as hypotheses which have their place in philosophy. For example Nietzsche will call in *Beyond Good and Evil*, concepts of the soul, the 'soul hypothesis' (Schacht, 1983), and view it as having some currency. Thus I will argue that Nietzsche's

philosophy cannot be reduced to a critique in which all notions of 'metaphysics' or ontology disappear in the interest of 'hermeneutics', 'linguistic analysis', or 'contingency'.

Nevertheless Descartes notions of self, substance and causality are major targets of Nietzsche in his critique of the metaphysical tradition. These notions, Nietzsche will find to be remnants of the doctrine of 'Being' transformed into the new scientific categories. In his attack on Plato-Platonism and Christianity Nietzsche is attacking the metaphysical tradition as well as the religious tradition which Nietzsche sees as evolving, using the notion of the Platonic Forms, out of the religious tradition. Nietzsche's attack on the Descartes-Kant tradition, particularly the attack on the categories of substance, causality, and self are an attack on the scientific tradition. But it is important to note that Nietzsche's attack on western science and its categories is continuous with his critique of religion-metaphysics — what Heidegger calls the onto-theological tradition. Nietzsche's critique is in fact designed to show this continuity and ultimately to reveal the immanent cultural categories which construct the scientific project of western science. In this way Nietzsche undermines the so called universality of science and therefore any notions of progress which result directly from the notions of objectivity and universality.

Nietzsche thus exposes science as a cultural product which has its own historicity and which is subject to the same contingencies as any 'discipline' of thought. After Nietzsche, (although one of Nietzsche's greatest enemies, Hegel, can take much credit), the history of science was to become increasingly important for the self understanding of the 'west'.

CHAPTER FIVE

Nietzsche's Anti-Cartesianism

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss Nietzsche's attack on epistemology, much of which is an attack on Descartes. This cannot be separated from his anti-metaphysics discussed in chapter 3. Nietzsche engages in a "subversion of categories and identities" (Haar, 1989) which is relevant to both. For example, the philosophic category "substance" is important to both the classical tradition and Descartes, or the modernist. Insofar as Nietzsche undermines the scientific-tradition, particularly by undermining three key scientific categories, those of substance, causality, and objectivity, all solidified in Aristotle, and resolidified in Descartes, Nietzsche can be seen to be an anti-epistemologist and anti-Cartesian. Furthermore, in the undermining of these categories Nietzsche undermines the concepts of reason and 'mind' which have depended on those categories. In doing so he undermines the modern scientific project itself.

"There is no immaculate knowledge," says Nietzsche in his chapter in *Zarathustra* entitled "On Immaculate Perception". Nietzsche attacks the myth of a

pure objective knowledge that can hover over reality without being implicated in it, that could without prejudice, or point of view, be the faithful mirror of reality .. the illusion peculiar to knowledge i.e. the illusion of objectivity, consists in imagining that it is possible to penetrate the essence of things, right down to its inmost recesses, while merely reflecting it.

Thus Nietzsche attacks what I have called the orthodox tradition of philosophy, the idea of an atemporal, non-spatial, structure of thought, that at the same time structures or governs human thought. In this attack Nietzsche attempts to rid philosophy of the last vestiges of religious thought that have clung to it ever since Plato transformed Homeric 'religion' into philosophy, a transformation that was necessarily incomplete and had to be completed by Descartes, Francis Bacon, Copernicus, and Galileo.

"Since the rise of modern science, whose spirit is expressed in the Cartesian philosophy of doubt and mistrust, the conceptual framework of the tradition has not been secure. The dichotomy between contemplation and action is broken" (Arendt, 1954). Cartesian 'extremism' can be described as an attempt to break with the thesis that had guided the orthodox tradition of philosophy

since the Presocratics - the Parmenidean thesis of the identity of thought and Being. In the skeptical unorthodox tradition of sophism, or in the Heraclitian school of the Presocratics, or in Greek philosophy in general, the undermining exists within a framework and cosmology in which nature presides as a continuity over the actions and deeds of persons which are viewed as fleeting moments within the context of an all powerful and continuing "nature" (Arendt, 1956). It is only with Plato that there are the intimations that thought could be divorced from nature, or sensuous reality. With Descartes, this divorce is made complete. Thought and action, no longer reside within the same domain. With this extremist separation of mind and matter modernity begins (Rosen, 1989). Theory or philosophy is no longer a "system of reasonably connected truths, which had not been made but given to the senses. Rather it became the modern scientific theory, which is a working hypothesis, changing in accordance with the results it produces and depending for its validity not on what it 'reveals', but on whether it 'works' (Arendt, 1956).

Nietzsche's concern is not to return theory to its former status, but to restore 'appearance' and thus the world--to overcome the 'world alienation' (Arendt, 1956) that had resulted from the withdrawal from the world implicit in the scientific outlook and in Cartesian-Kantian epistemology. In order to fulfil this task, Nietzsche places reason in the service of critique, and particularly a critique of the philosophic categories which Nietzsche believes have led to the predicament of what Arendt calls "world alienation." Of paramount importance in this endeavour is the critique of the categories essential to scientific epistemology — the categories of substance, causality, and objectivity.

Nietzsche's Subversion of Categories

"At the founding moment of modern philosophy, Descartes reaffirms the centrality of substance" (Copleston, 1954). He defines it, first, as that in which properties inhere, although it can itself only be known by these properties: 'for by means of our natural light we know that a real attribute cannot be an attribute of nothing.' In a second definition, he states that the notion of substance is just this — that which can exist by itself, without the aid of any other substance" (Poellner, 1995).

In its most general sense, since Aristotle, substance has been taken to be the constant, underlying unchanging substrata of any object. With Descartes the concept of substance came to be applied to the human subject itself. The fact that one could ascribe one's various mental states to

oneself gives rise to the notion of a mental substance, or later the Kantian transcendental subject, distinct from them and causing some of these states (Poellner, 1995). In this way, Descartes initiated what may be called a "science of the self" which views the self in terms of materialist science, excluding more traditional notions such as soul or psyche. Nietzsche attempts to unfreeze this static notion of both self and of substance.

Nietzsche, in line with his argument against "two worlds" in his critique of Platonism and Christianity, argues against the notion of the dual nature of objects. For Nietzsche, both Locke's notion that objects have primary and secondary qualities, and Kant's notion of the noumenal and phenomenal, are erroneous results of the misguided dualisms of Plato, Aristotle and Descartes. It is one of the interesting ironies of the history of ideas, that Descartes, who was instrumental in freeing matter for the "objective" examination of science, also was one of the founders of modern physics, which in its post Heisenberg phase, has shown the impossibility of objectivity. (and therefore the impossibility of positing objective worlds). "Whenever persons try to learn about things which neither are themselves, nor owe their existence to them, they will eventually encounter nothing but themselves, their own constructions, and their own pattern of actions." (Heisenberg, 1956, *Das Naturbild der heutigen Physik*, Hamburg, 1956). Is this not the revenge of the Myth of Narcissus on modern science's pretensions to objectivity and also justification for Nietzsche's notion of the need for myth and his disavowal of the purity of philosophy?

Nietzsche uses the new language of the burgeoning natural sciences of the 19th century to undermine the notion of substance. As John McGowan points out in *Postmodernism and its Critics*, if there is a basic or fundamental term in Nietzsche, it is "instinct or drive". Perhaps more correct is Deleuze's interpretation of the basic 'unit' in Nietzsche's philosophy as "force". Nietzsche seems to use these three words more or less interchangeably: instinct, drive, and force (Deleuze, 1962, McGowan, 1989):

A quantum of force is just such a quantum of drive, will, efficacy — rather it is nothing but this driving, willing, effecting itself, and only under the seduction of language which understands and misunderstands all effecting as conditioned by something that effects, ... there is no such substratum; there is no 'being' behind the doing, effecting, becoming; the doer is only superinvented to the doing. Basically, ordinary people duplicate the doing when they speak of lightening that flashes; this is a doing — doing:...the natural scientists are no better when they say 'force moves, force causes, and such like. (GM, 1887, I.13).

Here, Nietzsche touches on some of the most important motifs concerning the 'deconstruction' of substance, including the role of language in the creation of 'self', and the reversal of the traditional notion of cause and effect. As the quote indicates, for Nietzsche, there is no way in which an object or thing can be defined other than in the manner in which it affects us. A 'thing' has no qualities which may be abstracted from it which allow us to think of it as having an underlying substratum. A 'thing' IS nothing other than what it is as presented to a subject. Thus both thing and subject must be defined by their mutual interdependence. When we abstract 'qualities' from a thing, there is no remainder. We can have no experience of a substratum underlying these qualities.

The notion substance has "been called upon to explain how, given the relative and variable character of an object's qualities as they appear to different observers, it can nevertheless be said to exist in some sense 'in itself, ... that is independent of a perceiving or conceiving subject' (Honderich, 1995, Poellner, 1995). The concept substance, used to affirm objectivity, traverses the wide terrain from Aristotle to Descartes, through to Locke and Kant. With Descartes, the cogito itself is defined as substance as a result of Descartes 'discovery' of its necessity as an Archimedian centre. But the Cartesian cogito is viewed by Nietzsche as a RESULT of the rules of logic, not their cause or origin as Descartes would have us believe:

The subject is not something given, it is something added and invented and projected behind what there is — finally, is it necessary to posit an interpreter behind the interpretation? Even this is invention, hypothesis (Beyond Good and Evil, Sec. 1).

The self or soul, for Nietzsche, is not something that can in any way be regarded as an entity or substance which is 'given.' However Nietzsche does not rule out the notion of an empirical self which is the "result of occurrences which are mostly unconscious" (Poellner, 1995). The non-substantial is related to language, which for Nietzsche, is a "symptom of the will to power" (Haar, 1996). The subject, from the viewpoint of the will to power is the multiplicity of physical and psychological forces, a "multiplicity that built an imaginary unity for itself" (Haar, 1996). These highly provocative remarks are really, I believe, Nietzsche's attempt to reintroduce a worldliness, an immanence, which is lacking, in modernity, in the orthodox tradition from Descartes to Kant.

As I attempt to point out in chapter nine, the concepts 'self' or 'soul,' for Nietzsche, are indicators of the way our knowledge has remained pious. One of Nietzsche's greatest accomplishments, as Gilles Deleuze points out in *Nietzsche and Philosophy* is to have freed the 'concept' from its pious univocal origins, so that it can take its place as signalling a plurality of

meanings. Concepts, for Nietzsche, have functioned in an essentially reactionary fashion, because those with the power to define also have the power to exclude. From this perspective all identities, though necessary and functional, are also masks and dissimulations which 'freeze' or reify 'something' unnameable. Descartes created a concept of identity which is static, universal, and univocal. It is a concept of identity which is 'difference blind' because it is derived from a concept of reason as universal and necessary. For Nietzsche, Descartes "I think, therefore I am" is a RESULT of Descartes effort to define truth according to laws of logic and ultimately, mathematical reasoning. Descartes reasoning, his use of logic precedes and defines the Cartesian cogito (Haar, 1996).

From these observations I want to put forth a preliminary discussion of 'will' which will inform the last chapter of this thesis. First of all, the 'will' of Will to Power is NOT a subjective psychological force, desiring, as its object, power in worldly form. Rather the term will to power is meant to totally subvert this notion of the traditional metaphysical concept of the will. Once this is seen it can be understood that by 'power' is meant anything that is NOT held sway by the traditional notion of will as a subjective entity. Power gains its meaning from the diffusion and breaking apart of the metaphysical notion of will as either metaphysical entity (i.e. as an aspect of 'self'), or as a faculty of the subject, both notions conferring on will the source of our actions, a source which is viewed as an identity (Haar, 1996). Nietzsche affirms that 'there is no such thing as will' (WP 46) at least as it has been traditionally thought. The will is a derivation; it is a result, not a cause, and what it is a result of cannot be designated except as desire, eros, energy, Dionysus, etc., in other words a plurality or complexity of meanings.

I attempt to show that Nietzsche is both within and somewhat outside of the orthodox tradition. By this I mean that Nietzsche's subversion of categories of substance, self, and will, are meant to undermine philosophic orthodoxy; but the notion of removing or deconstructing the self is actually an essential feature of the orthodox tradition of philosophy-science-religion (which are not fully differentiated until the 18th century). Objectivity, the desire to have an unclouded 'vision' of 'reality' of a structure that is existent apart from human perception, always involves the extinction of the self. As Arendt puts it "objectivity...or the "extinction of the self" is the condition of 'pure vision' (Arendt, 1941). The 'extinction of the self' is partly a result of the epistemological tradition from Descartes onwards; objectivity in its pure form requires such extinction; the myth of objectivity

requires that the very human process of 'inquiry,' in Dewey's terms be removed or evaded so that objective truth can shine forth without the intrusion of human fallibility.

Yet this account finds Nietzsche caught in a contradiction. He must undermine the notion of self, yet in doing so he does not have the language to describe the type of self which he advocates. He must use categories such as 'will' which become ambivalent categories which drag Nietzsche back to the metaphysical tradition. In the last chapter of this thesis I attempt to read 'will to power' in a manner which respects Nietzsche's attempt to free categories from their pious origins, from the idea that "behind the will to truth lay the belief that truth is ultimately something rational, eternal, divine, in short, that 'God is Truth' (Morgan, 1941).

To summarize, Nietzsche takes exception to two notions which begin with Descartes in a radical way, that first, all truths are essentially rational and second that there is 'mind' which can be conceived as 'thinking substance' which is an entity, or subject, that is, which can be conceived as separate from 'life', Nietzsche's terms for the inseparability of organism and environment. Nietzsche attempts to undermine this form of solipsism, which resulted from conceiving 'mind' as substance.

Descartes problem was to integrate the mechanistic physics of Galileo with a theory of mind as non-deterministic. This was his problem because of his avowed aim to conquer nature on behalf of mankind. How could nature be conquered if 'mind' were merely part of the mechanistic system of Galilean mechanical forces. Thus Descartes was forced to confront one of philosophy's perennial problems, that of freedom, or freedom from determinism — specifically the determinism of Galilean physics. Descartes solution was to define 'mind' as thinking substance, where substance means, in effect 'soul' or 'self' a constant unchanging underlying substratum, and where thinking means mathematical thought. In this way the mechanistic certitude of Galilean physics is somehow 'inside' the mind, (when the mind is conceived as thought) and at the same time controlled by the mind (when the mind is conceived as substance). This is Descartes solution-mind as an amalgam of soul stuff and thought stuff, wherein the soul stuff maintains its privacy, independence, and autonomy, from the mechanistic certainty of mathematics-physics.

According to this interpretation, then, it is not exactly correct to say that the problem resulting from Descartes 'solution' is the problem of the separation of mind and matter. More properly it is the problem of solipsism, which is very similar but slightly different. Descartes splits

the mind into two sections, so that the mind determines reality by 'judging' its own contents, using mathematical logic to weigh the contents of intuition. Subjectivity, in Descartes early writings defined as 'judgement', later and increasingly is defined as 'will'.

Nietzsche, is correct then, in launching an attack on causality, on mechanism, and on self 'in the same breath'. Both mind as separate entity and logical reasoning as leading to the truth of consciousness, are equally fallacious, but united in Descartes. This is described by Nietzsche by an assertion in *Beyond Good and Evil*: "our faith in causality itself is at bottom our belief in the causality of the will."

Nietzsche's Attack on Mechanism and Self

The mechanistic thesis of late 19th century science is that "the world is a collection of matter in motion — a world consisting of material units, which have certain properties, are possessed of varying and perhaps also changing amounts and kinds of force, impinge upon and affect each other causally and thus produce effects upon and are modified by each other in accordance with immutable laws" (Schacht, 1983). Nietzsche prefaces his attack on this theory with the assertions that of all the interpretations of the world hitherto, the mechanistic one seems today to stand victorious in the foreground and "mechanistic theory must be considered an imperfect and merely provisional hypothesis."

Descartes takes over the mechanistic thesis but adds the precision of mathematics, thinking that 'matter in motion' can be perfectly quantifiable and calculable, and that therefore nature can be made perfectly transparent to the new calculus. But Nietzsche warns, taking over a thesis from Vico, "it is we who establish the mathematical concepts in terms of which the events we experience become quantifiable and calculable; it is in the requirements of our thought, rather than in the nature of reality, that the principles of logic and the categories of reason have their origin" (Schacht, 1983). In *The Will to Power* Nietzsche observes:

Things do not behave regularly, according to a rule; there are no things (they are fictitious, invented by us; they behave just as little under the constraint of necessity (WP 634).

For Nietzsche, then, what we call knowledge has very much to do with the necessity to translate the invisible, the process, into the 'thing', the invisible into the visible, the incommunicable into the communicable. " Man wants to arrange all events as accessible to sight and touch" (WP

640). But this 'arranging', has little or nothing to do with the 'will' or ego, as Descartes envisioned 'it'. Rather it is a process which takes place unconsciously, a creative act which has been necessary for the practical purpose of living. Life is thus for Nietzsche based on the illusion that there are things, substances, (discreet objects), and univocal meanings; these allow us to pursue practical ends without being swamped by innumerable stimulæ, innumerable interpretations — to forge personæ; identities which are necessary in society but which are basically illusory. The self which we think we have is really composed of innumerable selves. "We are a multiplicity that built an imaginary unity for itself" (Haar, 1993).

The 'imaginary unity' is the self or ego considered as 'logical essence' (Haar, 1993). The 'ego' in order to qualify as 'foundational', as substance, or unchanging, must be thought of as logical essence; it must be thought as ESSENTIALLY connected with unchanging, immutable 'laws' such as causality, category, and mechanistic atomism, the 'laws' of science, which for Descartes are the laws of reason itself. Therefore in Descartes, "the self or ego is restricted to and identified with reason" only, for Nietzsche an extreme narrowing down of something diffuse, and in fact, mostly unconscious. "I am therefore precisely only a thing that thinks: that is, a mind, or soul, or intellect, or reason" (Descartes, Discourse on method — Cress p63).

To SUMMARIZE, for Descartes, when perceiving what we call physical objects, we actually perceive 'ideas' residing non-spatially in an extensionless 'mind' or 'thinking substance'. This non-spatiality, extensionlessness is what constitutes the logical essence of the ego, or self. For Nietzsche this constitutes an idealist fallacy. There is no constancy behind the self of perception; neither are there 'things' which are constant. Both are illusions required for description, for communication, and for practicality, but they are not 'metaphysical' explanations. Descartes' theory of representation does not describe 'Being', but is a necessary fixation of 'becoming', a necessary illusion, hiding an infinity of perspectives.

CHAPTER SIX

The Weight of the Past and the Ascetic Ideal

In this chapter I traverse a very wide spectrum of Nietzsche's thought in order to show first how Nietzsche makes the transition from critique to genealogy or his particular way of viewing history; then I show how the ascetic ideal prevents the truths which Nietzsche begins to expose in *The Use and Abuse of History* from coming to light. I first attempt to show that Nietzsche does not turn from his anti-Platonism to a different more effective epistemology, but rather sets himself the task of a complex historical analysis.

One could summarize Nietzsche's anti-Platonism and anti-modernism with respect to nihilism in the following way:

First of all, there is no 'ground' called Being from which laws or social order can be derived. "One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a 'true' world. Briefly: the categories 'aim, "unity", "being" which we used to project some value into the world--we PULL OUT again; so the world looks valueless"(WP 12). Secondly, if we are left with 'becoming', that also 'becoming' aims at no goal, at no grand unity. Given the above premises 'one escape remains: to condemn the whole world of becoming and to invent a world that would lie beyond it as the true world'. Finally when one realizes that this 'true' world is fabricated solely out of psychological needs a shock ensues. Becoming is now the only 'true' reality "but one cannot endure this world which, however, one does not want to deny" (WP12). Now the world SEEMS valueless. But this, Nietzsche points out is an illusion created by the overall interpretive power of Platonism- Christianity which has left us bereft of other quite feasible interpretations of the world.

It may seem that after this realization of the decline of 'Being' as a viable concept, that Nietzsche will espouse an alternate epistemology based on an alternate cosmology, a more 'correct' cosmology. Nietzsche's alternate cosmology is often called 'chaos' or designated as the idea that for Nietzsche, the cosmos has no structure. For Nietzsche, this is sometimes designated by the notion of chaos, or alternately the Dionysian. For example Mark Warren, in *Nietzsche and Political Thought*, states that Nietzsche describes the Dionysian as the basic ground of the world". This may be true, for Nietzsche, for example, does something close to this in *The Tragic Age of the Greeks*. But Nietzsche's critique of Kant's notion of the thing in itself, as well as his critique of Platonic

Forms and the notion of Being, suggest that Nietzsche does NOT think that we can decide to what extent the world has a structure or not and therefore that Nietzsche's so called theory of perspectivalism is not based upon 'chaos' as a cosmology, but rather that chaos is the name for Nietzsche's unwillingness to designate a cosmology. Nietzsche wishes to give up entirely, I think, the traditional philosophic quest to have a grounding for our interpretations of the world. Accordingly, then, Nietzsche is not an 'anti-foundationalist' for this would designate an alternate epistemology rather than the proper diffidence towards epistemological problems in the first place.

It is important to make this clear because it seems that Haar, Warren and other writers take "the Dionysian" too literally as designating a structure despite Nietzsche's continual insistence against any possibility of a literal designation of such. Nietzsche states in *Beyond Good and Evil* 21:

One should use 'cause' and 'effect' only as pure concepts, that is to say as conventional fictions for the purpose of designations and communications — NOT for explanations.

Section 22 states:

'nature's conformity to law' of which you physicists talk so proudly as though — exists only owing to your interpretation and bad 'philology' it is no matter of fact, no 'text' but rather only a naively humanitarian emendation and perversion of meaning with which you make abundant concessions to the democratic instincts of the modern soul!

It should be clear from these statements as well as many others how thoroughly Nietzsche undermines any kind of correspondence theory of truth, that he does not designate any straight forward cosmology when he states that the world is will to power, for example; that he offers a description which he would view as one of many; and finally that his use of language therefore must not hold to a strict boundary between figurative and literal.

Another misunderstanding similar to the one above seems to follow from a misunderstanding of Proposition Six, in *Twilight of the Idols*, the last proposition of the section titled "How the Real World at Last Became a Fable - The History of an Error:

We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps?
... But no! WITH THE REAL WORLD WE HAVE ABOLISHED THE
APPARENT WORLD ... INCIPIIT ZARATHUSTRA

It seems that this aphorism has been misunderstood by those commentators (Rosen is amongst them) who think that the lack of a coherent metaphysical or epistemological position necessarily results in the meaninglessness of ANYTHING we then say about the world. While I am unsure if this is the intention of these commentators (it seems that it MUST be if they take metaphysics seriously) I am quite certain that in the above aphorism Nietzsche does NOT mean to say that the world, that is the material, physical, and symbolic world in which we live is now meaningless because of the decline of the notion of 'Being'. It certainly means that metaphysics has CONTRIBUTED to a certain meaninglessness. But I think that what Nietzsche is saying is that an awareness of the history of Being, which is the very history which Nietzsche is outlining in *How the Real World at Last Became a Fable* (this is the history of what I call the orthodox tradition) yields the following understanding: with the abolition of the idea of a "true world" apart from the actual world, the actual world ceases to SEEM merely to be an apparent world, and comes to be recognized as reality; for it was only by contrast to the fictitious other world that was regarded as the "true world" that the actual world was taken to be merely apparent.

It may be that, as Nietzsche says, that "the untenebility of one interpretation of the world (that is Platonism-Christianity) upon which a tremendous amount of energy has been lavished, awakens the suspicion that ALL interpretations are false" (WP 1). But this, note, is only a 'suspicion', or a temporary reaction. It is a recent and 'logical' result of what Nietzsche has called, a little jokingly, the 'monotono-theism' of philosophers (TI 1) — obsessive focussing on the Platonic tradition. In fact it is a misunderstanding, I think, by those commentators such as Danto and Rosen who claim that Nietzsche is a nihilist, to think that Nietzsche means here that 'all interpretations of the world must now be seen to be false'. Rather it is just the opposite, and here I side with Deleuze, that Nietzsche now means that a new plurality of interpretations are now open; now that the world need not be seen as 'apparent' as compared to the 'Real', the world in its fullness of meanings can now be grasped in a new way and for the first time!

That Nietzsche does not feel the need for either epistemological or metaphysical frameworks (at least ones that are seen as certain) is evident here:

... a metaphysical world could exist; the absolute possibility of it can hardly be disputed ... but one can do absolutely nothing with it — for one could assert nothing whatever about it except that it was a being-other, an inaccessible, incomprehensible being other; it would be a thing with negative qualities - even if the existence of such a world were never so well proved, it would be the most useless of all forms of

knowledge: even more useless than knowledge of the chemical composition of water is to a sailor in danger of shipwreck (HAH 9).

It could be asserted, and this is Heidegger's assertion, that Nietzsche IS a metaphysician in his avowal of the 'will to power' is of an ultimate reality. In fact Nietzsche does assert that "the world is the will to power and nothing else but the will to power". What I contest, and I discuss this in following chapters is that the will to power can be construed as a metaphysical doctrine along the lines in which metaphysics has previously been thought. In this chapter I want to stress that Nietzsche disavows (at least) Platonic-Christian metaphysics and sets himself the task of understanding the effects (i.e. nihilism) of that metaphysics and that this necessarily brings upon Nietzsche 'The Heaviest Burden' (JW 5) that is the full weight of history—the eternal recurrence. Nietzsche sets himself the difficult task of both validating past beliefs while at the same time seeing them as errors, as illusions. The eternal return is, let us say, a 'formula', for the undertaking of this task. Why is this task so difficult? Why is historical understanding itself so problematic from Nietzsche's viewpoint. How is the eternal return an answer to this problem.

In *The Use and Abuse of History* and in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, Nietzsche sets for himself the task of understanding the manner in which both metaphysics and history have conspired to force knowledge along lines which are ultimately nihilistic, which express, what Zarathustra calls, in the fragment entitled Redemption 'the spirit of revenge':

Verily, a great folly dwelleth in our Will; and it became a curse unto all humanity, that this folly acquired spirit! The spirit of revenge: my friends that hath hitherto been man's best contemplation; and where there was suffering, it was claimed there was always penalty ... "Penalty", so-called itself revenge. With a lying word it feigneth a good conscience ... And because in the willer himself there is suffering, because he cannot will backwards — thus was willing itself, and all life, claimed — to be penalty! (TSZ XLII).

And Nietzsche's answer to this imprisonment in 'penalty', in the bad conscience which denigrates life? Again from Zarathustra:

To redeem what is past and to transform every "it was" into "thus would I have it!" — that only do I call redemption! (TSZ XLII).

Here Nietzsche sets himself the task of 'refiguring' history in a manner which overcomes the spirit of revenge, a way which sees history and the past, including our individual pasts, full of error and folly as they are, as ultimately sacred. But first Nietzsche, must come to terms with the weight

of history, with the deadweight of inherited and unconscious custom, with 'morality' which he views as always preceded by compulsion: "morality is always preceded by compulsion, indeed it is for a time itself still compulsion to which one accommodates oneself for the avoidance of what one regards as unpleasurable" (HAH 53).

In order to do so, Nietzsche first engages in a biting critique of the historiography of his time. First in *The Use and Abuse of History*, Nietzsche criticises the historians of his time for an accumulation of merely neutral facts "an enormous heap of indigestible knowledge stones that occasionally rattle together in his body" (UAH 2). The study of history should serve 'life' should quicken the vitality of life. Secondly, the Marxist search for laws of history, for a science of history, hollows out the past and creates closure on the future by narrowing down the kaleidoscopic variety of history, much of it hidden from view, by engaging in the enormous presumption that a 'law' of history can be the organizing lens through which ALL of history can be understood.

Nietzsche attempts to escape this metaphysics of history which is still guided by teleology, still guided by the notion of God, or the ascetic ideal, the connection between truth and the 'good'. What is at stake, for Nietzsche, is a way in which the past can be constructively appropriated and incorporated into the present in a manner which promotes a 'philosophy of the future', rather than the 'spirit of revenge'. What is most dangerous for Nietzsche is the paralyzing effects of the habitual modes of thinking bequeathed by earlier generations.

That which we now call the world is the outcome of a host of errors and fantasies which have gradually arisen and grown entwined with one another in the course of the overall evolution of the organic being, and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past — as treasure: for the value of our humanity depends on it (HAH 20).

Our past consists of an inherited treasure, an inheritance which we cannot enjoy, which is discomfiting, not only because it is the outcome of 'errors and fantasies' but because, as an inheritance, it is an unconscious weight — that is until it can be made conscious, until we can bring to bear on it our plastic powers of creation, until we can make the 'treasure' in some way our own. Nietzsche here is requesting a connection with the past which can allow our actions to be authentic or moral as a thought out, conscious response to present circumstances rather than the stock response, which, because of the weight of our inherited past, is merely reflexive, reactive: "To be moral, to act in accordance with custom, to be ethical means to practise obedience toward a law or

tradition established from old" (HAH 51). Here is nihilism in its passive form. Yet Nietzsche is not fooled that all the virulence of the reactive forces of the spirit of revenge may lurk around the corner of such 'passivity'.

But such recognition of the perils of 'morality' is a difficult recognition for it requires an understanding of the meaning of the death of God. This means that such recognition requires an understanding of the way in which our knowledge is moral knowledge. Our knowledge of the world is Platonic-Socratic-Christian knowledge. That is, our knowledge is based on implicit standards which judge the world from a position which SEEMS to be 'outside' of the world. Such knowledge always expresses philosophic dissatisfaction with life. But such knowledge and such nihilistic dissatisfaction is difficult to discern because it is connected to a notion of responsibility, to a 'morality', by which I mean the setting of standards which always involves an implicit devaluation of life. We are living within the paradoxes of 'morality' — that is we are living in the shadow of Platonism-Christianity. One way to view Nietzsche's notion of the 'death of God' is to see it as the opening to history, and particularly to a re-visioning of philosophy as the history of philosophy as a cultural product, as conditional rather than unconditional truth. As such the death of God, opens to a new awareness of history as an 'overcoming' of the finitude that is inscribed in metaphysical thinking. The death of God, then leads to a potentially infinite quest which "so far as it is science and not legislation...means only the broadest extension of the concept of history" (GM 15).

But 'death of God' for Nietzsche is a paradoxical idea in the following sense. As Nietzsche's awareness of the fact that Platonism-Christianity has run its course by exposing the illusions that are at its centre, the death of God means an opening to a new awareness, a hermeneutic opportunity for a new kind of openness, experimentation, free spiritedness, infinite search and questioning, the end of any sense of closure that had resulted from the sense of there being an absolute ground or foundation for thinking. At the same time, the idea of the death of God is essentially an historical insight and therefore the so called 'newness' of the insight imposes its own discipline--that is an historical discipline which requires the 'newness' of the insight to be modified, contextualized by the very historical insight of which it is a part. Thus the death of God is a concept which opens to the "horizon of the infinite" as aphorism 124 of *The Joyful Wisdom* is named. At the same time it is a concept which imposes its own (historical) discipline. Part of that discipline Nietzsche suggests, both in aphorism 125 and in aphorism 344, named "To What Extent We are Still Pious, of the

Joyful Wisdom, is to understand what may be called resistance to the infinite quest, a resistance which manifests in many ways and for many reasons. Most commonly Nietzsche uses the metaphor of the shadow. We exist in the shadow of Platonism- Christianity. It is a shadow which is seldom perceived as such, or more correctly, perceived as something which we can easily overcome.

The death of God which for Nietzsche is a hermeneutic opportunity for open seas and clear skies, is for the people of the marketplace of the madman scene of *The Joyful Wisdom* 125, an 'opportunity' only to display their resistance to the notion that the world as it is, is meaningful. Instead the people of the marketplace are guided by the notion of progress and particularly the idea that science has rendered all talk of God obsolete:

As there were many people standing about who did not believe in God he caused a great deal of amusement. Why! is he lost? said one. Has he strayed away like a child, said another. Or does he keep himself hidden? Is he afraid of us? Has he taken a sea voyage? Has he emigrated? — the people cried out laughingly all in a hubbub (JW 125).

Why do the people no longer believe in God? "We have killed him Nietzsche says, and now (echoing Pascal) we are straying through "infinite nothingness". In aphorism 123, Nietzsche tells us that the

good faith in science rests on the fact that the absolute inclination and impulse has so rarely revealed itself in it that science is regarded not as a passion but as a condition and an ethos (JW 123).

In other words science had become the public philosophy of the time and it is for this reason that the people of the marketplace of aphorism 125 no longer believe in God. But that is not to say that Nietzsche turns away from science. Science as public philosophy, (and not Nietzsche himself) have brought to light the deadly truths which he talks about in *The Use and Abuse of History*: the "sovereignty of becoming, the fluidity of all concepts types and kinds, and the lack of any cardinal difference between human and animal" (UAH 9). But the people of the marketplace do not grasp these truths and therefore do not grasp the full import of the science which they adopt almost unconsciously or as Nietzsche says, as an 'ethos'. Why is this a problem? Nietzsche is clear in the *Joyful Wisdom* and in the *Genealogy of Morals*, that science is guided by the ascetic ideal, ultimately by metaphysical truths which prevent the truths which Nietzsche wants to expose from being recognized.

There are two ways to define the ascetic ideal, one more philosophical, the other more psychological. Philosophically, if the above premises are correct, that is, if we cannot abide the world of the senses, of THIS LIFE which we know, without creating other worlds of 'BEING', then the ascetic ideal is the form of reasoning which always unites Being, or Truth, with the 'good' or the moral, thus denying the possible disclosure of other truths, related to the sensual world. As such the will to truth of the ascetic ideal is an unconditional one. This leads directly to the more psychological definition of the ascetic ideal; if the true world is the world of Being, then the ascetic ideal involves 'the belief that the best human life is one of self- denial, a life based on a hatred of the human, the animal, the senses, the body, in such a way that there is a negative valuation of human existence, of 'becoming' of the senses, and of history.

From the Genealogy of Morals:

That which constrains these men, however, this UNCONDITIONAL will to truth, is faith in the ascetic ideal itself, even as an unconscious imperative — don't be deceived about that — it is the faith in a METAPHYSICAL value, the absolute value of TRUTH, sanctioned and guaranteed by this ideal alone (it stands or falls with this ideal) (GM 24).

Also from The Genealogy:

...the ascetic ideal permits no other interpretations, no other goal, it rejects, denies, affirms solely from the point of view of its interpretation .. it submits to no power, it believes in its own dominance over every other power. (GM 23).

By naming and identifying the ascetic ideal as the impulse which guides metaphysical thinking, Nietzsche is able to show that, though we live in the 'shadow' of metaphysical thought, metaphysical thought is still very influential in the form of modern science. The ascetic ideal has guided philosophy towards a notion of 'science' which has split 'science' off from social practice, and from any kind of understandable notion of 'self-world'. In fact one could argue that the orthodox tradition of philosophy has abandoned the search for wisdom or justice in the service of 'purity', in favour of standards and practices which must be sufficiently independent of ones actual worldly practices of judgement to have the kind of objectivity and justificatory status that is required by science. Two examples are appropriate here. Descartes, as I have shown in Chapter Five, attempts to respond to Galilean physics while Kant attempts to 'protect' philosophy from

Newtonian physics. Kant, just to take his example, finally inscribes within philosophy, another purity, the 'thing in itself', a noumenal realm, which only protects philosophy from Newtonian physics by re-creating a religious realm in philosophy, and re-inscribing the ascetic ideal.

Though Nietzsche is VERY positive towards the scientific SPIRIT of enquiry, towards the 'free spirits' of scientific thought, Nietzsche is highly critical of science as it relates to the ascetic ideal; for science, as it relates to the ascetic ideal is still guided by 'morality' by metaphysical standards which implicitly denigrate the world. Note section 344, Book Five of the Joyful Wisdom:

Does not the discipline of the scientific spirit just commence when one no longer harbours any convictions? It is probably so: Only it remains to be asked whether IN ORDER THAT THIS DISCIPLINE MAY COMMENCE, it is not necessary that there should already be a conviction, and in fact one so imperative and absolute, that it makes a sacrifice of all other convictions. One sees that science also rests on a belief; there is no science at all without premises ... thus the question why is there science? leads back to the moral problem: WHAT IN GENERAL IS THE PURPOSE OF MORALITY, if life, nature and history are 'non moral'...THE BELIEF IN SCIENCE AFFIRMS THEREBY A WORLD OTHER THAN THAT OF LIFE, NATURE, AND HISTORY; AND INsofar AS IT AFFIRMS THIS 'OTHER WORLD,' WHAT? MUST HE NOT THEREBY — DENY ITS COUNTERPART, THIS WORLD OUR WORLD? (JW 344).

Nietzsche demands that 'science', and by this I mean science as an institution, become more aware of its social embeddedness and therefore its hermeneutic limitations. Science, as an institution, is for Nietzsche, essentially reactive, conservative, yet has unjustifiably, worn the mask of all progressive forces in society. How has this come about?

Asking this question is somewhat like asking how Plato has become Platonism, how the concept of 'Being' has come to dominate Platonism despite Plato's insistence on the importance of philosophy for political life — despite the novelty, in Plato, that the philosopher must return to the cave. In terms of the allegory of the cave it is like asking how the outside of the cave (the cave itself stands for the polis) has come to represent a higher truth which is seen as a morality, in the sense of setting a standard of judgement. Science, and truth as defined by science, from the time of say, Galilean physics, up until today (see chapter 5), has come to be seen as embodying ultimate truths related to the evolution, progress and ultimate success of humankind. In this sense, a sense which is difficult to accept for those who have become used to the notion of the death of God without understanding its implications, (or in other words those who believe in progress and overcoming) 'science' is motivated by the ascetic ideal, by the original metaphysical Platonism, which

understands the 'good' as the truth of 'Being.' Science has brought an end to history as a confirmation of the self satisfaction of those who are comfortable, (or do not notice?) the sea of nihilism in which they swim.

In terms of the allegory of the cave why has this been so? One answer is that Plato has drawn the allegory in such a fashion that he makes both dialectics and mathematical reasoning superior to opinion and conversation which take place inside the cave. I have made it clear in chapter two that I do not support this argument fully, because it nullifies the educational and developmental import of the allegory. The allegory is an educational device to teach the imperious and potentially tyrannical Glaucon about phronesis, prudence and moderation. (Mara, 1995). It pictures a movement from opinion to knowledge, a development that is necessary but which can never be pinned to any specific content such as mathematical reasoning. But the parable of the cave, read from the standpoint of the ascetic ideal, and after the long transformation in which Plato becomes incorporated by Christianity, DOES pin down knowledge as 'mathematics-science'. But it is clear that Plato himself problematizes not only the definition of knowledge as scientific knowledge, but its usefulness for political affairs, for the polis. Again, how does he do so?

At the end of the allegory of the cave is an important discussion between Glaucon and Socrates as to how the philosopher kings, once their "knowledge" (read knowledge as "science") is perfected can establish a society based on this science; we had already seen the confusions which result when the philosopher attempts to communicate his knowledge; in fact the philosopher's difference/ knowledge had resulted in the desire to kill him. Plato's answer given at 541a is that "all those in the city who happen to be older than ten, they will send out to the country, and taking over their children, they will rear them — far away from the dispositions they now have from their parents — in their own manners and laws that are such as we described before."

In other words, the community envisaged is based on a kind of purification and the formation of a boundary which will always be threatened by outside forces — a community without resiliency because it is not based on discussion, negotiation, on-going evaluations, or community consensus, but rather on a one-time technocratic decision regarding truth/goodness by philosophers who are now philosopher/priests. This exemplifies the ascetic ideal as action.

The movement from 'science-truth' to direct political involvement is what I called, in writing about the eugenics movement in Canada, in the 20's, 'political eugenics' (Gilbert, 1996).

But 'political eugenics' does not require a eugenics movement. It only requires the notion of 'cleaning up' of cleansing, of purification. This is the ploy of all right wing governments which want to institute social and bureaucratic reorganization essentially in the interest of the rich and the technocrats themselves. The new, the progressive, is the mask worn, using polls, testing of students (always in math and science but never in the arts), economic indicators which measure 'success' in terms of G.N.P. (while ignoring increasing poverty and misery), etc., to cover an essentially reactionary regime. An essentially reactionary science wears the mask of progressive forces under the ascetic ideal.

Plato, I think, is either prophetic in his warning, in the cave parable, about the connection between knowledge defined in absolutes and political tyranny (Bloom, 1968), or (if you believe Popper's version of Plato) blatantly advocates technocratic solutions. If you believe the former interpretation, then Descartes, in this regard, is Plato's worst nightmare. Descartes' 'philosophy' as I tried to show, embodies all the reactionary forces of the ascetic ideal by trying to align philosophy with Galilean physics. Descartes defines the absolute heights of the association of nihilism with the ascetic ideal. Again, in the interest of 'progressive forces' Descartes names ancient philosophy useless, unpragmatic, (Rules for the Direction of the Mind-4) and attempts a complete overhaul of philosophy which would make it powerful and efficacious. Descartes wants nothing less than to make 'nature' entirely transparent in the interest of its conquering. Descartes avowed aim is to conquer nature on behalf of mankind (Rosen, 1989). When 'praxis' or 'thought action' makes claims to have a complete understanding of 'nature', then the ascetic ideal is active.

Philosophy as Nietzsche attempts to redefine it, is the protector of society against the ascetic ideal; for philosophy, as defined by both Plato and Nietzsche, can never have the pretence of a COMPLETE understanding, and particularly, not a rational understanding, of nature. Nature, made transparent, renders philosophy useless. Descartes is correct in thinking that if he could make nature totally transparent, then philosophy would be revolutionized so that it would drop away and become one with science. However, Nietzsche has taught us, once and for all, despite his 'naturalism' that nature can never be made transparent to rational thought. Firstly, there are no laws of nature. Secondly, we are part of nature and therefore we can never say where nature leaves off and 'social reality' begins. The ATTEMPT to understand the difference between nature 'out there' and human

nature is one of the propelling forces of the philosophic quest. The attempt to put philosophy aside because the truth of nature has been found defines the reactionary zeal of the ascetic ideal.

How can we describe both Glaucon's quest for an outside of the cave (which is a scientific certainty) as well as Descartes quest for absolute certainty in a manner which informs my discussion of nihilism, science and the ascetic ideal? Turning to the first quote above from *The Genealogy of Morals* notice the phrase "the unconditional will to truth". This phrase will figure importantly in the remainder of this essay. The unconditional will to truth is truth 'at all costs'. This is the imperative of Platonism-Christianity, as well as Descartes quest for certainty. These quests, for Nietzsche, are pious, because they are unconditional. Their piety consists in an all or nothing approach to truth which puts its historic as well as tragic aspects out of play.

Science is the form taken by our modern will to truth and science makes claims to have overcome the ascetic ideal. It makes claims to be an unpious alternative to the ascetic ideal. These claims themselves are nihilistic because they deny the very (historical) process, which have led to the possibility of truth without piety, of a greater honesty towards the concept of truth. Science is pious, Nietzsche tells us because of this evasion. Science is the latest replacement of the ascetic ideal, a 'reoccupation' of the place of the ascetic ideal. Here is Nietzsche writing in *The Joyful Wisdom*:

No doubt, those who are truthful in that audacious and ultimate sense that is presupposed by the faith in science **THUS AFFIRM ANOTHER WORLD** than the world of life nature, and history; and insofar as they affirm this "other world" — look, must they not by the same token negate its counterpart, this world, **OUR world?** — But you will have guessed what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a **METAPHYSICAL FAITH** upon which our faith in science rests — that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame that is thousands of years old, that Christian flame which was also the flame of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine (JW 344).

If we now turn back to the 'madman' scene of section 125 of *The Joyful Wisdom* and also re-visit the first quote above (in this chapter) from *The Genealogy of Morals*, we note that the faith in science is still a moral faith because of its unconditional nature. Such unconditional faith in truth is problematic because it prevents the historical sense from developing. Why is this problematic? — because the unconditional will to truth does not see the value of errors, of illusions. Illusions can be put behind us and the unconditional will to truth is willing to do so in the name of progress. "The unconditional will to truth is a commitment to proceed with the destruction of the errors and

illusions in terms of which we made sense of our lives after the demand for reasons had become binding on us" (Havas, 1995). Thus the unconditional will to truth is hostile to life — Nietzsche makes this clear in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The use and Abuse of History* — life requires errors, illusions. The unconditional will to truth is in this way actually a moral principle, in the broad definition of morality I have been using — that is — a transcendent standard which, because it is seen as transcendent, implicitly passes judgement on life. Science, as it is institutionalized in modernity, embodies such a sense of 'morality', of standards which are hostile to life.

Nietzsche, then, in his quest to overcome nihilism asks for historical awareness. The active nihilist and the scientist think that all that is required is to understand that Platonism-Christianity is based on illusions which are no longer required, as if this is not at all problematic, as if we no longer need illusions. But Nietzsche's truthseeker, or his sense of truthfulness, requires an awareness of the difficulties of truthfulness without illusions, an awareness of the shadow of Platonism within which we exist, which is also the shadow of nihilism. To merely think that one can escape that shadow is to call our illusions **MERE** illusions, rather than **IMPORTANT** illusions, **MERE** fictions, rather than **IMPORTANT** fictions. To claim escape or overcoming is to denigrate, or hollow out the self in the name of the unconditional, as if our history is not **OUR** history, as if our history were, in Rorty's terms 'contingent' (Rorty, 1989). But Nietzsche does not mean to say that our history is 'contingent', that it could have been otherwise because it is based on 'fables'. Rather he means to say that history is fateful, because it is 'our' history; it is a history which has conditioned us and which should, if taken into account, prevent truthfulness from being seen as 'unconditioned'. Truthfulness is an accomplishment that can come only from receiving in a properly historical context the 'news' of the death of God.

In order to do so illusions cannot merely be put behind us as anachronisms. Nietzsche is clear that the death of the Christian God will be experienced by former believers as self-confirmation and that these 'last men' of modernity will believe that they have been born into the fullness of time as the chosen, the elect — those who finally can live without illusions. Is this the reason why Plato finds acceptable the noble lie? — a form of illusion that at least is put forward by one (i.e. Plato) who knows the folly and danger inherent in thinking that one finally stands in the fullness of truth?

In *The Use and Abuse of History* Nietzsche makes it clear that noble lies are no longer either acceptable or possible. The deadly truths which Nietzsche describes in *The Use and Abuse of History* must be put forward:

"the finality of becoming, the flux of all ideas types and species, of the lack of all radical difference between man and beast, (a true but fatal idea)" (UAH IX).

The fatality of these beliefs for life is the theme of *The Use and Abuse of History* — this is the problem which Nietzsche now creates for himself, or rather is created by science, the new public philosophy, which forbids all lies except the lie inherent in the absoluteness or unconditionality of scientific truth itself. How does Nietzsche solve this problem — of the untenability of truth for life. It is not until *Zarathustra* and the last books of the *Joyful Wisdom* — not until Nietzsche's announcements of the Will to Power and the Eternal Return, that a 'solution' will begin to be formulated.

CHAPTER SEVEN

From active Nihilism to Accomplished Nihilism

....I have still perhaps the right to say COGITO ERGO SUM, though not VIVO ERGO COGITO. I am permitted the empty ESSE, not the full green VIVERE. A primary feeling tells me that I am a thinking being but not a living one, that I am no "animal", but at most a "cogital" (UAH X)

In this chapter I attempt to answer the question 'what does it mean for Nietzsche to call himself an accomplished nihilist'? In what sense can nihilism be an accomplishment? First I will discuss a more commonly used term, active nihilism. I suggest that the active-passive nihilism distinction is important for Nietzsche, but that the distinction must be fleshed out using the notion of 'accomplishment'. The 'accomplishment' of nihilism involves the 'solution' to the problem of the untenebility of the 'deadly' truths for 'life' which Nietzsche sets out in *The Use and Abuse of History*:

"the fluidity of all types and concepts, the finality of becoming and the lack of cardinal distinction between human and animal" (UAH 9).

Nietzsche's 'solution' to the conflict between the deadly truths (which are unbearable to all except the 'free spirited') is set out in *Zarathustra* and in *The Joyful Wisdom*. How does Nietzsche transform the 'deadly' truths of *The Use and Abuse of History* to the joyful, free spirited, truths of *The Joyful Wisdom*? Let us begin by following Nietzsche in *The Use and Abuse of History*.

"Perhaps humanity will perish of it" *Zarathustra* states in an unpublished note to *Zarathustra*, speaking of the three 'deadly' truths. *The Use and Abuse of History* presents truth and life in deadly conflict, a conflict which is presented as THE conflict of modernity, the conflict which MUST be solved and the conflict which constitutes the key to the solution to the problem of nihilism for modernity.

Nietzsche, identifying himself with Prometheus, who not only stole fire from the Gods, but gave humankind the gift of hope, the gift of future time, calls his essays on history untimely meditations. In fact Nietzsche attempts to stand against his time, to, like Oedipus, reverse his parentage, in order to bring humanity truths which can give hope, which can open to an 'infinite' future:

These thoughts are 'out of season' because I am trying to represent something of which the age is rightly proud — its historical culture — as a fault and a defect in our time, believing as I do that we are all suffering from a malignant historical fever and should at least recognize the fact (UAH Preface).

In fact, Nietzsche's identification with Prometheus, Oedipus, and the reversal of time will become more evident in *The Birth of Tragedy*. And interestingly, the notes which were used to write the untimely meditations predated the writing of *The Birth*. (HAH, Preface). Nietzsche was becoming Greek even before his writing of *The Birth*: "I have only reached such 'unseasonable' experience so far as I am the nurseling of older ages like the Greek, and less a child of this age" (UAH Preface).

The first part of "Use and Abuse" is an ode to forgetting, to the need to forget, to feel secure within one's horizons, in order to act, to be creative, to live life with the unselfconsciousness or innocence necessary to overcome the paralysis which CAN be the existential condition of our knowledge of death, of the "sovereignty of becoming" (UAH9). This requires the "unhistorical" — the "surrounding atmosphere that can alone create life and in whose annihilation life itself disappears" (UAH1) — and Nietzsche turns to the Greeks because he thinks of them as 'unhistorical'.

But ultimately "Use and Abuse" is not an ode to forgetting but to remembering, to memory — Nietzsche transforms the classical or orthodox definition of humankind from the rational animal to the remembering animal. But 'memory' as the unconscious trace of the past is repetition, neurosis, paralysis, conventionality, the end of thought. Memory is problematic, furthermore, when the 'sovereignty of becoming' and the fluidity of concepts are the ruling forces of consciousness. The actual importance of memory for Nietzsche places a high demand on consciousness and faces the conflict inherent between growth and stasis, nobility and decadence, progressive and reactive forces. Nietzsche's definition of memory, then, does not, as some think, leave behind the logos; Nietzsche makes higher demands on the classical logos — that the word, that reason, can include and overcome the fixations of the traces of the past.

Both "the unhistorical and the historical are equally necessary to the health of an individual, a community, and a system of culture" (UAH 1) — but "If the historical sense no longer preserves life, but mummifies it, then the tree dies unnaturally, from the top downward, and at last the roots

themselves wither" (UAH II). How can the burden of history be lifted? (Eventually the answer will be the eternal return, though only hinted at in Use and Abuse).

Nietzsche describes three uses of history, the monumental — to act and strive, the antiquarian — to preserve and admire, and the critical — to suffer and liberate. The great philosopher-historiographer can unite these uses:

The stronger the roots of the inmost nature of man, the more of the past will he assimilate and appropriate; and were one to conceive the most powerful and colossal nature, it would be known by this, that no limit of the historical sense would exist or it by which it could be overwhelmed and damaged and the whole of the past, its own and the most foreign, it would draw to itself and incorporate into itself and as it were transform into blood (UAH I).

Ultimately it is critical history which counts for Nietzsche's project of exposing the unsavoury truths, as well as the edifying fictions, of the spiritual history of the west. In this quest Nietzsche is the ACTIVE nihilist, the active philosopher-and the anti-Hegelian — for Nietzsche "assigns the philosopher an active role that Hegel's historical piety assigns to Providence or Logic ... what is the current task of the philosopher? Not composing some Heilsgeschichte on the wising up of the universe and collective entry into eternal rest at the End of History" (Lampert, 1993). In the middle chapters of "Use and Abuse" Nietzsche dissects relentlessly this debilitating Hegelianism which results, for Nietzsche, either in the self satisfaction of the 'last men', who regard THEMSELVES, THEIR TIME IN HISTORY as the fulfilment of the true and the good/or — in the advocacy of technocratic solutions (read 'genocide') which will, they think, speed up the fulfilment of history. In this regard Nietzsche warns — historical education is itself the solution to the problem of history. How can this be so?

First, the problem is that modern society, under the sway of science (and again when is Nietzsche not talking about history, science and the tragic all in the 'same breath') only views the past as a self- satisfied confirmation of the present. This results in a narrowing of possibilities, a hollowing of the 'self', and a petty idolatry of egoism which is barely conscious — things which are difficult, which require intense work and sacrifice over time, simply are not worth doing. Prudent egoism, cynicism, rule the day; there is simply nothing 'great' left to do. The misunderstanding of the people of the marketplace in The Joyful Wisdom 125 exemplifies this narrowing of horizons. The sacred past of Judeo-Christianity is gone, along with ANY sense of the sacredness of the

present. There is neither past nor future nor a meaningful present. Nietzsche takes upon himself the task of the redemption of time and this will be an important meaning of the 'eternal return'.

In this task Nietzsche takes his task as philosopher-prophet with ultimate seriousness, and in doing so sounds a note which is grating on the modern ear. Has not progress brought the liberation of the masses from slavery and ignorance? Is egalitarianism not in some sense really the fulfilment of a prophecy? But Nietzsche asks first of all into what OTHER kinds of slavery and idolatry (read nihilism) 'mass' man has fallen; into what OTHER kinds of rootlessness and homelessness (again read nihilism) have we fallen? Further, since we think (perhaps along with Marx, Nietzsche's contemporary and competitor) that the liberation of the 'common man' is the end of history, then the great thoughts and deeds of the past have been for this end and therefore are no longer necessary — or worse — **THEY NEVER WERE VERY IMPORTANT!** What could be more nihilistic, more hollowing of the past and future than this way of thinking? As Nietzsche puts it in Chapter Nine of *The Use and Abuse of History*-- great persons and thoughts are mere "bubbles that become visible on the flood" (UAH 4).

Instead "the greatest thoughts are the greatest events" (BGE 285) and "genuine philosophers are commanders and legislators" (BGE 211). When Nietzsche discusses justice in Chapter Six, he takes justice as seriously as Plato and indeed sees it as his task to keep alive the 'conversation' amongst the great philosophers. Nietzsche complains in Chapter Six that life seems to favour the ignorant and the unjust by granting them decisiveness and self assurance. Here there are certainly echoes of Thrasymachus in *The Republic* for whom justice is 'doing good to one's friends and harming one's enemies' (PR 1). Here Nietzsche is arguing about the injustice inherent in a world in which the unjust, the wicked, can act effectively because knowledge and sensitivity is not a barrier. The unhistorical person can act while the "historical virtuoso of the present time has developed in himself such a delicacy and sensitiveness that 'nothing is alien to him'" (UAH 4).

Continuing in Chapter Six "you can explain the past only by what is most powerful in the present". And "the greatest are those whose love of truth serves their pure will to justice". "The impulse to justice without the power of judgement has been the cause of the greatest suffering on earth....there are no means of planting a power of judgement: and so when one speaks to men of truth and justice they will ever be troubled by the doubt whether it be the fanatic or the judge who is speaking to them". This problem remains unsolved as it always will; but certainly the disinterested,

scientific type, the person who does not see any connection between truth and self, is disqualified from judging well. Nietzsche above all demands truth — and here — truth which is related to developed capacities of judgement: Nietzsche does not tolerate fraudulence of any kind. And Plato's noble lie? Is this for Nietzsche a form of fraudulence?

From Chapter Ten, the last of "Use and Abuse" :

Plato thought it necessary for the first generation of his new society (in the perfect state) to be brought up with the help of a "mighty lie." The children were to be taught to believe that they had all lain dreaming for a long time under the earth, where they had been molded and formed by the masterhand of Nature. It was impossible to GO AGAINST THE PAST, and work against the work of the gods!

How does Nietzsche want to 'work against the work of the Gods? First, all of the middle section of "Use and Abuse" concerns the Hegelian-Christian devaluation of history and the need for a historical sense which can redeem modernity from the nihilism inherent in a disturbance in the continuity of time. But even before Hegel, Plato had fixed time with his "aeterna veritas" actually a noble or necessary lie which Nietzsche, first of all censures, and secondly, knows is no longer viable due to the 'frankness' of modern science. Nietzsche, anyway, refuses noble lies and pushes forward his program of exposing the 'terrible' truths:

the sovereignty of becoming, the flux of all ideas, types, and species, and the lack of any radical difference between man and beast (a fatal truth I think) (UAH 9).

This, first of all, opens the history of thought to the entire natural history of humankind in an ecological context. In this sense Nietzsche is not far from Darwin. The exposure of the fatal truths will open up history to excavations which can bring to light hitherto hidden truths. But this is not the extent of Nietzsche's "work against the work of the Gods." For "only he who is building up the future has a right to judge the past"(UAH 6). Nietzsche sets for himself the task of overcoming the claustrophobia of the Greeks, particularly the metaphysical Greeks. Despite what he says in "Use and Abuse" about the NEED for horizons as a precondition for effective praxis, Nietzsche's goal, guided by his obsessive search for truth as redemption, will be to open up thought to infinite horizons to the "horizon of the infinite", as aphorism 124 is named in Joyful Wisdom. The previous metaphors of the orthodox tradition, particularly the Platonic 'forms' had been spatial metaphors.

Nietzsche's infinite involves an infinite of 'time' but time made into history through great and sublime thoughts—foremost of which is eternal recurrence.

Nietzsche's untimely meditations on history are in fact a meditation on the possibilities of a new future, of acting for the 'benefit of a time to come', to overcome the enormous burden of the past. Nietzsche takes on the Promethean task — to bring hope, to rejuvenate the future and to overcome the 'spirit of revenge.' In *Thus Spake Zarathustra* Nietzsche attempts to overcome the malady of history — the wilful revenge against the past through the equally wilful but unthinking creation of a new future.

At the moment Zarathustra is going across the bridge between human being and the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche relinquishes the resentment against every "it was" by willing the overcoming of finitude. "The present and the past upon the earth — alas! my friends, that is my most intolerable burden; and I should not know how to live, if I were not a seer of that which must come." Zarathustra, as the teacher of the eternal recurrence, "sees" the future, anticipates it not as a copying of the past, a finite mimesis, but as a sublime future determined by an artistic will whose pleasure is experienced by foresight (Ghisalberti, 1996).

The idea of eternal recurrence, is for Nietzsche both scientific and poetic. It is a form of bold experimentation. Just as Nietzsche's concept of art is active, tragic, 'breaking the crust of conventions,' so his concept of science is of the free spirited experimenter, the prophet, the seer. In this respect science and art, at least in the concept of the eternal recurrence, merge. It is in the *Joyful Wisdom*, Nietzsche's book on 'science' that Nietzsche brings forth his theory in its most explicit rendering:

What if a demon crept after thee into thy loneliest loneliness someday or night and said to thee 'This life, as thou livest it at present and hast lived it, thou must live it once more, and also innumerable times; and there will be nothing new in it but every pain and joy and every thought and every sigh, and all the unspeakably small and great in thy life must come to thee again and all in the same series and sequence — and similarly this spider and this moonlight among the trees, and similarly this moment, and I myself. The eternal sandglass of existence will ever be turned once more, and thou with it, thou speck of dust! - wouldst thou not throw thyself down and gnash thy teeth and curse the demon that so spake? Or hast thou experienced a tremendous moment in which you wouldst answer him: Thou art a God and never did I hear anything so divine! If that though acquired power over thee as thou art, it would transform thee, and perhaps crush thee; the question with regard to all and everything: Dost thou want this once more, and also for innumerable times? would lie as the heaviest burden upon thy activities! Or how wouldst thou have become

favourably inclined to thyself and to life, so as to long for nothing more ardently than for this last eternal sanctioning and sealing?

How is this fragment entitled *The Heaviest Burden* both scientific (in Nietzsche's sense) and poetic? It is a thought experiment, an hypothesis whose outcome is uncertain, because it requires of its reader an exploration of subjectivity and authenticity. It proposes both a form of total affirmation, which Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy* calls the Dionysian. At the same time the fragment demands of its reader an elevation of life, the creation of 'tremendous moments' in one's life, or the acknowledgement of such moments. This is the Apollonian or the power of dream and individuation by which as Nietzsche states in *Use and Abuse* "the Greeks gradually learned to organize the chaos by taking Apollo's advice and thinking back to themselves, to their own true necessities, and letting all the sham necessities go"(UAH X). Most of all the hypothesis of the eternal return is a valorization of history as 'alive' as an ongoing human project whose concern must ultimately be shaped by the future and by the Apollonian dream which entices us onwards.

This statement of the eternal return is Nietzsche's way of describing 'the tragic' in philosophic terms. The 'tragic' in its broadest terms, for Nietzsche, means both a total affirmation of EVERYTHING that is the world as it is, as well as the possibility, within the world, of the enhancement of the world through insight, knowledge, or any 'creative act' which may be seen as a 'tremendous moment'. In the next chapter I will try to show how Nietzsche finds the 'eternal recurrence' within the tragic vision of the Greeks and in this way to show that Nietzsche's concept of science (as hypothesis, as genealogy, and as philology), are related to both his concept of history, as well as his concept of tragedy. This is by no means, then, the end of our discussion of eternal recurrence. I will try to show how Nietzsche finds the eternal recurrence within the tragic vision and the close connection between Dionysus, Zarathustra and the tragic vision. The relation between the eternal recurrence, tragedy, and Zarathustra is indicated by the discussion of Zarathustra's downgoing in fragment 342 entitled *Incipit Tragoedia of The Joyful Wisdom*. Zarathustra's downgoing parallels the philosopher's return to the cave, but it is tragic insight which he brings rather than eternal truth. Now with Zarathustra's downgoing, there can be a new beginning, a possibility again, after the 'Death of Socrates' (fragment 340) for a new tragic insight. We are living

now in the time of the Socratic giving of reasons. The 'giving of reasons' of the earth and its materials has led to the time of technology, OUR TIME, in which the earth must give its reasons to Socrates. Now after the death of Socrates (fragment 340) and the taking on of The Heaviest Burden (fragment 341) can there be a time for a new beginning which is not new, an Incipit Tragoedia, a new beginning of tragedy in which the earth is honoured by its total and tragic acceptance.

Active and Passive Nihilism

The acknowledgement of excellence required by the hypothesis of the eternal return is a difficult requirement in view of the orthodox tradition's evasion of subjectivity, its hollowing of the 'self', or its creation of a self guided by the 'spirit of revenge'. This spirit, guided by resentment, or bad conscience, wishes to put history, with its difficulties, paradoxes, wars, etc., behind it in the interest of a spurious purification which is always, for Nietzsche, guided by 'morality'. Morality, for Nietzsche, means in its most general sense, standards of knowledge by which life is judged, directed, and most importantly, found wanting.

The eternal return overcomes the idea, within the orthodox tradition, that truth exists as a structure which is prior and external to human subjectivity. Philosophy within the orthodox tradition IS that very evasion (of subjectivity) and is that standard by which 'life' is denigrated. And the failure to see that humankind itself has created these structures is what may be called and what Nietzsche sometimes calls 'passive nihilism'. Put in another way:

"Passive nihilism is reactive exactly in the sense that when the supreme values fall, it refuses to accept the annihilation and in an attempt to numb, heal, and tranquillize, opposes to it all sorts of disguises: political, religious, moral, aesthetic, etc." (Schlechta, 1954 3:558).

But how do the supreme values fall? For those who accuse Nietzsche of nihilism — it is not Nietzsche who created the severe intellectual conscience of modern science which absolutely forbids the public lie, or in Platonic terms, the noble lie. The severity of the quest for truth is the very aspect of the orthodox tradition which results eventually in exposing the 'lies' of absolute Being, the 'lies' of the otherworldliness of Platonism. The very severity of the Christian conscience, of Christian 'sincerity' eventually, along with Christianity's alliance with Athen's quest for truth, forbids the 'lies' of Christianity. We become aware, eventually, of the "hermeneutic essence of

values" (Vattimo, in Darby, 1989). This is active nihilism. But can the distinction between active and passive nihilism be maintained?

I will argue that, though for Nietzsche, the distinction between active and passive nihilism is important, the distinction does not indicate that through 'affirmation' or creativity, (that is active nihilism) we can DO something about nihilism, we can overcome and extinguish nihilism. For such overcoming, or what I call the 'artistic solution', would only reinscribe metaphysics, within Nietzsche's thought, as another 'solution' within the orthodox tradition. It would reinscribe reasons and solutions at the centre of his thought and would nullify much of his critique of metaphysics. In fact Heidegger, in Nietzsche, (volume 4) takes the position that Nietzsche DOES reinscribe metaphysics at the centre of his thought.

Heidegger, in his fourth volume on Nietzsche, argues that the affirmation of value is metaphysical because values are the essential components of Being and because such affirmation by the 'will' or the will to power, which for Heidegger is 'essentially connected' to Descartes notion of will as the domination or control of nature, is a metaphysical principle.

The intrinsic presuppositions of the metaphysics of will to power are determined by that relationship (to Descartes). Because it has gone unnoticed that behind Nietzsche's exceedingly sharp rejection of the Cartesian cogito stands an even more rigorous commitment to the subjectivity posited by Descartes, the essential historical relationship that determines their fundamental positions — remains in obscurity (Heidegger, 1961).

Heidegger claims that, for Nietzsche, the 'ubermensch', is the person who sees this and is able to master the metaphysical machinery of the taking up and overcoming of value (Heidegger, 1931) I contend that the ubermensch is poetic, used as an educational device, in fact a paradox, to instruct us about the impossibility of pure Dionysian affirmation. In fact, Heller, in his book *The Importance of Nietzsche*, makes the very interesting point that the eternal recurrence validates history as it has been without qualification; but this must mean the acknowledgement that there has never been and never will be an Ubermensch. Interestingly enough, in this context, Heidegger is silent throughout his works about the Dionysian. To open up this issue would lead Heidegger to see that the sense of affirmation of values about which he speaks would have to ignore what Nietzsche calls, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, the 'interlacing' of Dionysus and Apollo (Ghisalberti, 1996). Instead Heidegger views Nietzsche as another philosopher who is simply within the Apollonian or orthodox tradition of metaphysics.

The notion of the (PURE) Dionysian notion of affirmation is based on a misreading of *The Birth of Tragedy*. That book ends with an imagined exclamation by Aeschylus, the greatest of the Greek tragedians, exclaiming "Now follow me to witness a tragedy and sacrifice with me in the temple of both deities!" In other words both the Apollonian and the Dionysian must be equally honoured.

The Heideggarian notion of the *ubermensch* as pure affirmer of values is, therefore, problematic. Nietzsche demands an affirmation of history, where 'history' means the hermeneutic openness which results from an understanding of the death of God. It is history which we must affirm if we are to become accomplished nihilists. And the affirmation of history involves, paradoxically, a certain passivity, or resignation with regard to purely intellectual solutions, (but not in regard to lived or existential solutions) in the realization that 'reason' must be thought in a weakened form; I would argue that Nietzsche celebrates the narrow scope of human autonomy and our limited capacity to posit value as a pure positing outside of our cultural constraints. This requires an understanding of the ways in which human beings are themselves constituted by those values, how human beings are shaped by culture. Nietzsche says in *Daybreak* 552: "We..ought to blow to the wind all presumptuous talk of willing and creating."

Accordingly, when Nietzsche struggles, in his anti-Platonism with the notions of Being and Becoming, part of his struggle is to make it evident that we can create very little distance from the notion of Becoming. The notion of 'Being' creates distance, call it a position from outside of culture from which culture can be evaluated — that is denigrated; Nietzsche calls this 'distance' at various times morality, wisdom, Being. And this wisdom is related, by Nietzsche to decadence, to declining life:

In every age the wisest have passed the identical judgement on life: it is worthless ... Everywhere and always their mouths have uttered the same sound — a sound full of doubt, full of melancholy, full of weariness with life, full of opposition to life ... This irreverent notion that the great sages are declining types first dawned on me in regard to just the case in which learned and unlearned prejudice is most strongly opposed to it (TI 1-2).

This very notion of 'Being' denigrates life when and if we refuse to acknowledge that in the history of thought, the notion of Being is a human construct. The lack of this acknowledgement means that we are implicitly judged by a notion for which we cannot take responsibility. What Nietzsche objects to is the selflessness by which we accept the notion of 'Being' as 'out there' as an

ahistorical standard, as a 'structure' or the linchpin of as structure. Seeing 'Being' this way means that Being is 'pure' is outside of history and human subjectivity; viewing Being this way means that those who view it this way, desire to see Being as a standard by and through which human fallible life is judged and ultimately denigrated. For Nietzsche this position is childish and full of resentment and the spirit of revenge because it wishes to view all of history, with its errors, fallibility, violence, war, and horror, as requiring redemption, usually in the form of an apocalyptic purification which, for Nietzsche is merely another form of revenge upon human life and history.

One of the important meanings of 'history' then, for Nietzsche is an understanding of 'Being' as a human creation which has its own history. Nietzsche at the beginning of *Twilight of the Idols* describes what amounts to the history of the orthodox tradition---the history of the concept 'Being', in six propositions entitled *How The Real World at Last Became a Myth*. The 'Real' world refers to the Platonic notion of 'Being'. It begins:

1. The Real World, attainable to the wise, the pious, the virtuous man — he dwells in it, he IS IT ... Transcription of the proposition: I, Plato AM the truth.

It ends with:

6. We have abolished the real world: what world is left? the apparent world perhaps? ... But no! with the real world we have also abolished the apparent world ...
INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA.

In other words the Platonic notion of Truth or Being must be seen to have a history; it HAS had a history, and when this is seen it becomes apparent that the Platonic distinction between a Real and an apparent world no longer has relevance. This is at least one meaning of 'history' for Nietzsche — an understanding which is necessary for the 'accomplishment' of nihilism. Nietzsche's anti-Platonism consists not only in the unbelievability of the notion of Being, but in the understanding of the history of the 'error that is Being — the 'History of an Error'. But there is yet another meaning.

Science, since Descartes and Bacon is the 'public' philosophy which publicizes the dangerous truths — which refuses the noble lie of Platonism. Nietzsche risks telling the truth, not only because it is his decision, but because science had begun to make these truths evident. Nietzsche takes the risk of grounding philosophy on the dangerous truths: 'the sovereignty of becoming, the fluidity of all concepts, types, and kinds, and the lack of any cardinal difference

between human and animal'. In so doing Nietzsche transforms the history of philosophy. It is now the history which encompasses both the history of the greatest and most sublime ideas as well as the history of human kind as natural history as an ecology of human life on earth. It is the naturalism of these deadly truths which forbids Nietzsche ever giving up on a guiding idea of his thought from the *Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo* — the Dionysian — the 'tragic' thought in terms of natural forces. It is this attempt at unifying 'art' and 'science' which can transform the 'truths against life' the 'anti-life' truths of *The Use and Abuse of History* into the joyous truths of *The Joyful Wisdom*. "Deadly science becomes joyful science because will to power has come to light as the fundamental fact and eternal recurrence as the highest value" (Lampert, 1993). And as I will show in the next chapter Nietzsche turns to the unhistorical Greeks of the tragic vision to find the idea of eternal return at the heart of Greek tragedy.

The Birth of Tragedy, first published in 1872, was Nietzsche's first major work, published soon after having become a professor of classical philology at Basil, Germany. It caused a stir because the theme of Greek tragedy was unexpected and unconventional, particularly with its interpretation of the relation between Dionysus and Greek culture. The turn to Greek Tragedy and Dionysus was subversive, at least in philosophic circles, because it undermined the Apollonian nature of the orthodox tradition. In fact 'The Birth' is still considered somewhat subversive for the same reasons. Such is the strength of the relationship between the orthodox tradition and the ascetic ideal.

Nietzsche's career as a writer took yet another unexpected turn with his soon to follow publication of his *Second Untimely Meditation*, or as it is commonly titled *The Use and Abuse of History*. I would like to suggest that the content and order of appearance of these two most unusual (for a philosopher) publications can provide important material for understanding Nietzsche as responding to the problem of nihilism as he viewed it as existing for modern Europe. All of Nietzsche's future themes, science, knowledge, the ascetic ideal, truthfulness, are introduced AND RELATED to each other in these two volumes. There is much more in *The Birth of Tragedy* than a discussion of Dionysus.

In turning to a discussion of Greek Tragedy in *The Birth*, Nietzsche did not at all abandon the concern of the orthodox tradition for truth. In fact, in *The Genealogy of Morals*, *The Gay Science*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche CONTINUES a discussion of truth and Socratism which he began in *The Birth of Tragedy* and then continued from a different perspective, in *The Use and Abuse of History*. What themes constitute that continuity? How does Nietzsche discuss truth and Socratism in 'The Birth' as an answer to a problematic which Nietzsche views as his particular problem as a modern European?

Nietzsche, in *The Birth*, reintroduces not only Dionysus as casting a new light on tragedy, but Socrates as well. As Walter Kaufmann states it "Socrates is introduced in *The Birth* with the reverence befitting a God, the equal of Apollo and Dionysus" (Kaufmann, 1967). Why this reverence for Socrates in a book which aims to bring Dionysus to the forefront of the tragic vision?

To ask this, again, is to ask about Nietzsche's perspective as a modern European. From that perspective the problem of tragic vision or its lack, the problem of history, or more specifically of historicism, and the problem of knowledge, or 'science', (defined in its broadest terms) are intertwined. One cannot begin to understand Nietzsche without understanding the inseparability of these three problems. Let us now attempt to reconstruct at least a part of the perspective from which *The Birth* was written.

I would suggest that *The Birth* can fruitfully be viewed as an answer to the problem of nihilism as Nietzsche viewed and felt this problem as a modern European. Following Randall Havas, I will name this form of nihilism a problem of culture (Havas, 1995). Modern Europeans as Nietzsche viewed them in the late 19th century were beginning to live in a culture which was increasingly 'Socratic'; that is they were living in a culture which had to become aware of itself through interpretations of what it meant to be a member of that culture. In other words modern Europeans had been forced into a position of a kind of self-consciousness, or paralysis, which involved a distinction from history, from becoming.

Nietzsche viewed this as an inevitable development of what it meant to live in the growing scientific culture of the mid-19th century; science gives reasons for everything, including 'culture'. Nietzsche viewed this process of giving reasons as having the effect of 'deculturing' a society. A decultured society, for Nietzsche, was one which is nihilistic for its inability to make sense of itself, a failure of meaning and sense. But this failure was not one which could be 'cured' by Socratism, by

giving reasons. Rather Nietzsche viewed Socratism as a symptom of this decline in meaning, or at best a 'solution' forced upon culture by its loss of timmanent, unquestioned and instinctual meanings.

It is difficult to state what Nietzsche meant by culture because any 'definitions' given, such as the one I just gave above, implicate the definer in the very form of Socratism, which, Nietzsche states in *The Birth of Tragedy*, is totally unnecessary for a tragic culture. It is not that tragic culture is unthinking or automatic in any sense though there is the implication that 'instinct' is more intact in a tragic culture than in an egalitarian or Socratic culture. Randall Havas puts it this way:

...tragedy enabled the Greeks to live — or, anyway, celebrated their ability to live — without the sorts of reasons that Socrates thought necessary if their aesthetic and ethical behaviour was to be fully intelligible ... but Nietzsche thought that tragedy allowed them to do so without simply ignoring the Socratic demand ... rather tragedy enabled them to see through that demand (Havas, 1996).

If we follow Havas here, we can say two things about 'culture'. For Nietzsche, its highest form is that of tragic culture. Secondly, tragic culture, in some way that Nietzsche perhaps does not make clear enough, defines itself in opposition to Socratic culture, by seeing through the need for reasons. This argument can be clarified by turning to some of Nietzsche's more historical comments. For instance the aristocrats of pre-revolutionary Europe did not feel the need to justify themselves. Likewise the aristocratic culture of pre-Socratic Greece was more natural, more instinctual, more graceful, than the more egalitarian culture of Socratic Greece. Nietzsche viewed the role of Socrates as undermining the natural grace and unselfconscious beauty of his aristocratic interlocutors.

But Nietzsche never advocates returns. He sees it as the task of modern Europeans to fully understand the will to truth that is the modern legacy. The 'will to truth' has developed OUT OF both Socratism and Christianity, so that these two axial world doctrines have deconstructed themselves, so to speak. First the Socratic demand for the truth, originally a-historical, has given way to the necessity to acknowledge the essentially historical nature of modern truth. Secondly, the Christian committment to sincerity, to conscience, to truth itself, has forced upon Christianity itself the untruth of its doctrine of otherworldliness. In other words our Judaeo-Christian heritage has connected truth and morality, or piety, in a way which still exists, but which exists in a much weakened form.

To acknowledge the death of God means to become aware of the piety that has always been associated with truth, from Plato's reverence for the Gods to Hegel's reverence for reason. In *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche makes his first inroads into the goal of that awareness. Nietzsche suggests that the piety associated with truth, or in other words the 'ascetic ideal', the consistent (since Plato) connection between truth and morality has been a form of closure which has prevented what Nietzsche would like to see- an expansion of 'this-worldly embodied consciousness'. At the same time the piety of truth prevents an acknowledgement of the meanings that are already there, a resistance to seeing the meanings which are already there.

My goal, in discussing *The Birth of Tragedy* in the next chapter will be to show how the themes of tragedy, truth-science, and history are intertwined. I argue that the focus on Dionysus to the exclusion of these other themes has resulted in the 'artistic hypothesis' and to a misreading of Nietzsche which views tragedy as in some sense a 'solution' to the 'problem' of nihilism. I contend that neither the eternal recurrence, nor the 'will to power' are offered by Nietzsche as 'solutions' to the 'problem' of nihilism but rather as metaphoric suggestions, as tropes, as poetic devices which allow the 'Verwindung', the healing, resignation, convalescence, resulting from the awareness of what Heidegger calls the 'errancy of metaphysics' (Vattimo, 1985).

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tragedy

Nearly every age and stage of culture has at some time or other sought with profound irritation to free itself from the Greeks, because in their presence everything one has achieved oneself, though apparently quite original and sincerely admired, suddenly seemed to lose life and color and shrivelled into a poor copy, even a caricature. (Preface to BT)

Have I been understood? - Dionysus against the Crucified.. (E.H. p134) (1)

The Birth of Tragedy announces Nietzsche's unexpected 'return' to the ancient Greeks with the intention of 'overcoming' them. But unlike Nietzsche's critique of Platonism, and his even more devastating critique of rationalism and in particular the Descartes to Kant tradition, Nietzsche's return to the tragedians is less meant to debunk than to expose heretofore hidden possibilities. These possibilities, foremost of which is the idea of the eternal recurrence, are inherent in tragedy itself, as defined by Nietzsche, but as yet, have not been represented either in philosophy or in literary criticism. Therefore, in The Birth of Tragedy, Nietzsche is doing more than turning to the Greeks for a model of what modern Germany could be as a culture. He is making an observation about modernity which he continues in The Second Untimely Meditation—that history, in the form of historicism, that is as 'science' or scientific laws of history (Marx, Hegel) hollows out central aspects of our western tradition, an important one of which is the tragic vision. The eternal recurrence, whatever it means, DOES mean at least that ALL aspects of history, including the 'abject' (in Kristeva's terms), illusion, the uncanny, as well as the horrifying, figure in 'what we have become'. It is more dangerous as well as nihilistic to think that we have put these aside, than to face up to the idea that as part of our often difficult and problematic heritage, we are composed of their traces.

How do we know that the 'eternal recurrence' certainly Nietzsche's most difficult if not mystifying concept, is inspired by Greek Tragedy, though the concept is not mentioned in The Birth of Tragedy? First, Nietzsche argues, speaking in The Birth of Tragedy of the 'metaphysical comfort' which art provides, that:

life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable — this comfort appears in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of

natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same.

The 'metaphysical comfort' of art presages the life affirmation of Dionysus and the eternal recurrence. Also, in *The Use and Abuse of History*, the notes for which were written BEFORE *The Birth of Tragedy* (Lampert, 1995) Nietzsche writes:

That which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated, the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth. Only if, when the fifth act of the earth's drama ended, the whole play every time began again from the beginning, if it was certain that the same catastrophe were repeated at definite intervals, could the men of power venture to desire monumental history in full icon-like veracity. (UAH 6)

Further, in *The Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche writes that the Dionysian excess of energy leads to eternal life to that "eternal recurrence of life" (TI 5) which overcomes all nihilistic tendencies. We know that Nietzsche turns to Greek tragedy in the first place for its Dionysian qualities. We know also, historically, that Greek Tragedy was, particularly in its beginnings, associated with the God Dionysus (Silk and Stern, 1941). And Nietzsche, in *The Will to Power*, states that he wants "a Dionysian affirmation of the world as it is, without subtraction, exception, or selection—it wants the eternal circulation" (WP 536). This sense of total affirmation of everything that is, the sense of loving one's fate whatever that may be, seems to be Nietzsche's most basic stance towards art as a 'metaphysical' pursuit, that is, as Nietzsche's most basic pronouncement on the relationship between art, truth and subjectivity. To will what is and to will what one is without qualification — this would seem to bring together the eternal recurrence with Dionysus — a totality of ecstatic vision without restraint (Ghisalberti, 1996).

But Tragedy is born of BOTH Apollo and Dionysus. And even more basic to Nietzsche's stance — tragedy is born; that is it too has its history, its biography and its tragic limitations. This is what is signified in the first place with Nietzsche's reference to birth. Procreation means the production of something entirely new. How can Dionysian affirmation encompass procreation, birth, and therefore narrative, history, if we could imagine such a force is without restraint, without individuation (Silk and Stern, 1941) and therefore without dreams. Dreams are born of restraint, of control of ego, of individuation, which require dreaming as a supplement to a restrained existence. Moreover dreams themselves are the seeds of transformation, of transfiguration. Dreams are the

necessary condition of all educational and transformational practice become aware of itself. The pure Dionysian is therefore of itself sterile, at least in terms of the argument which Nietzsche is asserting — the birth of a new form. As we shall see, Nietzsche seeks newness, not from Greek tragedy, as an existing form, but in the

"past as an indication of a possibility, of a great possibility...of recovering the analogue of that which was their possibility: a disposition, a force, a power — the capability of extricating oneself from the present .. it is a creative mimesis .. it is 'poietic'... it is great art itself." (Lacoue-Labarthe, *Mimesis and History*).

Nietzsche writes in *The Will to Power*, "This world must be transfigured ever anew and in new ways" (WP 537). The notion that art involves transfiguration (*Verklärung*) recurs throughout *The Birth of Tragedy*, along with the notion of overcoming (*Überwindung*). What can be meant by these concepts and how do they relate to birth or creation? Who are Apollo and Dionysus and how do their interaction result in the notion of Art as transformation and overcoming? And finally how does Nietzsche resolve or not resolve the conflict between the total affirmation of Dionysus, the "affirmation of the world as it is," and the transfiguration and overcoming associated with art? For total affirmation, the totally Dionysian, as Nietzsche envisions it, does not require Apollo, and therefore puts out of play the dream which is the forerunner of all transformation, all transfiguration.

I will argue in this chapter that there is an essential conflict, in Nietzsche's work, between the necessity to think historically, the absolute necessity, in Nietzsche's thought of the historical sense, and the Dionysian sense of total affirmation — (when Dionysus is taken to mean a 'ground' of existence) — that Nietzsche's abandoning of Apollo and his turn to Dionysus, in his final statement "Dionysus vs. the Crucified" is provocative, polemical (and when is Nietzsche not both of these) but that Nietzsche's final valorization of Dionysus—must be viewed as inclusive of an affirmation of HISTORY. Nietzsche's way of maintaining the continuity between history and Dionysus is through his concept of the eternal recurrence. But the eternal recurrence cannot be understood without first traversing the territory of Nietzsche's historiography. When this is done, then it will be seen that truthfulness and the 'will to truth' is a defining moment of Nietzsche's thought and that the 'will to truth' and its 'genealogy' cannot sustain any simply polemical turn to Dionysus without violating Nietzsche's most important work in history and genealogy, work which

is Apollonian, and moderate, and which acknowledges the 'interlacing' as Nietzsche calls it in 'The Birth' of the Apollonian and the Dionysian.

The Birth of Tragedy : The Death of Tragedy

In sustaining this thesis it is necessary, first of all to see that the Birth of Tragedy is about more than Nietzsche's conception of the tragic. It is about the death of tragedy and the birth of Socratism or a certain kind of will to truth. This 'will to truth' Nietzsche will view as essential to the identity of the modern European (Havas, 1995). It is by focusing solely on the theme of tragedy (provocative and interesting in itself) that Nietzsche interpreters omit an important aspect of the structure of Nietzsche's notion of tragedy's 'birth', that is the whole discussion of anti-Socratism and the treatment of the notion of 'truth'. There is an implicit genealogy here-that tragedy gives way eventually to Socratism; that tragedy is defined, by Nietzsche, not only by the 'Dionysian' but by its immunity to Socratism, that is its immunity to 'giving reasons', giving accounts of itself.

Paul R. Harrison, in his valuable book *The Disenchantment of Reason* states it this way:

From the standpoint of Nietzsche's *Urgeschichte*, knowing itself, the will to know, is the fatal step that leads from Socrates to modernity. Nietzsche argues first that "our whole culture is entangled in the net of Alexandrian culture"(BT14). It proposes as its ideal the theoretical man equipped with the greatest forces of knowledge and labouring in the service of science, whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates.

It is when these themes of "The Birth" are ignored that interpreters view tragedy as an alternative world view to that of the scientific, (or scientific?) culture of 19th century Germany, which was Nietzsche's milieu. Writers such as Derrida, Paul de Man, and Rorty, use this interpretation of Nietzsche to push forward their essentially aestheticist views; all three, though Derrida perhaps is the exception, think that metaphysics is something that can somehow be left behind. According to this interpretation Nietzsche's view of cosmology was that there is an essential chaos, a formlessness, which prevents us from making truth statements. All is chaos and we can only have partial perspectival glimpses of 'truth'. Artistic creation, on this account is the preferred metaphysics. While there is truth in this description, there is also an evasion of the importance of history for Nietzsche. Some of Nietzsche's most provocative statements about art are found in *The Will to Power*- "we have art lest we die of the truth", etc. But it is of only limited usefulness to set up too strict a distinction, for Nietzsche, between art and truth. It is true that in *The Birth of*

Tragedy, art and Beauty are of ultimate importance. But even two years later, by the time of *The Use and Abuse of History* this is no longer true for Nietzsche. In fact Nietzsche wishes to make historiography both more artistic, and more truthful.

In terms of the theme of nihilism it can be seen that Nietzsche, in espousing a cosmology of chaos can confront a nihilism or meaninglessness which is an incipient condition of human nature. And I believe that this is also one of Nietzsche's aims. But Nietzsche sees the problem of nihilism, for example in *The Genealogy of Morals* as our (modern Europeans') inability to make sense of things and therefore an inability to speak, to 'make promises'(GM 2). Making promises means speaking in a manner which is socially binding. This we are obliged to do no matter what our cosmology. At least one definition of nihilism which Nietzsche propounds in his later work has to do with the impossibility of a true individuality in light of the 'herd instinct' and the 'morality of pity'. This difficulty, or near impossibility, results in an inarticulacy which prevents persons from being understandable to themselves or to each other. Psychologically this may be termed a problem of identity. And indeed in his middle works Nietzsche views the modern European identity as lacking in self awareness of the will to truthfulness--the inability to integrate and understand the 'death of God' as an historical event and as an accomplishment.

I argue here that the seeds of THIS treatment of the problem of nihilism are to be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. I want then to juxtapose the 'commonly held' view of the Birth of Tragedy, which is by no means incorrect (only limited) with an interpretation which takes the theme of Socratism more seriously. Now I turn to the not unimportant, nor incorrect in itself, 'commonly held' view. This view must be discussed in some detail in order to understand what Nietzsche means by the Dionysian, an important concept which spans his career, and in terms of this thesis, to understand Nietzsche's earliest stance on the problem of nihilism.

The Birth of Tragedy as Cosmology

The Birth of Tragedy introduces the Apollonian and Dionysian as the originating 'art impulses of nature'. Life for Nietzsche is essentially artistic rather than rational or moral. (What I am arguing here, though I am putting this argument aside until I explain here the 'commonly held view' is that this 'essentially' artistic nature of life does not exclude truthfulness or morality). In *The Birth*, Nietzsche pronounces on the artistic nature of life and its relation to transfiguration:

Thus the Dionysian is seen to be, compared to the Apollonian, the eternal and original artistic power that first calls the whole world of phenomena into existence — and it is only in the midst of this world that a new transfiguring illusion becomes necessary in order to keep the animated world of individuation alive...Of this foundation of all existence — the Dionysian basic ground of the world — not one whit more may enter the consciousness of the human individual than can be overcome again by this Apollonian power of transfiguration (B.T.25).

From this very rich passage we can see the origins of Nietzsche's naturalism, including the beginnings of an understanding of the relationship between naturalism and will to power. But note that the Dionysian is a force of nature which 'calls the whole world of phenomena into existence'. This includes the human world. From the standpoint of the Dionysian there is a kind of ecstatic unity between human being and nature, a kind of primal unity of forces. This is certainly a clue to what Nietzsche means by the 'eternal circulation' of the Dionysian. But notice, though this is less evident from the above passage, that the Apollonian, is, as well, one of the originating "art impulses of nature".

Again, life, for Nietzsche, in "The Birth" is essentially artistic; that is life is not essentially connected with an order of rationality which relates to the good, nor is life related to revelation of any supersensuous reality. Life is a self- generating artistic creation; we are most 'aligned' with life, then, when we are artistic, imaginative and creative. But what could this artistry mean from the impersonal standpoint of the Dionysian? Art as the above passage explicates is 'not a self contained and self enclosed sphere of activity and experience detached from the rest of life but rather is intimately bound up with life and as having the greatest significance in and for it' (Schacht, 1995). Nietzsche makes these comments in his revision of 1889 of the preface to *The Birth*. What then is 'art' as it is more commonly known, as an activity of shaping, of interpreting, of making? How does Apollo who brings both dreams (i.e. the ecstatic and natural excess of finitude) and individuation (the constrained, the individuated which requires dreaming as a supplement to that very balance), interact with the Dionysian to bring about new possibilities, in the words of Lacoue-Labarthe, 'great possibilities' (Labarthe: *History and Mimesis*).

We cannot answer yet until we stress again and even more emphatically that for Nietzsche nature herself is artistic. Both the Apollonian and the Dionysian are "art impulses" of nature, forces which burst forth from nature herself, without the mediation of the human artist (Schacht, 1995). Humans as natural beings (i.e. not only as composers or artists) are artists both in their capacity for

the Apollonian capacity to dream, a natural phenomenon which creates beautiful illusions, as well as in being 'the medium through which the one truly existent subject celebrates his release in appearance' (BT 14). Notice in this passage an imbalance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian: the Dionysian is the primary force of a releasement — but from what? We must assume that it is releasement from the forces of Apollo, from all restraint, from individuation, from separateness. But why should this force be more primary, if both Apollo and Dionysus are forces of nature? Is not the invocation of Apollo, the god of individuation and of dreaming, problematic in assuming a strict separation of natural and human reality? Does not Nietzsche, here in his naturalism repeat the mistaken gesture of the philosophers of the 'state of nature': we can never say where nature leaves off — we are part of it; our view of nature is always contaminated. Let us now turn towards Apollo and Nietzsche's ideas on the god of harmony, light order, restraint and individuation, to see if he can resolve (he cannot) this essential paradox.

A brief prelude is necessary. Nietzsche, unlike other scholars of his time, did not view the Greeks as a people of order, harmony and balance. This view looks at the art OBJECTS of Greece as exemplifying the Greek temperament. Nietzsche's genealogy asks what kind of people would make such art; who are the people whose NECESSITY it is to create such art? His answer; a people who see the horror and absurdity of existence:

it was the terror and horror of existence from which the Greeks needed to be saved; and it was in order to be able to live that they developed their art...all this was again and again overcome by the Greeks with the aid of the Olympian middle world of art; or at any rate it was veiled and withdrawn from sight" (BT 3).

Here art is a process of veiling, of salutary illusion. Apollo is the god of dreaming and thus of illusion. Apollo supplies the plastic power of formation, inspired by dreams, necessary for the actual creation of works of art.

The highest, and indeed the truly serious task of art is to save the eye from gazing into the horrors of night and to deliver the subject by the healing balm of illusion from the spasms of the agitation of the will (BT 19).

Art, Nietzsche repeatedly states in *The Birth*, deals in illusions and lies which make life bearable; art spreads a veil of beauty over a harsh reality (Schacht, 1995). This position of Nietzsche does not change. In *The Will to Power* — "we possess art lest we perish of the truth". Art transfigures the harshness of Dionysian reality. Thus art, and here we are talking about humanly

created art, cannot be mimetic, an artefact based on shadows, as in Plato. Rather art is a supplement, a metaphysical supplement to the reality of nature, which transfigures and 'overcomes' nature (BT 24).

Now we are in a position to point out the *aporia* in Nietzsche's concept of the Apollonian. How can the world of art be both a supplement, a human creation which casts a beautiful veil, and at the same time a totally natural force, an aspect of nature itself? Nietzsche obviously identifies Apollo and Dionysus as separate forces of creation: They are "two worlds of art differing in their intrinsic essence and in their highest aims" (B.T.16). But at the same time Nietzsche states that they are "interlaced". Besides this, the progeny of the coupling of the deities must indicate a certain indeterminacy — otherwise Nietzsche would not use the image of 'birth'. There can be forms of art, apparently, according to Nietzsche, which are purely Apollonian, such as sculpture and forms which are purely Dionysian such as music. Again, such distinctions are difficult to maintain, as if the creation of music does not require dreaming, human discipline and human individuation. While Nietzsche at times attempts to separate the two deities he also admits, as I have said, that Apollo and Dionysus are "interlaced" (BT p59). But if this is true, if Apollo and Dionysus are interlaced and are forces of nature, then the conceptual distinction of the two must itself be a form of artistic conception. This conceptual framework would then give primacy to Apollo not Dionysus.

It is not until the Will to Power that Nietzsche gives complete primacy to Dionysus for reasons that are perhaps clear. Nietzsche attempts to give primacy to Dionysus for reasons which have to do with Nietzsche's critique of western rationality. The rational or orthodox tradition has engaged in an evasion of the Dionysian, the irrational, the rapturous as well as the abject, the horrifying, in the interest of Truth and the ascetic ideal: the necessity of the connection between order, morality, and reason. Philosophy itself has been based, since Plato, on creating a boundary between itself and the irrational (Klein, 1995). Philosophy as wisdom, has stressed balance, harmony and individuation all guided by the ascetic ideal.

In this sense western philosophy has been Apollonian where Apollo is viewed as a force for order, reason and balance and in Plato related to the bringing about of harmony under the sway of "the good". As well, western philosophy, since Plato, has put 'natural forces' (i.e. what Apollo and Dionysus are) out of play, again in the interest of what Nietzsche calls the ascetic ideal—the unity of reason and balance with 'the good'-whether the good is envisioned in terms of Platonic forms,

Christian morality, or traditions and customs which have been internalized and which now give pleasure — but an unthinking and uncritical pleasure. (In Chapter Two on the allegory of the cave I claim that Plato puts natural forces out of play by ignoring Heraclitus).

By invoking the primacy of Dionysus, at least at the end of his thought, Nietzsche is attempting to bring to philosophy not only what philosophy has evaded, but what Nietzsche views as a truer cosmology, a more honest cosmology than has existed in previous cosmologies which have confused a desire for pleasure, peace, order, with the true nature of things- chaos, chance, contingency. But this sense of contingency or chance, as opposed to harmony, brings us face to face with the 'disgusting, ugly, and painful features of existence' (Morgan, 1941). Nietzsche invokes Dionysus, then, to affirm first, what has been excluded - evil -, the abject, "all that is questionable and terrible in existence"(TI p39) and then, what has been degraded — the world itself, degraded by the other worldly philosophies of transcendence, Platonism-Christianity. Secondly, Dionysus forces upon us the partial and belated nature of all precepts; we cannot have a vision of the whole; we can only have perspectives which are actually illusions or veils of Apollo.

By conceiving of Apollo and Dionysus as "artistic forces which burst forth from nature herself without the mediation of the human artist — energies in which nature's art impulses are satisfied in the most direct and immediate way" (B.T. p2), Nietzsche re-naturalizes nature, or more clearly de-divinizes nature and at the same time places the artistic process at the origins of cosmology — "the world must be seen and can be justified only as an artistic process" — we as natural beings, that is at base 'animals', are part of this cosmic process — we are not distanced from it in such a position that we can pass judgement on it as critics, philosophers, philosopher-kings; therefore we have no position outside of an immanent process called the Apollonian-Dionysian from which to judge or denigrate life. In so far as we are artists - "only in so far as the genius, in the act of artistic creation coalesces with this primordial artist of the world, does he learn anything of the eternal essence of art" (B.T.5).

Let me summarize the above 'commonly held' view of The Birth in a manner which will lead us into the theme of The Birth which is ignored in this description — anti-Socratism. Art, or more specifically tragic art, provides a solution to the problem of suffering by offering a glimpse of the reality behind 'the lie of culture' (Havas, 1995). Dionysus, who is the generic hero-figure of all

Greek tragedy represents a deeper reality, a deeper unity which lies behind the lie of culture. The destruction of the tragic hero, who represents but is not himself, Dionysus, allows the audience to, at once, identify with the tragic hero, and realize that there is a deeper unity, the Dionysian, which lies behind the lie of culture. This provides "metaphysical comfort from the horror and terror of existence" (B T 25)

On this account, the tragic Greeks could live with, in Richard Rorty's terms, the 'contingency' or groundlessness of their culture (Rorty, 1989). The tragedies served to allow the Greeks to be aware of this essential groundlessness of existence. The Greeks then were the people who could stare nothingness in the face and the Greek tragedians were great creators and dramatists due to their understanding of the groundlessness of their existence. The way out of the impasse of the 'nothing' is to create, to 'impose' an order on things that is not there. This imposition is a matter of an Apollonian artistic imposition on an essentially chaotic Dionysian reality. What really is, is wholly natural, Dionysian, and not at all something Apollonian, or cultural. Culture is wholly an illusion, on this account, and Greek tragedy provides the basis for this judgement.

The above 'commonly held' view lends credence to some of Nietzsche's most famous utterances, given mostly in *The Will to Power*. These may be classified as an aspect of Nietzsche's perhaps most famous aphorism-'there are no facts, only interpretations'. For example, "we can comprehend only a world that that we ourselves have made" (W.P. Sec. 495); "not to know but to schematize" etc. There are several other quotes of the same nature. I want to argue for an interpretation of Nietzsche which is more 'moderate' than these quotes signify and which takes into account Nietzsche's preoccupation with Socrates and thus with truthfulness. For Nietzsche's anti-Socratism consists basically in the idea that culture at its best, that is the tragic culture of the ancient Greeks did NOT require, and was in fact 'immune' to the kind of distancing from culture that is implied in both the 'commonly held' view of "The Birth" as well as the quotes from the *Will to Power* above. I turn now to a discussion of Nietzsche's anti-Socratism from *The Birth of Tragedy*.

Anti-Socratism and History

This discussion of Nietzsche's attitude towards Socrates is a supplement to chapter three's discussion of anti-Platonism. Both Socratic responsibility and Platonic reason express standards of judgement which are implicitly nihilistic because they judge life from a 'reactive' standpoint

'outside' of life. Socratic responsibility is a "matter of articulating one's standard of judgement" (Havas, 1995). Platonism, if not Plato, attempts to tie the meaning of what is said to standards lying wholly outside the actual empirical and temporal conditions of human speech and action. Both Socrates and Plato share in the attempt to put out of play the idea that 'truth' or truthfulness have anything to do with historical awareness. Both Socrates and Platonism, in the above senses are representatives of the orthodox tradition of philosophy.

However, though Socrates and Plato are similar in the above respects, Nietzsche's relationship with Socrates is much closer and more ambivalent than his relationship with Plato. Nietzsche at once admires and is highly critical of Socrates; Nietzsche has a strong identification with Socrates as an independent, more or less a-political truth seeker. Even more important for my argument, Nietzsche viewed his alienation from the German culture of his time as parallel to Socrates relative independence from Greek culture.

But there is an enormous difference in their 'alienation'. Socrates viewed himself as a truth seeker and defined truth in a manner and from a stand[point "that is completely external to culture as a whole (Havas, 1995); Socrates aim as Nietzsche sees it is not only to achieve a degree of cultural transcendence, to be able to make considered judgements about certain aspects of culture, but rather to attain, in the name of philosophy, TOTAL INDEPENDENCE from any and all traditions (Havas, 1995). Nietzsche thinks that such independence is first, an impossibility and secondly, implicitly nihilistic.

There is a further parallel between modern Germany and ancient Greece which is made implicit in *The Use and Abuse of History*. And here is where *The Use and Abuse of History* must be read as a companion volume to "The Birth".

The form of this parallel is the following:

Germany does not exist as a culture because it has no proper being. (Lacoue-Labarthe, in Rickels, 1990)

The Athens of the Greek tragedians existed because it did have a proper being.

Nietzsche thought that the Germany of his time had no identity. There was a scission between inside and outside, there was no organic unity. Germany had for years been affected by the modern evil, the historical evil, historicism which is 'depropriation'. (Lacoue-Labarthe):

...we moderns have nothing whatever of our own, [we are] walking encyclopaedias, filled with ages, customs, arts, philosophy, religions, discoveries of others (UAH 6)

Tragedic Athens, on the other hand, as described in *The Birth*, exemplifies a particular kind of culture, characterized by 'authority' and 'obedience'. These words do not connote authoritarianism but rather a culture with a large degree of 'internal unity'(Lacoue-Labarthe). Moving backwards from Socrates to *The Birth*, this meant a culture that was immune to the Socratic demand to give reasons; and this immunity, was for Nietzsche the most important characteristic of tragic Athens. Another way to put this is that for Nietzsche tragedy is possible only when there is an immunity to 'philosophy' itself, to giving reasons, in the sense that the orthodox tradition, provided reasons, essentially false and nihilistic, to the problem of meaning. Meaning, Nietzsche implies in his description of tragedy, is implicit, in some sense unquestioned, and therefore is not really 'meaning' not a semantics, not found through comparisons, between another world and this world, the fundamental and nihilistic comparisons of the orthodox tradition.

And this is where a reading of *The Use and Abuse of History* must be combined with a reading of *The Birth*. Nietzsche's anti-Socratism consists in the combination of a 'tragedic' thesis as well as an historical thesis. The aim of Nietzsche's attack on the Socratic demand for reasons is not intelligible independently of the particular historical context in which it is raised. Socrates concept of 'giving reasons' of distanced truth, came as a result of the 'need' which arose in Athens as a result of the decline of the 'organic-tragedic' pre-Socratic culture. It was only upon this 'breakdown', in which the more or less a-historic Athens began itself to become a culture which became aware of itself via historical thinking, that the need for 'giving reasons', for a sense of truth as distanced from 'culture', arose. Socrates was in this sense a solution to a problem, the problem of a culture which began to not have the organic 'glue' which held it together.

Tragedy is the art that aims, in Nietzsche's terms, to retie the Gordian knot, to draw together the single chaotic strands of a diverse cultural heritage and secure them in a cultural unity. Of course, tragedy simplifies and abbreviates but it does not refute or contradict "the endlessly complex calculus of human action and desire" (Lampert, 1995).

In this way Nietzsche provides a mini-genealogy of the way the philosophy of the orthodox tradition arose. From this historical moment onwards the orthodox or metaphysical tradition was to have the power to expunge, to eradicate, history itself, in the name of truth and even more powerfully, in the name of truth combined with morality, the ascetic ideal.

On this reading of Nietzsche which I am recommending, one must 'back up' from the Second Untimely Meditation to "The Birth" to understand how, for Nietzsche, the historicism of 19th century Germany led him to Greek Tragedy as one piece in the puzzle of his attempt to 'overcome' nihilism. Implicit in Nietzsche's turn to Greek Tragedy is the notion that Socratic Greece mirrors modernity in the sense of a disintegration of culture resulting in the need to 'give reasons'. Also implicit in the aesthetics of the Dionysian releasement from individuality in 'The Birth' is a critique of the 'bourgeois' individualism of his time and the nihilistic consequences of nineteenth century individualism. The reasons for Nietzsche's turn to tragedy, which have to do with Nietzsche's historical sense of the parallels between Socratic Greece and modern Europe cannot be omitted from an account of 'The Birth'.

It is true that Greek Tragedy offered to Nietzsche an alternative cosmology to that of Platonic Greece, a cosmology of chaos which would provide the artist with truly 'raw' materials for describing the human-tragic dilemma. But on this (Heideggarian) reading which I am recommending, Nietzsche's turn to tragedy also requires Nietzsche, according to his own doctrine of 'natural forces', of genealogy, to understand the 'need' in the first place which led Nietzsche in this direction. And this understanding of Nietzsche's need is an understanding of history, an understanding which Heidegger was to call 'the history of Being'. This 'need' of Nietzsche was parallel to the need of Socrates. Just as Socrates, due to the decline of Greek culture had to 'give reasons', so did Nietzsche have to render philosophy historical, to introduce historical as well as psychological thinking in a more self-conscious manner into the body of philosophy-in a manner that did not succumb to the poisonous dangers of historicism. For historicism, the viewing of history as science, as laws of progress, renders history philosophical in a Socratic manner by giving reasons and laws for the self-improvement of mankind. Historicism has the same thrust as Socratism — Being could be penetrated, could be made transparent in the interest of self improvement. How is Nietzsche's understanding of history essentially different? Can truth or at least truthfulness be maintained in the light of the weight of history?

Socratism as Truthfulness

According to the 'commonly held' view of Nietzsche's analysis of Greek Tragedy, 'culture' is essentially false, an artistic or Apollonian imposition of a cultural matrix onto a Dionysian reality. According to this view, every view of ourselves and the world, that is, every system of belief,

structure of desire, artistic creation and so on — is an interpretation, something we create rather than discover. The implication of this 'doctrine' often called perspectivism, is that since there is no determinate structure to the world, then we impose order through interpretation. This is the postmodern, Rortyan doctrine that truth is something that is made, created, and not found (Rorty, 1989).

This view, which has propelled Nietzsche into the postmodern ethos of creativity, play, deconstruction etc., is counterintuitive in the following sense. It means that the world offers no resistance to interpretation, that all and every interpretation is correct. This involves perspectivism in what may be called aesthetic nonsense. According to this interpretation Nietzsche had no interest whatsoever in morality, or what he calls in the 'Genealogy' 'making promises'. However, the 'Genealogy of Morals' discussion of making promises, along with the interpretation of 'The Birth' above, belies the notion that Nietzsche had no interest in morality or the binding forces of culture.

As well, there is another side to the doctrine of perspectivism which is less well acknowledged in postmodern circles. This is the idea that if interpretation is a totally created cultural imposition on a world of chaos, if there are 'no facts but only interpretations,' then we must have total responsibility for those interpretations. We may call this in view of our discussion above, the Socratic alternative. It implies that, as I described it above, interpretations are COMPLETELY external to culture, that we can have an eagle's eye view of things, a moral stance which is sure and responsible to culture but without really being a cultural or social being. This alternative may be called alternately the ascetic ideal or the orthodox tradition. THIS is also counterintuitive. It implies a form of knowledge (of Being) that Nietzsche goes to great lengths to show us is simply not available to a human being (see chapters one through six of this thesis).

Given these two extremes, first of aestheticism and secondly of Socratic moralism, that result from the 'commonly held' view, how does Nietzsche define truthfulness? First, to relate Nietzsche to his forerunner Kant — Kant had drawn a picture of the world which to Nietzsche did not take full enough account of 'the death of god'. Kant's view of truth was still a pious one because it left a noumenal or religious realm which could not be intelligible to human understanding. Nietzsche wishes to restore a kind of intelligibility to the world which is not pious, which is detached from the ascetic ideal. The world for Nietzsche is intelligible or can be an intelligible

place. Its lack of intelligibility is nihilism itself — the inability to be articulate to each other, to listen and to speak in a quite (non-noumenal) manner about human interest and human concern.

Nietzsche's early interest in Greek cosmology is not sustained through to his work in *The Genealogy* or the *Gay Science* to the extent that he propounds an aestheticism which is unconcerned with 'making promises' with an intelligible moral structure as an ACHIEVEMENT of human action, human praxis. The Kantian thing in itself is not necessary as a constraint on human reason and therefore human intelligibility because Nietzsche views the real constraints on understanding as cultural, social, not ontological. As well, he views the formation or the search for truthfulness as well as the creation of individuality as an ACHIEVEMENT of culture. THIS is the meaning of Zarathustra's famous 'tightrope scene' indicating the as yet incompleteness of humankind. Certainly an important aspect of that incompleteness is what Nietzsche calls piety and in particular Christian piety, which has prevented, as Deleuze puts it, philosophy from reaching its true maturity (Deleuze, 1992). But I have still not indicated the importance of Socratic truthfulness to Nietzsche's idea of the importance of the simple intelligibility of the world.

According to Nietzsche's anti- Socratism, theoretic optimism, of which Socrates is the main exponent, must come to grief upon the realization that human thought cannot plumb the depths of Being, that there is an essential problem with the Parmenidean thesis of the unity of thought and being. As we have seen in Chapter Two of this essay, Plato problematized this thesis in the allegory of the cave. But Nietzsche, in 'The Birth' turns to Greek tragedy to contrast tragic insight, tragic pessimism, with Socratic optimism:

Science, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits where optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck ... when they see to their horror how logic coils up ... and finally bites its own tail — suddenly the new form of insight breaks through, TRAGIC INSIGHT, which, merely to be endured, needs art as a protection and remedy (B.T. Sec.15).

It is worth repeating this important thought- "theoretical optimism falls prey to the illusion that human reason can plumb the depths of being" (Havas, 1995). From this assertion or rather discovery (in the cosmology of Greek tragedy) Nietzsche does not conclude that truthfulness is unimportant. Rather in this brief passage from *The Birth*, Nietzsche begins to deal with the three key problems-of truthfulness, of science and of history, and to relate them in a manner which he will further explore in his later works, particularly *The Gay Science*, and *The Genealogy*.

The "powerful illusion of science" (see quote above) is that it is not a practice, that it is a self sustaining entity which provides truth through logic. But in *The Joyful Wisdom*, Nietzsche wants to explore how the will to truth itself became a need, an instrument of both power and survival. How did "knowledge and the striving for the true eventually find their place as a need among other needs." (JS 110). How did "knowledge become a piece of life itself and hence a continually growing power"(JS 151). In this way Nietzsche detaches truth from truthfulness as a need, as a human requirement, as an aspect of power and human interest and as a social practice.

Science exists now in the "dregs of Bacon and Descartes". That is truth as scientific certainty, the rape of nature, the progressive view of history has become fully embodied in modern science. In terms of Heidegger's useful formulation, science is complicit in the modern 'enframing', the view of objects of nature as a 'standing reserve', the control and objectification of nature, and the devaluation of life. Science in these ways is at its core nihilistic. But Nietzsche does not turn away from science; he attempts to reformulate science in a non-nihilistic manner — in a manner which is inclusive of Dionysian natural forces, which he first introduces in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Socratism is our modern inheritance, an inheritance in the form of science away from which we cannot turn. As Harrison states it:

The linkage between the modern individual and the death of Greek Tragedy is the emergence of the theoretical man (*anthropos theoretikos*) and his simultaneous refinement of reason and the use of that reason in the practice of the care of the self. This is the Socratic revolution for Nietzsche: the emergence of theory and of individualism.

The notion of Tragedy as a redemptive principle and as a binding force of culture give way to the philosophical view of the world as object of theory, which Nietzsche identifies with Socrates. By the end of *The Birth*, the Dionysian-Apollonian conflict has given way to the Dionysian-Socratic. And Nietzsche sees this mini-genealogy as mirroring modernity's movement towards science as faith and ethos. But modernity's Socratism, science as public faith, has made it impossible to any longer hide, using the noble lies of Platonism Christianity, the deadly truths: the sovereignty of becoming, the fluidity of all concepts and types, the lack of any cardinal distinction between human and animal. These truths, which Nietzsche brings forward in *The Use and Abuse of History*, have now become a matter of public faith as a result of the frankness of modern science. Platonism has been reversed; the senses are now worshipped and thought, particularly, great

thoughts are "mere bubbles" in the flow of history. "European modernity is a decline of the spirit traceable, in part, to great events in philosophy and religion; its misinterpretation of itself as the progressive advance of the whole of history threatens to make that decline permanent as the end of history" (Lampert, 1995). This is the danger of the dangerous truths which have been hidden by the noble lies of Plato and Bacon-Descartes; their implications are no longer thought about and viewed historically as conflicting with the mythologies of the past; the dangerous truths, filtered through the modern myth of progress have become a modern and pious faith.

The piety of this faith is demonstrated by the surrendering of the infinite quest for truth—which is true science — to the status of Kuhnian 'worldviews', to the language of 'paradigms', to postmodern 'deconstruction'. All of these can be considered as aspects of Christianity's appropriation of philosophy, Jerusalem's capture of Athens. "In Nietzsche's view, that capture was the victory of revenge over the highest possible spiritedness" (Lampert, 1995) — and therefore the most nihilistic event — the victory of the spirit of revenge. Therefore Nietzsche refuses to abandon science to philosophic skepticism. History as genealogy is a science and Nietzsche refuses to abandon either historical science, modern cosmology or evolutionary biology.

In modern science Nietzsche sees the possibility for the transformation of the deadly truths. Nietzschean science is tragic, limited, because unlike Cartesian science it is never certain. And here science meets and unites with eternal recurrence; science, as opinion, but as opinion which keeps the greatest thoughts and problems alive, refuses to turn away from disquieting truths. And science refuses to express "hatred of the human, and even more of the animal, and still more of the material" (GM 3.28) because, tutored by Dionysus and the eternal return, it no longer is guided by the spirit of revenge. The birth of modern tragedy celebrates the truths of nature as modern science instead of evading them in favour of the conscious illusions of Descartes and Platonism-Christianity.

CHAPTER NINE

The Will to Truth and the Will to Power

Introduction

God is dead but given the ways of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown (JW 108).

In this chapter I will discuss Nietzsche's 'doctrine' of the will to power in terms of the will to truth. In outlining the will to power in terms of the will to truth, I am attempting to undermine, those interpretations which connect the cosmology of chaos of *The Birth of Tragedy* to the concept of will which is presented, or which SEEMS to be presented in Nietzsche's posthumously published *Will to Power*. In previous chapters I called this the "commonly held view". Perhaps another name for it may be the 'artistic hypothesis'. How are these connected? What is the connection between the artistic hypothesis and the supposed cosmology of chaos? How does the artistic hypothesis seem to be an answer to the problem of nihilism?

'The Birth' presents the world as an artistic creation of natural forces; nature has no divine reference, nor are there 'laws' of nature; rather the cosmos is constituted by an essential chaos, 'becoming' without 'being'. In order to live in such a world, humankind has to exercise will: that is we must impress or impose upon this chaos, order; failure to do so means a failure to survive. Calling this the artistic hypothesis brings to mind two of Nietzsche's most famous aphorisms, from *The Will to Power*: "we possess art lest we perish of the truth" (WP 822), and "there are no facts, only interpretations" (WP 540).

There is further evidence of the 'artistic hypothesis' mostly from *The Will to Power*: "Not to know but to schematize — to impose upon chaos as much regularity and form as our practical needs require" (WP 515); also "to impose upon becoming the character of being .. is the supreme will to power"(WP 517). Along with this evidence there are the aphorisms also from 'The Will' which imply that artistic creation is a higher value and more important than truthfulness or honesty: "...truth does not count as the supreme value, even less as the supreme power. The will to illusion, to appearance, to deception, to becoming and change (to objectified deception) here counts as more profound, more primeval, metaphysical, than the will to truth, to reality, to mere appearance—the last is itself merely a form of the will to illusion" (WP 619).

These excerpts support the following hypotheses: art is more profound and important than truth; art is the imposition of the strongest will upon chaos; nihilism is the result of an inability to recognize one's right to posit or impose new meanings in the wake of the demise of our highest values. According to the 'artistic hypothesis' ACTIVE nihilism is artistic imposition, performed by the strongest wills who by creating, by imposing, create the kind of reality which must be accepted by the more slavish, by those who are not by nature creative, or who are dominated by a 'master class' of creators. According to the artistic hypothesis, 'culture' is mere illusion, falseness, unreality; there is a deeper Dionysian reality which constitutes the 'raw' material upon which order is imposed.

My contention is that the above 'artistic hypothesis' gains its power from a particular reading of the *Birth of Tragedy* (Nietzsche's first work) and a reading of "The Will", his last, which excludes *The Birth of Tragedy's* concern, (though in muddled form, Nietzsche himself admits in his 1886 revision of the preface) with 'science' or the modern form of the will to knowledge, history, (and in particular the 'evolution' of Socratism), and 'art' in its broadest sense of creativity, and the relation between these. Nietzsche states in his 1886 revision of the preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*: {my task in this book} is "to look at science in the perspective of the artist, but at art in that of life".

The interpretation I am advocating views these themes as beginning in 'The Birth' and as being developed in *The Gay Science* and *The Genealogy*. The 'artistic' interpretation ignores these essential connections and views the 'will to power' as the imprint or imposition of 'values' on 'chaos' — a kind of creation 'ex nihilo'. According to this schema, then, culture is nothing more than a temporary illusion created by the strongest willed, by the 'masters', as a result of the anxiety of groundlessness. The will to power then is about domination by the strongest willed according to a model which views culture on the model of a created artistic product. On this account also culture is 'contingent', it could have been otherwise under different conditions.

There is seemingly as I have said, great deal of evidence for the above ideas, and not always from 'The Will': "Life is essentially injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least at its mildest, exploitation (BGE 259). Here is evidence of the 'artistic' hypothesis, as it may relate to will and imposition. It is difficult to argue that Nietzsche did not at times use the hypotheses of the will to power to describe domination of one group by another. But it can also be argued that this very kind of domination can be seen to have RESULTED from the nihilistic implications of a particular notion of will, i.e. as

substance, as Archimedian point, as mechanistic (see chapter 5) against which Nietzsche argues USING the concept of will to power. I would suggest here that the will to power is used by Nietzsche in two different forms — as a descriptive term and as a philosophical hypothesis. For the will to power as a philosophic concept (rather than as a description of what happens and has happened as a result of the orthodox tradition), is meant to undermine both the concept of 'will' (see chapter five) as well as the concept of power as it is usually used.

The Will to Power and The Tragic

I have argued above that the will to power when seen in the context of the 'artistic hypothesis', is the "imposition of form or structure upon what, in itself, lacks any form or structure" (Havas, 1995). In this definition power is taken to mean control or domination and will is the activity of exercising that domination. But a reading of *The Birth of Tragedy* which takes into account Nietzsche's concepts of culture and of science, in that book, would lead us to a different idea of the will to power. The import of Nietzsche's turn to tragedy is that 'culture', particularly as exemplified in tragic culture, is something for which 'reasons' need not be given. Culture exercises 'restraints' and 'obedience' (Havas, 1995) on those who are part of that culture. But 'restraints' and 'obedience' should not be taken to mean control or domination. Obedience pertains more to the idea that 'culture' is what makes the world 'intelligible'; culture as described in *The Birth* does not exact 'obedience' (in the sense of being dominated) but rather makes such 'exacting' unnecessary. Culture makes the world intelligible. It was the 'lack' of that kind or degree of intelligibility which made necessary, in post tragic culture, the Socratic giving of reasons (which developed in modernity into full blown rationalism, but as well into the 'will to truth'). I will argue, and Nietzsche argues, in *The Gay Science* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, that the will to truth, which began with Socrates in the form of giving reasons, is something from which we, as moderns, cannot turn away; the Socratic will to truth has led us to uncover the illusions, metaphysical and epistemological, of which this impulse is a part. At the same time the commitment to truthfulness remains, in modernity, as an unconditioned will to truth at all costs; as such it remains with us as the modern form of morality, of the ascetic ideal.

Two excerpts, one from Paul Harrison's *The Disenchantment of Reason*, (already quoted in a previous chapter) the other from Nietzsche, support these arguments. First Harrison:

From the standpoint of Nietzsche's *Urgeschichte*, however, knowing itself, the will to know, is the fatal step that leads from Socrates to modernity. Nietzsche argues that "our whole modern culture is entangled in the net of Alexandrian culture. It proposes as its ideal the theoretical person equipped with the greatest forces of knowledge and labouring in the service of science, whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates.

And from Nietzsche :

The truthful person, in the audacious and ultimate sense presupposed by the faith in science, thereby **AFFIRMS ANOTHER WORLD** than that of life, nature and history: and in so far as he affirms this 'other world', does this not mean that he has to deny its antithesis, this world, our world?...It is still a metaphysical faith that underlies our faith in science — and we persons of knowledge of today, we Godless persons and anti-metaphysicians, we too still derive our flame from the fire ignited by faith millenia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is divine (GM p152).

This understanding of the will to truth is an historical understanding; it is only by acknowledging our accomplishments with respect to an understanding of truth that we can become 'accomplished nihilists'. This seems, if I follow Nietzsche correctly, to require a certain resignation to an historical situation which can be overcome neither by an act of will, nor by intellectual pyrotechnics. We "STILL derive our flame from the fire ignited by faith millenia old" (GM p153).

Following this argument, the importance of 'art' for Nietzsche should be seen more as a 'letting things be the way they are' rather than an imposition of the way things should be. This seems to fit the way 'art' and 'tragedy' are related; for tragedy acknowledges 'the way things are', including the necessity to suffer, to be resigned, and to die, and including "the terrifying the evil and the questionable" (WP 451). Tragedy taught the ancient Greeks to recognize how things were for them. Stated philosophically, in the words of Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, tragedy is founded and governed by the law of finitude (Labarthe in Rickles, 1995).

Stated in a different manner, what is dangerous for Nietzsche is the notion of truth as unconditional — that is truth 'at all costs'. This is the kind of truth by which Descartes hoped to 'conquer nature on behalf of mankind' and it is the kind of truth with which Glaucon was 'seduced' by Socrates to value absolutes, in the cave parable as I have described it in Chapter Two. Our attempts to speak and act outside of the constraints of culture manifest what Nietzsche calls "the worst of tastes, the taste for the unconditional" (BGE 31). Also with reference to the allegory of the

cave as well as to Descartes, the taste for the unconditional manifests in the outlook that cultural practices require some sort of 'legitimation' which lie outside of the circle and history of those practices (outside of the cave); 'opinion' under this requirement becomes 'mere' opinion something which cannot legitimate social practices and which therefore is inadequate. Similarly, as we shall see later in this argument, illusions under the sign of science's unacknowledged attachment to the ascetic ideal, become 'mere' illusions, rather than the important, or 'fate-full' illusions which constitute the history of thought. The inability or resistance to acknowledging the necessity of illusion or error is the barrier to making the will to truth more 'honest', that is more historical, more psychological. It is the barrier to viewing 'the death of God' as an historical accomplishment. As well, as I shall argue, it is also a barrier to seeing the will to truth as an inescapable form, for modernity, of the will to power; as such the will to truth teaches us that error is not something that we can 'overcome', but IS something only to which we can respond. (the response is a 'scientific' and not a purely artistic 'overcoming' — but always under the police supervision of mistrust).

The above argument suggests that neither 'power' nor 'will', when viewed in the context of 'tragedic' culture and understood in terms of Nietzsche's period of the *Genealogy* and *The Joyful Wisdom*, should be taken to mean domination, political will, or strength of will, nor should will be taken to mean what it meant for Descartes or Schopenhauer. For both of these thinkers, will meant something like a 'faculty', a power of the person which must be strong in the face of a chaotic and unintelligible world.

I have tried to set out in chapter 4 an essential connection between the 'gnostic', unintelligible universe faced by Descartes and Descartes' need to find not only certainty but efficacy and power. Nietzsche's aim in his overcoming of nihilism is to show that the universe, particularly when viewed under the sign of 'tragedy' is an intelligible place; it makes sense, because 'tragedic culture' did not offer resistance to that making sense; tragic culture suffered from an overabundance of life, from overfullness (BT p32) from the fact that life makes sense, not from the idea that it is chaotic or inscrutable. At least one definition of nihilism, in terms of modern Europe was that life did not make sense in many ways; therefore it became susceptible to the need for 'reasons'; it became susceptible to the Socratic imperative. But if this is the case, if this historical hypothesis is true then of what possible use could it be to 'return' to the study of ancient Greek culture?

The question has already been answered for it is only by way of Nietzsche's rather long itinerary from Greek Tragedy to Plato and the metaphysical tradition, to modern Europe, that an understanding of the 'fatefulness' of history could have been understood. That history Nietzsche views, innovatively, as the history of finitude, of constraint, of limit and he discovered that history as fateful or as finite through an understanding of the 'complicity between tragedy and finitude' (Labarthe in Rickles, 1995). Under the sign of this complicity, Nietzsche views 'power' not as excess, as boundlessness, as an energy which exceeds all limits and is without identity. This is in fact Dionysus. Dionysus is the hero, who in exceeding the limits or conventions of his culture, (In Greek Tragedy) teaches about the intelligible character of the constraints of that culture. Power, on the other hand ARE those constraints which make culture intelligible.

On this reading "power is Nietzsche's name for the constraints that making sense exercise upon us and 'will' is Nietzsche's name for commitment" (Havas, 1995). The will to power has more to do, then, with 'what culture makes us responsive to' according to the various factors which 'position' us within that culture. What is perceived as 'truth', or what makes sense to us, depends on a combination of constraint and commitment. Will refers to "our responsiveness to what constrains us". In the tradition of orthodox philosophy that responsiveness is missing; in its stead there is a pious relationship to truth which views truth as unconstrained or unconditioned, as still related to absolutes. In the philosophic tenor of the orthodox tradition, we position ourselves outside of the 'cave' or culture and forget the constraints of language, culture and history. But that positioning is illusory, is based on a fantasy of purity or perfection, and a distancing from culture which is simply not available, or, one could say, is available only as fantasy. In the philosophic mood of the orthodox tradition 'truth' is unconstrained . By redefining truth as an aspect of the will to power Nietzsche places truth where he thinks it belongs--as conditioned by culture and history. How does history figure in Nietzsche's rendering of the will to power? How is the will to power an answer to Nietzsche's view of the prevalence of nihilism in the orthodox tradition? What is the relationship between the will to power and history.

I want to use Richard Rorty as a foil to argue against a particular interpretation of what some postmodernists take to be Nietzsche's concept of history and by doing so, clarify, Nietzsche's notion of history. This is necessary because the will to truth, which Nietzsche argues, in *The Joyful*

Wisdom, is our (i.e. modernity's) particular form of the will to power) is 'fate-full' for modernity, is inescapable, a destiny, which is closely linked to nihilism.

I here argue that truth cannot be seen as Rorty claims, as something which is created and therefore 'contingent' (Rorty, 1989). The notion of truth as contingent is based on the notion that we can distance ourselves from our linguistic and institutional practices and define truth apart from these. At the same time that Rorty defines truth as 'created' he avers that we cannot really distance ourselves from 'the way things are done', from our social and cultural practice. (In this sense Rorty is very close to Nietzsche). But if this is the case then what is the point of arguing that truth, defined historically is 'contingent'. By contingent Rorty COULD mean contingent UPON something, that is contingent upon cultural practices. THIS, I suggest is what Nietzsche might mean if he used the word contingent instead of the word he does use--'conditional', as he uses it in the Will to Power (sec 555): ...coming to know is always placing oneself in a conditional relation to something..." The problem is that Rorty seems to mean by contingency, something entirely different--that things could have been otherwise, that because truth is something which is 'created', then it could at any historical juncture been created otherwise. Now that we have this realization we can be aware of ourselves as the creators of history; we can create in a manner which will wreak less havoc on the world in the form of cruelty, cruelty being "the worst thing we can do to one another" (Rorty, 1989).

According to the above interpretation of Rorty, Rorty must be defined as an active nihilist. An active nihilist, as I have already set it out, is one who defines nihilism as the "result of an inability to recognize one's right to posit or impose new meanings in the wake of the demise of our highest values" (Havas, 1995). Rorty either sees himself as the strong poet, or advocates the 'strong poet' ('strong poet' is a phrase which Rorty derives from Harold Bloom) as one who has this right of imposition. I have suggested above that Nietzsche's concept of nihilism is much broader and more complex than the active-passive nihilism dichotomy would suggest and that the 'will to power' and the 'will to truth' as a form of the will to power are Nietzsche's names for that complexity. More specifically the notion of the strong poet or the 'master' who has the 'right' to impose new values implies a form of 'responsibility' which is still pious, still attached to the ascetic ideal. Rorty's idea of the way in which Nietzsche is historical follows from what I have called above the 'artistic hypothesis'. Again it suggests the notion that the 'strong poet' 'creates' culture by way of an

'imposition' of values. As I have argued this accounts for only a very narrow range of Nietzsche's thinking about values.

First, the notion of responsibility (to create new values) suggests the very notions of agency or self against which Nietzsche argued in his deconstruction of the rationalist tradition (which I set out in chapter five). To view Nietzsche as uniquely AFTER — that is AFTER the demise of all such Archimedian points such as 'self' or 'will' is a much more fruitful way to understand the relationship between the will to power and nihilism — to understand how Nietzsche offers the will to power as a response, but not necessarily a solution, to the problem of nihilism; the concept of the will to power has everything to do with the difference between being responsive and finding a solution; for on the account of will I am presenting here, the very meaning of will to power is meant as a replacement for the idea that we must find philosophic solutions to philosophic problems which Nietzsche views as created in the first place by the creations of philosophic fictions or fantasies. These fictions, in turn, were created as solutions to 'problems' such as the 'groundlessness of existence' which are themselves views of the 'cosmos' or truth to which humans are simply not privileged.

If power on this reading is something like the constraint which culture i.e. institutions and language, places upon us, and will is 'commitment', but not 'self' or 'soul' in the sense of an agency that can be said to exist apart from 'culture', then why does Nietzsche use the word 'will'; will seems to imply the strong sense of agency against which I am arguing. One answer, as I stated above, is that Nietzsche does sometimes use both will and power in this sense, for instance to mean political will to power. Here, I think, Nietzsche is using the term 'descriptively'. But when Nietzsche uses the term 'philosophically' I think he means by 'will' something like the impossibility of evading subjectivity. And subjectivity can equally be translated as opinion or interpretation. Will as 'interpretation' is not something we "do", as philosophers or strong poets, but rather something that is more related to our animality, to our ability to survive as organisms. 'Will', on this reading is a necessary function of the preservation of life; there is no question that Nietzsche means to view humanity in this rather humbler physiological fashion—to not commit the error of the 'overvaluation of thought.' (Freud uses this phrase in Totem and Taboo). But this does not mean, I think that Nietzsche is reductionistic; our 'animality' for Nietzsche, is inclusive of the highest degrees of creative, intellectual, moral, and altruistic endeavours. It is just that Nietzsche refuses to view these

endeavours (that is interpretation, or will to power) as embodying some sort of qualitative leap by which we can define ourselves as having a 'core' of humanness which is 'essentially' human, which would privilege us in knowing what the cosmos is really like, and thence to construct a 'true philosophy' based on this conception of the universe. Thus when Nietzsche says:

The total character of the universe is in all eternity chaos in the sense not of a lack of necessity but a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms (JW 109).

He is not claiming to know that 'chaos' = the true character of the universe but rather that such 'true character' is unknowable; we do not have privileged information regarding the true nature of the universe; we are left only with something which may be called interpretations in which reason plays a lesser role than it would if we did have such knowledge. The idea that in the absence of an understanding of the 'structure' of the world we are left with interpretation, seems, for many postmodern thinkers, to leave us with the 'artistic hypothesis' The artistic hypothesis would define interpretation as creativity. And this does seem to follow-but only if it seen that 'creativity' embraces the widest circle of activities, including survival, and not only literature and art.

For example, Nietzsche relates 'interpretation' with adaptation on a biological level in a passage in 'The Genealogy':

"whatever exists, having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it; all events in the organic world are a subduing, a becoming master, and all subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated" (GM 11).

New meanings which are derived from new interpretations, create new objects of interpretation and therefore necessitate in turn new interpretations. But interpretation, in this instance should not be read as 'imposition' on an object because for Nietzsche there is no object, no 'thing in itself'. Therefore interpretations are always subject to being re-interpreted, to becoming, in Deleuze's terms, overcome by other 'forces'. Will is Nietzsche's word for the interplay amongst these forces.

"Will is the differential element of force...the will is not exercised mysteriously on muscles and nerves, still less on 'matter in general', but is necessarily exercised on another will — will can operate only on will — one must venture the hypothesis that whatever 'effects' are recognized, will is operating on will" (BGE 36).

It must be concluded that this leaves Nietzsche with a much 'weaker' sense of interpretation than is thought by the artistic hypothesis. Interpretation is all pervasive, inescapable. But by the same token, it is decentred and more or less unconscious. Interpretation is by no means an answer to the problem of nihilism but rather a symptom or indicator of nihilism's inescapability as an historical process.

That Nietzsche considers 'will to power' only one possible interpretation amongst others and that the act of interpreting itself is an important aspect of will to power is suggested in this passage- 22- from Beyond Good and Evil:

“and somebody might come along who, with opposite intention and mode of interpretation, could read off of the same nature and with regard to the same phenomenon, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power — an interpreter who could picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all 'will to power' so vividly that almost every word, even the word 'tyranny' itself, would eventually seem unsuitable, or a weakening and attenuating metaphor — being too human — but he might nevertheless, end by asserting the same about the world as you do, namely, that it has a 'necessary' and 'calculable' course, NOT because laws obtain in it, but because they are absolutely lacking....”

Notice here that 'will to power' appears in quotation marks in order to disrupt literal meaning and to indicate that it too is interpretation.

History, Science, and The Will to Power

On the account of will to power which I am putting forward will and the necessity of interpretation are very closely linked. But though Nietzsche uses the biological science of his time to show the continuity between survival and interpretation, the 'will to truth' as a form of the 'will to power' demands that that very scientific outlook which 'analyses' in terms of the Cartesian project of breaking things down to their elemental particles, also deconstructs itself over a period of time, has a historical evolution. The theme of truth's historicity did not suddenly crop up out of nowhere in *Human All Too Human* and *The Genealogy of Morals*. It is there, as I have stated earlier in *The Birth of Tragedy*:

Science, spurred by its powerful illusion, speeds irresistibly towards its limits where its optimism, concealed in the essence of logic, suffers shipwreck .. finally the new

form of insight breaks through, tragic insight which merely to be endured, needs art as a protection and a remedy.(BT 15).

In this mini genealogical account of the relationship between tragic insight and science, Nietzsche attempts to show how history and necessity have come together, to show that science-truth has had a specific history. Namely science has been spurred on by a powerful illusion. This illusion may be called by several names. Basically it is the illusion of an explanatory, or 'logical' endpoint to its searchings. Such theoretic optimism, as the passage notes, 'suffers shipwreck' from its own 'unconditional' premise of truth at all costs. The will to truth, in modernity, can no longer, according to Nietzsche, evade the conclusion that such endpoints are illusory. In this way the will to truth as 'science' in modernity has the opportunity to recognize its own limits:

Because the ascetic ideal has hitherto dominated all philosophy, because truth was posited as Being, as God, as the highest court of appeal — because truth was not "permitted" to be a problem at all, is this "permitted" understood? — From the moment that faith in this ascetic ideal is denied, a NEW PROBLEM ARISES: that of the VALUE of truth (GM p153).

The evasion of such recognition results in science's complicity with the ascetic ideal and therefore with the piety of knowledge. And we have seen that pious knowledge is nihilistic because it positions itself as an evaluator of 'life' from the standpoint of existing values. Such a standpoint is nihilistic in its refusal to take up the task, which is an historical task, of the valuation of those values which are taken for granted by science's complicity with the ascetic ideal and thus implicitly with Platonism-Christianity.

Historical analysis, or the exploration of the creation of values which Nietzsche calls genealogy, shows that "the problem of values is the problem of their creation" (Deleuze, 1968). This is the essential link between the tragedy, history, and science or knowledge. To follow Deleuze:

"evaluations are not values but ways of being, aspects of Dasein, (in Heidegger's terms) the modes of existence of those who judge and evaluate" (Deleuze, 1968).

The will to truth attempts to escape this questioning by hiding behind the ascetic ideal or the orthodox tradition. Nietzsche exposes this complicity between truth and the ascetic ideal and evaluates truth itself from the standpoint of its historical evolution. In doing so he finds that truth has been a category of morality. But the particular form that this 'morality' takes in modernity

involves an unwillingness to view 'truth' in the context of history and therefore a refusal of its evaluation.

This very refusal is nihilistic, life denying, because it takes truth as a standard of measurement without looking into the validity of that standard. Truth is viewed as 'unconditional' as truth at all costs. But this notion of truth is actually comic rather than tragic because it will always uphold an order of reactionary forces. It fails to see any relationship between our limited subjective viewpoints, opinions, actions, and truth itself. If this connection could be made then truth would be seen as imbricated with the illusions and errors which make life tragic and which at the same time create the Dionysian impetus to break through the boundaries of time and space.

The nihilistic 'person of knowledge' of modernity views his 'knowledge' as an alternative to falsehood and therefore as an aspect of progressive forces. He is fooled by the objectivist fallacy that truth as it is connected with science (and it must be made clear that the modern man of knowledge of which Nietzsche speaks, views truth in the context of science) will eventually solve so called 'social' problems, without seeing that science-technology has become a social problem in itself. Science is here seen as an alternative to the 'old' views of theology and philosophy, the upholder of progressive forces.

Nietzsche explicitly rejects this viewpoint — that a scientific outlook is a replacement to a philosophic one which it leaves behind as anachronistic:

"No! this modern science — let us face this fact — is the best ally the ascetic ideal has at present, and precisely because it is the most unconscious, involuntary, hidden, and subterranean ally!" (GM 111)

It is precisely the failure of historical awareness which views science as progressive and beyond illusions, which is nihilistic for Nietzsche. It is a historical repetition of the modern, post-Cartesian quest for certainty as an overcoming of the errors of the past. Such overcoming is replete with the spirit of revenge, of 'resentment' which attempts, to relegate the 'it was' of the past to the trashcan of anachronistic illusion.

Science's will to truth in fact must be seen as replete with morality, with the ascetic ideal, and thus as continuous with Platonism- Christianity. Nietzsche's genealogy, though it introduces historical awareness as revealing the morality which lingers as an aspect of the will to truth, is itself an aspect of that will to truth. Nietzsche, then cannot, and does not, make claims to overcome the ascetic ideal. Such overcoming would involve Nietzsche in the same 'extinction of the self', the

same hollowing out of subjectivity, (and thus of illusion, error, blindness) which Nietzsche thinks results from the modernist evasion of the problem of nihilism in the form of new more certain truths. Hatred of history, resentment, the spirit of revenge, all the reactive forces which are life denying and therefore nihilistic, require the adoption of new truths as an evasion of subjectivity.

These arguments are outlined in section 344 of *The Gay Science*. In this section Nietzsche is dealing in part with the myth of objectivism in science. Tragic insight opposes to objectivism the notion that 'truth' cannot be separated from subjectivity, error, and illusion and that therefore truth has a price. But the 'price' of truth is not the difficulty of living without illusions if by this is meant that the illusions of the past can be tossed out as irrelevant. Rather the price is the necessity to respond to the notion of the 'death of God'; but such response requires the historical awareness of living in the shadow of this event.

Listen to section 108, p167 of *The Gay Science*:

New Struggles — After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave — a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown — and we still have to vanquish his shadow too.

To understand the significance of the Death of God is not to think that faith can be vanquished in the name of reason or science. Rather it is to understand the struggle inherent in the conflict between our will to knowledge and the event of the death of God. Historical awareness tells us that we have two inheritances neither one of which we can 'shake off' — the Socratic imperative to knowledge and the Judeo-Christian inheritance of religious faith. But Nietzsche does not accept the capture of Athens by Jerusalem — the *Gay Science*, *The Joyful wisdom* embraces the scientific spirit which has evolved out of the philosophic spirit of Athens.

Conclusion

Wherever Socratism turns its searching eyes it sees lack of insight and the power of illusion; and from this lack it infers the essential perversity and reprehensibility of what exists (Harrison, 1994).

We have seen in the first part of this essay that 'morality' (as defined by the orthodox tradition — i.e. as universal, abstract standards — which includes the notion of unconditional truth)

is nihilistic. Morality, in this general sense creates standards by which the world is judged and found inadequate. Philosophy as it has existed within the orthodox tradition has supported and indeed created this sense of 'morality'. In this sense philosophy and morality (roughly Athens and Jerusalem) have erected rather 'monstrous' edifices of thought as a response to life's perceived inadequacy and to life's sufferings, contingencies, paradoxes. Nietzsche's exploration of Christianity and Platonism reveals that these axial world systems have, in effect, created meaninglessness through the attempt to avoid suffering, chaos and instability, through the avoidance of the Dionysian.

Nietzsche's exploration of tragedy and his affirmation of the importance of seeing the tragic or Dionysian as an aspect of life, suggests that there is plenty of meaning, that we suffer BECAUSE THERE IS meaning and that the 'will to truth' needs to be strong enough to absorb this overabundance. The attempt to affirm Dionysus alone, however, as an 'answer' to the problem of nihilism, under the sign of the 'artistic hypothesis,' is itself nihilistic. It is an attempt to reject history; the attempt to reject our reverences is itself a form of nihilistic self-denial which has resulted from philosophy's attempt to evade the Dionysian in the form of 'problems' and 'solutions', the giving of reasons.

The death of God may, in the context of nihilism be seen as the requirement that truth be viewed conditionally — that we should eschew the quest of Glaucon and the quest of Descartes to find:

"a position outside of morality, some point 'beyond good and evil', to which one has to rise climb, or fly — and in the present case at least a point beyond OUR good and evil, a freedom from everything 'European' by which I mean the sum of the imperious value judgements that have become part of our flesh and blood" (JW 380).

However what I have been attempting to show throughout this thesis (see particularly the quote from Plato's Republic that opens Chapter 2) is that we simply cannot eschew such quest. We require under the Socratic-Christian imperative which is our inheritance, to achieve objectivity, knowing though, as we SHOULD know, that such objectivity is impossible. We wish to escape the perils of who we have become, the perils of the death of God, but such evasion is only possible at the price of creating an overdetermined structure of thought which denies, in the first place, that life, though it is painful, makes sense. To quote a well known Nietzsche scholar "being a modern is

difficult". I suggest here that a great part of the difficulty is living within a historical context which has become almost monstrous in its 'overdetermination' of meanings. Nietzsche, particularly through his notions of genealogy and the 'eternal recurrence' suggests that we cannot step back from the task of, first responsiveness to, and then, articulation of, these historical meanings. At the same time Nietzsche envisions a new lightness, a new healthfulness which can result from a new kind of scientific spirit — a science which can accept the spirit of infinite questioning without certainty.

CHAPTER TEN

Summary and Conclusions

The technologies that we have, both in penicillin and in nuclear arms, are things that have been summoned forth by getting things to give their reasons..(George Grant, In Conversation, 1995).

In this thesis I have attempted to discuss Nietzsche's concept of nihilism both from the standpoint of Nietzsche's critique of the orthodox-metaphysical tradition and from the standpoint of Nietzsche's attempts to reconstruct philosophy through an inclusion of tragedy and genealogy. The theme of Dionysus spans these efforts, from its early introduction in the *Birth of Tragedy*, to Nietzsche's final (non-posthumously) published words in *Ecce Homo* "Have I been understood?—Dionysus against the Crucified.." (Nietzsche, 1889). The theme of Dionysus can be seen to propel Nietzsche's thought through three antitheses - all of which include Dionysus — Dionysus vs. Apollo, Dionysus vs. Socrates and Dionysus vs. The Crucified. I have come to the conclusion in my final chapter that one should not consider Nietzsche to be abandoning 'philosophy' in favour 'poetry' when these words are taken in their broadest sense. This is the 'postmodern' stance adopted by such thinkers as Derrida and Paul de Man, who "accept the popular notion that Nietzsche lacked a theory of truth, that Nietzsche believed all truth claims to be interpretations without foundation" (Warren, 1988). I suggest here that Nietzsche's continual attempts to inject Dionysus into philosophic discussion from the beginning to the end of his career may have led Nietzsche interpreters in this direction through the exclusion of the themes of truthfulness and history which are both there from the beginning of his thought in *The Birth of Tragedy*.

A second wave of interpreters influenced by Heidegger, amongst them Schacht and Danto, stress the ontological, metaphysical, and epistemological aspects of Nietzsche's thought. This has resulted from Heidegger's (misfounded, I think) attempts to view Nietzsche as the last metaphysician. Heidegger views the eternal recurrence, the *ubermensch*, and the will to power as metaphysical doctrines. For example in *Nietzsche, Volume Four*, Heidegger's volume which treats the theme of nihilism, Heidegger sees an "essential connection" between the concept of will in Descartes and in Nietzsche. This thesis, as is pointed out in chapter four, is in complete agreement with Heidegger regarding the fact that Descartes begins with an attempt to discover certainty but ends with the 'demonic' construction of truth as will. But as I point out in Chapter Nine, I think

Nietzsche's concept of 'will to power' is meant to UNDERMINE such metaphysical notions of will. I also point out that Nietzsche does this with difficulty, often switching back and forth in his writings from the 'metaphysical' notion of will to the notion of will as 'decentred', as a construction produced by cultural and, ultimately, historical, contexts. Nevertheless I argue that Nietzsche attempts to re-introduce into philosophy a notion of 'subjectivity', which emphasizes its concrete and materially situated nature.

I have introduced the notion of the 'orthodox tradition' of philosophy as the mainstream branch of western philosophy in order to distinguish this form of thinking from the skeptical, sophist, Heraclitean, and poetic traditions which are more or less integrated into the mainstream at various historical junctures. What distinguishes the orthodox tradition, I have suggested in Chapter One, is an evasion of the notion of a concrete and materially situated subjectivity. In its stead is a notion of 'self' or 'soul' which is metaphysically constructed and therefore which has little to do with concrete social and historical contexts. The orthodox tradition's abstract notion of Truth and its metaphysically constructed notion of self, are complicit in the evolution of culture as nihilistic or meaningless because within this tradition, questions of certainty, ethical standards which are universal, and a priori philosophic concepts, have taken precedence over a sense of 'praxis-action-opinion-subjectivity' which has to do with humanity's concrete 'action' or activity in the world.

The orthodox tradition is humanist, that is, it sees the person as the centre and constituting agent of thinking, making, and doing. The Copernican revolution began the decentering process whereby we could no longer view the human being at the centre. In Nietzsche's terms 'we roll to position x'; we are decentred, we have lost dignity in our own eyes.

Nietzsche's name for this decentering process is 'the death of God'. Nietzsche, I suggest, names 'truthfulness' the process whereby we receive and integrate, in a manner which does justice to the important illusions which comprise our history, the 'news' of the death of God. This same sense of truthfulness requires us to see, historically, that our Socratic-Platonic heritage is something which we cannot simply shake off. The attempt to leave off our heritage, Nietzsche names the ascetic ideal, an ideal with which modern science-knowledge is complicit. The modern will to truth, when it is 'weak', that is, not sufficiently guided by the fatefulness of our historicity, reinscribes nihilism, by re-engaging in what Arnold Ghelen calls 'overcoming'. (Snyder, Jon, Intro. to *The End of Modernity*). Overcoming is the viewing as archaic the old truths (such as God, or religious belief) in favour of the new truths, the new regime, the new scientific eugenics programs etc.

Nietzsche cautions suspicion of all purifications beginning from the Platonic attempt to purify philosophy (of poetry, of sophism, of Heraclitus, of Homer- [Arendt, 1959]), while at the same time cautioning us that such attempts at purification also come in the form of attempts at scientific objectivity, something the West is destined for, something which cannot simply be shaken off. The desire to achieve objectivity, as Arendt states it in *Between Past and Future* is intimately related to 'the extinction of the self' (Arendt, 1949).

Accordingly, I would like to attempt a Nietzschean definition of philosophy as it exists in the orthodox tradition. Philosophy within the orthodox tradition is thought which is based on the extinction of subjectivity, when subjectivity is defined, contra the metaphysical notion of self, as human agency, or meaningful praxis, within concrete social-political-historical contexts. Nietzsche suggests in the *Joyful Wisdom* and *The Genealogy of Morals*, that such praxis, can only be meaningful and thus non-nihilistic, in modernity, when it is based on our Socratic Platonic-Christian legacy of truthfulness, a legacy which is not easy, which requires 'achievement' or accomplishment, because that sense of truthfulness will always be in conflict with necessary illusions. To integrate that sense of achievement or accomplishment in understanding the 'death of God' requires us to create our subjectivity not through a wilful act of self-creation, or through the creation of poetry, though these acts, as postmodernists point out, are important creative acts in the determination of the modern sense of self — but, strange as it may sound from the philosopher who wrote the *AntiChrist*, through 'suffering', where suffering means living a fully embodied 'this worldly' life.

Prior to those creative acts Nietzsche implores the modern to understand the meaning of suffering, but in a worldly context. To understand the world requires the modern to suffer in the sense of listening to, reading, bearing — the world, the text, the person, as they are. Only in this manner can a subjectivity which is concrete be formed and a sense of self which is intelligible be lived. Making the world make sense means allowing ourselves to see the sense that is already there in the world. This means enduring the limitations of the tragic blindness, through which, as partial and belated creatures, we live and suffer.

Conclusions

Perhaps the most important conclusions of this thesis have already been drawn by defining nihilism as something which cannot be 'overcome' in any simplified manner, by showing that modern science's complicity with the ascetic ideal attempts such overcoming under the guise of progressive forces which are really politically reactionary, and by showing that philosophy, as it is constructed by the orthodox tradition, evades practical subjectivity and thus the truthfulness and suffering that are necessary to make sense of the world.

At least one of the general conclusions that I think can be drawn from this thesis, is that we, as moderns, because of the severity of the orthodox tradition's focus on truth are 'destined' to define ourselves, in terms of "will to truth". In fact it is imperative to Nietzsche that we so define ourselves. This means that the 'death of God' is not something which we can put behind us. It is the very boldness and severity of the orthodox tradition's search for truth which forbids this, and this very boldness which Nietzsche adopts as his own. It is also the focus on truth, at the centre of both Socratism and Christianity which forbids dogmatic acceptance of the very tenets of those systems of thought. Christianity's notion of 'sincerity', for example, results in the 'deconstruction' from within Christianity itself, of the dogmatic notions of otherworldliness, sin, redemption, etc., which are also central to Christianity. At the end of this process we are left with a Christianity, which at least from the perspective of philosophy or atheism, is hollow at the core. Nishitani, in his book on nihilism states it this way: "Knowledge itself is only possible through the will to power which constantly engages in efficient self-deception" (Nishitani, 1990). One of the important conclusions of this essay, then, is that viewing these illusions as 'mere' illusions, rather than IMPORTANT and NECESSARY illusions is one of the ways in which moderns evade the difficult task of truthfulness and the difficult accomplishment of the formation of a practical subjectivity which makes sense of the world.

At the same time Nietzsche's anti-Platonism consists in not accepting the necessity of false beliefs or illusions. If illusions will always accompany thought and action, or in other words, if tragedy in its broadest sense, is unavoidable, and Nietzsche thinks this is so, this does not mean that Nietzsche does not think that illusions should not be exposed as such. In fact the idea of consciously accepted illusion he named "Jesuitism" — an aspect of philosophy Nietzsche thought it was time to overcome. And Jesuitism, in the form of evading the implications of falsehood has certainly been an important part of the orthodox tradition up until Nietzsche.

Following up on the theme of evasion I would like to explore at least one current educational issue which I think is informed by Nietzsche's analysis of the importance and inevitability of truthfulness, and its evasion. This is the issue which I will name here the issue of excellence and equality. In discussing this issue I wish first of all bring an important theme of Nietzsche's, one which I have so far avoided, out into the open, and secondly, show how Nietzsche's treatment of this issue can inform, in a very constructive manner, I think, current thinking about education.

An important theme running through Nietzsche's thought is one which is unsavoury and difficult to digest for liberal egalitarians — that is Nietzsche's anti-liberalism, his anti-egalitarianism, his neo-Aristocratism (Warren, 1988). Nietzsche's conservatism is an integral part of his thought; but I would like to suggest that running counter to Nietzsche's so called anti-liberalism is a focus on the individual and in particular individual excellence which is very much a PART of liberal tradition. One of Nietzsche's greatest concerns is an educational one — the formation of outstanding individuals. Nietzsche's claim is that liberal-egalitarian cultures are no longer interested in excellence or at least do not have the capacity, because of the levelling effect of modern egalitarianism, to produce excellence. This is at least one aspect of Nietzsche's critique of the notion of equality in modernity.

I would suggest to liberals who express outrage at Nietzsche's interest in aristocracy that, at least, Nietzsche brings a very important issue to the fore within liberal thought, an issue that is avoided consistently. This is simply the fact that there is a conflict between the notions of equality and excellence, that one is often bought at the price of the other. I am not here taking an anti-egalitarian stance; I am merely pointing out a situation in which the 'will to truth' operates as an evasion in modern liberal societies; it fails to think historically; it fails to understand the death of God. In doing so it operates in a reactionary manner espousing under the guise or belief in progress, the notion that, in time, ALL people will be able to achieve excellence, at least, in their own way, or the reverse — that we will achieve a society of total equality which is ALSO a society of excellence.

What I want to point out here is not at all that Nietzsche's aristocratic stance should be justified. What I wish to point out is our evident refusal to SIMPLY LOOK at this issue, to behold it, to consider it — to consider that there is a conflict between equality and excellence and to see how this conflict plays itself out in modern liberal education and in schools in particular. IF we

WOULD look at this issue more closely we would also see the hypercompetitiveness, or alternatively, the utter apathy of the less gifted, that results from our failure to do so. Finally if we could stare down the truths and difficulties of this situation-- the unsolvable paradoxes inherent in modern education, in a ruthlessly Nietzschean manner, we would, I submit, be much less easily led into extremist technocratic solutions.

The basis for Nietzsche's dislike of liberal democracy is that conflict is an essential aspect of the creation of 'higher culture' as well as excellence in individuals. Many passages may be cited in support of Nietzsche's theory of conflict. One of the most cited passages that deals with conflict in its very widest sense is from *Beyond Good and Evil*. This passage also shows the connection between Nietzsche's concept of nihilism and liberal equality---that is that liberal culture imposes equality as rule or law bringing about disintegration instead of enhancement of life:

Refraining mutually from injury, violence, and exploitation and placing one's will on a par with that of someone else — this may become, in a certain rough sense, good manners among individuals if the appropriate conditions are present (namely if these individuals are actually similar in strength and value standards and belong together in one body). But as soon as this principle is extended, and possibly even accepted as the **FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF SOCIETY**, it immediately proves to be what it really is — a will to the **DENIAL** of life, a principle of disintegration and decay. Here we must be aware of superficiality and get to the bottom of the matter resisting all sentimental weakness: life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; suppression, hardness, imposition of one's own forms, incorporation and at least, at its mildest, exploitation — but why should one use those words for which a slanderous intent has been imprinted for ages? ... everywhere people are now raving about, even under scientific disguises about coming conditions of society in which the exploitative aspect will be removed — which sounds to me as if they promised to invent a way of life that would dispense with all organic functions (BGE 259).

This passage supports the concept of nihilism put forward in this thesis — that is, as soon as a principle, such as equality is seen as a "**FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE OF SOCIETY**" it becomes an 'external' standard by which 'life' is measured and found wanting in some way. Nietzsche seems to essentialize 'life' by naming it "essentially appropriation, injury overpowering" etc.; I dealt with this to some extent in the previous chapter. The point I want to make here is that Nietzsche views it as potentially destructive, as 'life' denying to repress conflict. Perhaps this is the influence of Heraclitus — "War is father of all things and king of all; and some he has shown as Gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free" (Wheelwright, 1966).

If Nietzsche invokes strife, and sees exploitation as rooted in life. "it is not because he endorses or affirms political violence, but rather because he was convinced that strife, whether in the individual or society at large, is the essential sign of nobility" (Klein, 1997). From the first essay of *Genealogy of Morals*:

One might even say that the struggle between the values good and bad, good and evil has risen ever higher and thus become more and more profound and spiritual so that today there is perhaps no more decisive mark of a higher nature, a more spiritual nature, than that of being divided in this sense and a genuine battleground of these opposed values (GM I).

Nietzsche believes that human beings are "essentially unequal and that any attempt to equalize these differences will have a pernicious effects on the health of individuals and the culture at large" (Klien, 1997). As well, Nietzsche sees conflict and creativity as closely related and this inclusive of conflict within the person as well as amongst members of society. Two excerpts from *The Genealogy of Morals* discuss the relation between the evolution of self conflict and the repressions of social life:

These fearful bulwarks with which the political organization protected itself — brought about that all those instincts of wild, free, prowling man turned backwards AGAINST MAN HIMSELF — the existence on earth of an animal soul turned against itself was something so new, profound, unheard of enigmatic, contradictory and PREGNANT WITH THE FUTURE that the aspect of the earth was essentially altered. From now on, man gives rise to an interest, a tension a hope, almost a certainty, as if with him something was announced and preparing itself, as if man were not a goal but only a way, an episode, a bridge, a great promise.(GM II)

These passages and several others concerning 'the will to power' suggests that Nietzsche demands that power and conflict, both intra-psychic and societal be acknowledged as both creative and destructive. But Nietzsche's demand for this recognition is not at all a call to, or acceptance of, political violence. I believe that Nietzsche's hope, his 'great promise' was that the facing up to the deadly truths which he first announces in *The Use and Abuse of History*: the sovereignty of becoming, the flux of all types, forms and concepts, and the lack of cardinal distinction between human and animal, would, once their potentially nihilistic implications were absorbed and accommodated, lead to a new kind of honesty and truthfulness which would be ennobling, invigorating, within the context of a weakened sense of the importance of all orthodoxies.

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Abbreviations Used in the Text For Nietzsche's Works

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|-------------|--|
| BT | The Birth of Tragedy |
| BGE | Beyond Good and Evil |
| TSZ | Thus Spake Zarathustra |
| GM | The Genealogy of Morals |
| GS or JW | The Gay Science (Joyful Wisdom) — Both Titles Used |
| EH | Ecce Homo |
| UAH | On the Use and Disadvantage (Abuse) of History |
| TI | Twilight of the Idols |
| HAH | Human All Too Human |
| WP | The Will To Power |
| BGE | Beyond Good and Evil |
| PTAG | Philosophy on the Tragic Age of the Greeks |

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