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THE *ERZIEHUNG* OF THE HUMAN SOUL: AN INTERPRETATION OF NIETZSCHE'S

UNZEITGEMÄSSE BETRACHTUNGEN

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For Matthew, an Erzieher and a friend

...und Leben überhaupt heisst in Gefahr sein.¹

¹ Nietzsche, KSA 1.360.

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However, any errors contained within this dissertation are my sole responsibility.

Abstract

This dissertation is an interpretation of the four essays that comprise Nietzsche's *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* [UB] as a single, coherent whole. Its first four chapters are each a close reading of one of these essays; in them, Nietzsche's theoretical understanding of human life in general, as well as of the best possible kind of life, is progressively unfolded – as well as his practical project of effecting a large-scale cultural reform in conjunction with Wagner's Bayreuth project. The focal point of my interpretation is the complex understanding of the nature of the human soul contained within the *UB*: its constitutive parts and their interactions, the process of its growth or unfolding, the ways in which education (as both *Bildung* and *Er-ziehung*) can help or hinder this growth, and the basic types of human ways of life into which it tends to crystallize. I call this the *erotic-historic soul* after its two main constituent parts, desiring and memory. I argue that this is, at its core, the same model that we find in Nietzsche's mature works. Moreover, Nietzsche's understanding of the soul is central not just to the thinking behind the *UB*, but also to their rhetorical structure: both the primary audience of these essays (the "young souls") and the way in which Nietzsche addresses them – starting from their contempt for contemporary German culture and then leading them to a new, constructive project to which they can devote themselves – can be fruitfully analyzed in terms of the erotic-historic soul. The main goals of this dissertation are to shed new light on Nietzsche's intellectual development, as well as to point attention to the highly original form of ethical understanding that the *Considerations* exhibit, centered on the quintessentially Nietzschean injunction to "become what one is", understood as a way of cultivating the soul's natural powers.

Abbreviations

Throughout this dissertation I refer to Nietzsche's works according to the established abbreviations of their German titles. Quotations from the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* (which, unlike most of his other works, cannot be accurately cited by their internal divisions alone), are taken from the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), to which I refer simply in the format x.y, where *x* is volume number and *y* is page number (i.e. omitting the abbreviation KSA). Quotations from Nietzsche's other published works are taken from the KSA, but cited by the abbreviation of the given work and its internal division; in most cases this means the number of the aphorism. Works not published in the KSA are quoted according to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Werke* (KGW), and letters are quoted according to the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe Briefwechsel* (KGB).

Emphases in all quotations are original, unless indicated otherwise.

Nietzsche's published works and authorized manuscripts

AC	<i>Der Antichrist. Fluch auf das Christenthum.</i>
DS	UB, Erstes Stück: <i>David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller.</i>
EH	<i>Ecce homo. Wie man wird, was man ist.</i>
FW	<i>Die fröhliche Wissenschaft („la gaya scienza“).</i>
GD	<i>Götzen-Dämmerung oder Wie man mit dem Hammer philosophirt.</i>
GM	<i>Zur Genealogie der Moral. Eine Streitschrift.</i>
GT	<i>Die Geburt der Tragödie. Oder: Griechenthum und Pessimismus.</i>

- HL UB, Zweites Stück: Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben.*
- JGB Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft.*
- M Morgenröthe. Gedanken über die moralischen Vorurtheile.*
- MA Menschliches, Allzumenschliches. Ein Buch für freie Geister.*
- SE UB, Drittes Stück: Schopenhauer als Erzieher.*
- UB Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen.*
- VM MA II, Erste Abtheilung: Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche.*
- Wa Der Fall Wagner. Ein Musikanten-Problem.*
- WB UB, Viertes Stück: Richard Wagner in Bayreuth.*
- WS MA II, Zweite Abtheilung: Der Wanderer und sein Schatten.*
- Za Also sprach Zarathustra. Ein Buch für Alle und Keinen.*
- ZB Ueber die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten. Sechs öffentliche Vorträge.*

Editions of Nietzsche's writings

- KGB Nietzsche Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe.*
- KGW Nietzsche Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe.*
- KSA Friedrich Nietzsche, Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe in 15 Bänden.*

Other works

SuZ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit*

WWV Arthur Schopenhauer, *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung*

Introduction

There can be little doubt that Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is one of the most influential thinkers of the modern age. Scholars often tend to focus on the sharp critical strands he developed in his late works, such as his diagnosis of the European nihilism, his critique of Christianity as the ultimate source of this nihilism, or his genealogical dismantling of apparently exalted moral values to the *pudenda origo* from which they stem. As influential as Nietzsche's critique of earlier moral systems has been, his ethical thinking nevertheless contains also a more constructive dimension which tends to be overshadowed by the critical moment. This constructive dimension is signaled by slogans such as "become what you are", *amor fati*, or "eternal return of the same", and its general purpose is to educate his readers to love life – both their own life and life (or being) as a whole – in a way that is not possible under other ways of thinking. This dissertation is focused on the origins and foundations of this constructive dimension of Nietzsche's ethics, as it appears in his second book – the collection of four long essays collectively known as the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*. In doing so, I hope to articulate in a detailed manner how Nietzsche, at this stage of his productive life, imagines the new, life-affirming ethic – an ethic that is, unlike its popular Kantian and utilitarian rivals, not just a set of lifeless ratiocinations, but a concrete, individual, and embodied *way of life* (in the sense pioneered by Pierre Hadot and applied specifically to Nietzsche by Hutter 2006).

The *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* are commonly known as Nietzsche's second 'book', or rather as a series of four long essays, written between 1872 and 1876, united under a common title

but dealing with rather disparate topics. The first one, *DS*, is for the most part a scathing review of D.F. Strauss' latest book, and for scholars like Colli (1999, 905) or Brobjer (2008, 58) it is Nietzsche's least interesting work. And while *HL* and *SE* have found their fair share of critical attention, *WB* is commonly considered to be a rather uninteresting, fawning hagiography of Wagner, a testament of Nietzsche's youthful devotion to the maestro. Moreover, the *UB* are, as a whole, undoubtedly Nietzsche's most neglected work. This has been noted by those who have devoted some attention to them (Breazeale 1997, vii; Large 2012, 86). And deeds – or rather lack thereof – provide even more evidence of this neglect: when I first conceived this dissertation, in the spring of 2016, not a single book (to my knowledge) had ever been published about the *UB*. That makes it 140 years since their completion without a dedicated interpretation or commentary. Catherine Zuckert's 1976 article, based on her 1970 dissertation (to which I had access through the University of Chicago library), was the only interpretation of the *UB* as a whole known to me. The other articles on the *UB* as a whole were either accounts of a particular aspect of these essays (Siemens 2001; Ansell-Pearson 2013),¹ or simply introductions provided for the *UB* or for the individual essays when they appeared in English translations (Nietzsche 1990, ed. Arrowsmith; Gray 1995; Breazeale 1997).

A major reason for this scholarly neglect is the assumption that insofar as the *UB* can be considered a single project, it is a fragmentary and abortive one. Evidence from the *Nachlass* is cited to show that Nietzsche planned a much larger number of the *UB* (13 in the most developed

¹ Ansell-Pearson (2013, 227) claims that for the early Nietzsche, the sublime defines “the very practice of philosophy”, but then goes on to define the sublime as simply “the truly important and significant [as opposed to] the fleeting and fashionable” (ibid., 231). Obviously, Nietzsche's philosophy – as any other philosophy – is concerned with what the author considers truly important. Ansell-Pearson thus says frustratingly little of substance about the argument of the *UB*.

extant plans),² most of which were never even started, and insofar as their unity is discussed, it is only in terms of certain themes that appear across these four essays. We can add to these some of Nietzsche's own later statements, such as "jene unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen rechne ich als Jugendschriften" (letter to Elise Fincke from 20 March 1882, KGB III.1, 181), or "wenn ich einstmals das Wort 'unzeitgemäß' auf meine Bücher geschrieben habe, wie viel Jugend, Unerfahrenheit, Winkel drückt sich in diesem Worte aus! Heute begreife ich, daß [...] ich eben damit zu den Modernsten der Modernen gehörte" (note 2 [201], 12.165). But even more stringent dismissals of their value have appeared in the literature – for example, Fink (1992, 41) characterizes them as merely "Artistenmetaphysik auf Grund von Schopenhauers Philosophie", and Picht (1988, 98–9) wonders whether Nietzsche's actual philosophy begins with *MA* or with *Za*. Thus, at the time I started working on this dissertation, the reader of the *UB* was faced with the scholarly consensus that these essays are mere pieces of juvenilia that are, in particular, an artifact of Wagner's influence on the young Nietzsche (given that *DS* was written at Wagner's behest and that *WB* appears to be entirely uncritical of Wagner). What more, then, is there to say about these four youthful errors?

For one, Nietzsche himself tells us that the first three of the *UB* are where his thinking actually begins (*MA* II, Vorrede 1), in the sense that their concerns came to occupy his thinking earlier than those of *GT*. This already is reason enough for a careful study of the *UB*: to begin at the beginning is, generally speaking, a sound principle. The *UB*, the texts in which Nietzsche first articulates the central concerns that animate his thinking throughout his productive life, promise

² The note 7 [189], 7.212 is a plan of eleven essays without a common title, and the note 16 [2], 7.393 is a plan of nine such essays. The notes 19 [300] – 19 [303], 7.512; 19 [317], 7.516; and 26 [23], 7.585 all contain various possible titles for the essay series. Finally, the notes 19 [330], 7.520; 29 [163], 7.699; and 32 [4], 7.755 each are topically quite similar plans of thirteen essays, which are to be entitled *UB*.

to give us a view of the entire field of Nietzsche's intellectual concerns, and of how he conceived of the possibilities of moving within this space. And, fortunately, scholars have begun to appreciate this promise and to pay more serious attention to the *UB* in the recent years. Two book-length interpretations of these essays have been published recently (Brooks 2018 and Church 2019), as well as a two-volume commentary on the *UB*, which belongs to the *Nietzsche-Kommentar* series (Neymeyr 2020).³ Other relevant literature on the early Nietzsche, such as Taylor 1997, Church 2015,⁴ and Lampert 2017, is also of some use to those seeking a better understanding of the *UB*. And while I'm happy about this newfound critical attention directed at the *UB*, I believe there is much more to say about these four essays of Nietzsche than these works have said. It is my hope that this dissertation will contribute to a more complete understanding of their arguments, their structure, and their overall intention.

Summary of the Argument

As I imply above, it is my opinion that these four essays do form a single, coherent whole, and a principal aim of this dissertation is to interpret them as such. First of all, although Nietzsche did plan 13 essays for the series, the vast majority of the topics the planned essays were to address are present, or at least touched upon, in the four essays that have been completed (Brooks 2018, 14). The three interpreters who have already treated the *UB* as a whole have found significant overarching themes in them, centered on their conception of education and on Nietzsche's hopes

³ These two volumes offer an overall thematic commentary, as well as detailed *Stellenkommentar*, to each of the four *UB*. I've found that Neymeyr generally tends to overemphasize the reliance of the *UB* on Schopenhauer and Wagner (perhaps due to the plethora of references and allusions to their writings, which she has carefully catalogued), but I've found her commentary to be of great utility nevertheless.

⁴ Generally speaking, I will refer to Church 2019 rather than to Church 2015, because Church 2019 is a later work, which is moreover focused solely on the *UB*, and on the *UB* as a single whole.

for a reform of German culture on this basis (in cooperation with Wagner’s Bayreuth project), and consider them neither failed nor incomplete (Brooks 2018, 20; Church 2019, 10). They have also noted that the essays can be divided into two distinct halves, roughly a ‘no-saying’ one (*DS* and *HL*) and a ‘yes-saying’ one (*SE* and *WB*) (Brooks 2018, 12–3; Church 2019, 1–2).

I agree with these observations of Zuckert, Brooks, and Church. However, I believe that the case for a substantial philosophical unity of the *UB* can be taken much further than they did. My hermeneutical starting point is the observation of Leo Strauss (1988, 230) that careful readers are careful writers, and that what a careful writer tells us about how *he* reads books is an important guiding thread for the reading of his own works. In this regard I would like to take a new approach to interpreting the *UB*: namely to highlight the importance of the three questions posed by Nietzsche at the beginning of *DS* 4 (1.177), questions that guide his reading of D.F. Strauss’ book *Der alte und der neue Glaube*. If we take our bearing from these questions, the *UB* come to light not as a merely theoretical book in which Nietzsche expounds his ‘philosophy’ to whoever might be interested in it, but rather as a practical *project* that strives to effect a transformation first in the souls of its readers, and through them hopefully in the German culture at large. In this I depart from Zuckert (1976) and Church (2019, 15), the latter of whom treats the *UB* as a piece of “practical philosophy in the distinctly Kantian sense”.⁵ That is to say, this dissertation aims to be a thorough interpretation of the *UB* that is aware of the differences between their teaching, the project that they present, and the thought behind them. The main models for this approach are

⁵ Brooks’ (2018, 19) account of what the project of the *UB* are to accomplish – first to “demolish German culture” in *DS* and *HL* and then “erecting [it] anew” in *SE* and *WB* – strikes me as too megalomaniacal even for the young Nietzsche. Actions of this scale are not the task of a *book*.

Lampert's (2001) interpretation of *JGB*, and Meier's interpretations of *Za* (2017) and of *EH* and *AC* (2019).

Second, contrary to Brooks' and Church's emphasis on *culture* (Brooks' book is entitled *Nietzsche's Culture War* [emphasis added]; and Church's reading of the *UB* as neo-Kantian heavily emphasizes culture as the realm of freedom against nature as the realm of necessity), I shall demonstrate the importance of *nature* in the thinking behind the project of the *UB*. On my interpretation, Nietzsche's view of the nature-culture relation is not the Kantian dichotomy, but rather the ancient complementary view: culture as the cultivation of nature, as a "neue und verbesserte Physis" (1.334). My focus shall be in particular on the nature of the human soul as it is understood in these essays, which I take to be the core from which all other arguments and plans proposed by Nietzsche unfold. The nature of the soul is one of the main subjects of the *UB*, and the account of *sei du selbst* in *SE* 1 is rightly one of the most celebrated passages in these essays. However, it has not yet been sufficiently appreciated that *HL* 1 deals not just with human historicity, but also with human ahistoricity; and that the conjunction of these two elements in fact forms a coherent and sophisticated account of the motive forces and inner structures of the human soul. I understand this "ahistoricity" as, essentially, desiring: the motive forces of the soul that demand the satisfaction of some lack within us. Historicity, on the other hand, refers not just to our dealing with the past, but also to our general dealings with all things external to us and with figuring out the best ways of getting around in the world; it is, fundamentally, *ἵστορία*, "learning by inquiry", and thus the embryonic form of all higher intellectual operations (notably including the operations of *reasoning*, *measuring*, and *valuing*). It is *magistra vitae*, *vita* meaning life as essentially desiring of growth beyond whatever it had already become. In this respect I follow in the footsteps of Fink 1992 and Heidegger 2003, both of whom sought to uncover the structures

governing human experience that underlie Nietzsche's discussions of (not only) historical phenomena in the *UB*, and especially in *HL*.

On my reading, then, *HL* 1 and *SE* 1 are the central loci of Nietzsche's psychological theory in the *UB*, dealing with the nature of the soul not just in terms of its parts, but also in terms of the ways in which it *grows* (*φύει*) and unfolds itself, and how this growth can be cultivated (cf. Parkes 1994, 2). This psychological theory, which is in its basic principles the same as that of the mature Nietzsche, is then the basis of Nietzsche's project in the *UB*, an account of the "unabänderlichen Artung und Gestalt [der Dinge]" that has to be known in order to work at "*Verbesserung der als veränderlich erkannten Seite der Welt*" (1.445).⁶ This psychology determines the choice of Nietzsche's principal audience, the rhetorical means he uses to appeal to them and their particular concerns, the shape and extent of the cultural reform the *UB* strive to effect, and the means to be used in order to bring this reform about. In short, psychology is "Herrin der Wissenschaften" and "der Weg zu den Grundproblemen" (*JGB* 23) already in the *UB*.

The argument of this dissertation will unfold over its five chapters. The first four chapters are each an interpretation of a single *UB*, and the fifth chapter is a critical evaluation of the project presented in these four essays and of the thinking behind them. The first chapter begins with the personal background of *DS*, considering the extent to which Nietzsche was – and wasn't – influenced by Wagner in his earliest productive period. Afterward, an interpretation of *DS* 1–3 – Nietzsche's *Kulturkritik* in a narrow sense of the word – shows why Nietzsche considered D.F. Strauss' book a subject worthy of a lengthy critique, and after a summary of that book's arguments

⁶ I don't think this means that philosophy is "only secondarily an enterprise concerned with the pursuit of permanent truth, which, if it even exists, is only desirable because it aids in the more fundamental task of altering truth" (Brooks 2018, 206) – quite the opposite.

I interpret Nietzsche's scathing review of it (*DS* 4–12) as revealing apophatically – by thrashing a failure symptomatic of contemporary German pseudo-culture – the broad contours of his own project.

The second chapter, the interpretation of *HL*, deals first with the structure of the human soul, which I call *erotic-historic*. This structure leads Nietzsche to postulate some basic conditions of psychic health, to which the three useful forms of history are particularly conducive. *HL* then explores how modern scientific history undermines said conditions, and thereby provides a complex diagnosis of the sickness of German culture, of which D.F. Strauss is only the most obvious symptom. The root of this sickness is the absolute and insoluble conflict between life and knowledge, which will be shown to be one of the central points of Nietzsche's thinking in the *UB*. Finally, I explore some of his hints toward the curing of this sickness, which are presented chiefly in *HL* 10.

The third chapter, whose subject is *SE*, explicates the right and wrong methods of getting to know one's erotic-historic soul, and thus of facilitating one's psychic growth, as well as the role that the figure of the educator has to play in this process. This growth is said to have a certain peak in the figure of the genius (in three forms: the philosopher, the artist, and the saint), i.e. in a person who has grasped in some way the whole of being and has affirmed its value in a 'Schopenhauerian affirmation'. This best way of life, or even an inkling of its possibility, is then to result in a practical life devoted to culture understood as "*die Erzeugung des Philosophen, des Künstlers und des Heiligen in uns und ausser uns*" (1.382), and hopefully also in the founding of institutions devoted to this new and genuine culture.

The main subject of the fourth chapter, on *WB*, is Wagner himself. Three thematic lines emerge here: first is Wagner as the exemplary artist and a person who has become what he is.

Second is his art and the unparalleled effect it can have on its audience, namely its capacity to alienate them from their unreflective, comfortable existence and turn them toward a life of culture. Third, this immense educative potential of Wagner's art in its new home of Bayreuth – conceived as an institution of genuine culture – makes it the best possible vehicle for a large-scale renewal of German, and possibly even European, culture. *WB* culminates in an image of the free men of the future, men educated so as to become what they are, and of the renaissance of European culture they will bring about as the result of the current striving of Nietzsche and Wagner.

The Nietzsche that emerges from this study is a thoroughgoing rationalist, but one who sees a fundamental and insoluble conflict between truth and life. He hoped to manage this conflict by a project that was to work in conjunction with Bayreuth – a project in which he was to suffer from the truth in order to provide salutary illusions to the many and thus to establish a new, genuine culture. However, these hopes never materialized, and Nietzsche plunged into a deep intellectual crisis at the inaugural Bayreuth festival. The fifth chapter will examine why this had happened.⁷ First, it will explore some grave errors in the project of the *UB*, chief among them a misunderstanding of what Wagner was and what he stood for. Second will be the problems of the thinking behind the *UB* itself. The central of these is the idea that the conflict between life and knowledge is absolutely insoluble and its manifold consequences, such as the ultimately life-denying character of the thought built on this foundation. Coming to terms with these problems eventually resulted in a substantial change in Nietzsche's conception of the philosophic life: the later Nietzsche no longer thinks truth and life are *necessarily* in conflict, and takes the life devoted

⁷ Brooks (2018, 211) and Church (2015, ch. 9; 2019, ch. 6) emphasize the continuities between the thought of the *UB* and that of the later Nietzsche, but in my view they go so far in this respect as to erase the profound differences between the thought of the young Nietzsche and his mature thought. I intend to pay due attention to both the successes and the shortcomings of the *UB*, and thereby also to shed a clearer light on the break that occurred in Nietzsche's thought after the *UB*.

to the truth to be the best and happiest kind of life. However, there are also elements of the thought of the *UB* that remained important also for the later Nietzsche, mostly related to his psychological theory and his understanding of various human types. And finally, I will show how two of Nietzsche's ideas that he was to reject later – the attitude of the voluntary suffering of truthfulness, and his yet-inadequate conception of *sei du selbst* – served the indispensable role of ladders upon which he climbed to his mature, genuinely philosophic self.

In sum, I hope to show the thinking of the young Nietzsche in its full attractiveness and intellectual strength, rather than as just an abortive juvenile misstep. To a careful reader, the *UB* offer much food for thought not just regarding their failures from which Nietzsche had to learn, but also regarding their successes which he continued to build upon. It should be noted that, contrary to current scholarly opinion, Nietzsche himself didn't consider these works to be failures and mere juvenilia, and always held the *UB*, and *SE* in particular, to be of great importance in this respect. To give a couple of salient examples, in a draft intended for Lou von Salomé from December 1882 (KGB III.1, 299), he writes that in *SE* she can find "meine Grundgesinnungen". In August 1884 he wrote to Franz Overbeck (KGB III.1, 518): "übrigens habe ich *so gelebt*, wie ich es mir selber (namentlich in 'Schopenhauer als Erzieher') vorgezeichnet habe". And in the letter to Georg Brandes from 10 April 1888 (KGB III.5, 287) he explains that "diese kleine Schrift [*SE*] dient mir als Erkennungszeichen: wem sie nichts *Persönliches* erzählt, der hat wahrscheinlich auch sonst nichts mit mir zu thun."⁸ The note 35 [48] (11.534-5), from mid-1885, is a draft of an introduction for the four finished *UB*, calling them "Angelruthen" for new readers, and speaks of the plan to add three new ones to them (cf. also the note 41 [2], 11.669–78, entitled "*Neue*

⁸ For a more thorough discussion of this issue cf. the end of Chapter V.4.

unzeitgemäße Betrachtung”). He reissued the four essays (separately) in 1886, at the time when he reissued also his other pre-*Zarathustra* works (Large 2012, 102). And although he didn’t write a preface to introduce them as he did with his other earlier books, the preface to *MA II* can be considered to serve this purpose (Lampert 2017, 43). Finally, in *EH UB 3*, *SE* is described as containing “meine innerste Geschichte, mein *Werden*”, and *WB* as “eine Vision meiner Zukunft”. In sum, this dissertation aims to do justice to Nietzsche’s claim that the *UB* “verdienen die höchste Beachtung für meine Entwicklung” (letter to Karl Knortz from 21 June 1888; KGB III.5, 340).

And, besides their importance for Nietzsche’s later development, they are in their own, if somewhat flawed, way a serious reflection on the fundamental philosophical question of $\pi\tilde{\omega}\varsigma$ *\beta\iota\omega\tau\acute{\epsilon}\omicron\nu*, on the best way of life – and on the related, eminently practical task of leading the suitable readers toward it, the task of education (*Erziehung*). The *UB* understand ethics as a complete, embodied way of life, and moreover as one that is focused on and tailored for the particular individual as individual. They are, moreover, an educational project which aims to bring about the highest potentialities of being-human by teaching the readers to cultivate their souls toward these potentialities according to their own natures and needs, and by preparing suitable external conditions for them to do so. Understanding the project of the *UB* is, in my view, invaluable to all those who seek and attempt new ways of cultivating human souls – their own as well as the souls of others – in the Here and Now.

Note on the Title

The overall title of these four essays, *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*, is notoriously difficult to adequately translate into English. Various translators and scholars over the years have rendered

it as *Thoughts out of Season* (A.M. Ludovici), *Untimely Meditations* (R.J. Hollingdale and S. Brooks), *Untimely Considerations* (C. Zuckert), *Unmodern Observations* (W. Arrowsmith), and *Unfashionable Observations* (R.T. Gray and J. Church). In my view, the best rendering of this title is *Untimely Considerations*.

The word *unzeitgemäss* literally means inappropriate or inadequate to the present time or age. Translations of this word as “out of season”, “unmodern”, and “unfashionable” stress Nietzsche’s opposition to the prevailing trends and tendencies of his time, while also underlining his desire to intervene in the said time (e.g. Gray 1995, 377–9 or Ansell-Pearson 2013, 227–8). On this view, translating it as “untimely” removes the word from the present temporal context upon which it is to act by connotations of a certain inadequacy or misfortune this word carries (as e.g. in “an untimely death”). However, Large (1994, 33) argues that Nietzsche “is constantly aware of his own writing as occupying an anomalous, often cultivatedly ambivalent position in time”, and that the term *unzeitgemäss* carries a futural tendency that alienates it from contemporary times even though his argument clearly is a very ‘timely’ intervention into contemporary German culture (e.g. at 1.247, or much later in the title “Streifzüge eines Unzeitgemässen” from *GD*). Large’s reading thus justifies the translation ‘untimely’, and even does justice to the alienating tendency of the word that gives other translators a pause and leads them to be more inclined to other translations.⁹ Thus, the word “untimely” best captures the future-oriented dimension of Nietzsche’s argument in the *UB*, which is on my reading of particular importance, not least because the human soul as Nietzsche describes it in the *UB* is fundamentally oriented on the future.

⁹ Neymeyr (2020, 2.369) has a similar understanding of Nietzsche’s usage of the word *unzeitgemäss*. Interestingly enough, Ansell-Pearson (2013, 228) lapses back into the usage of “untimely” right after he argues for the translation “unfashionable”.

As for the second part of the title, the Latin root of the word “consideration” captures both the visual and the intellectual connotations of the word *Betrachtung*. The same could be said of the word “observation”; however, this nowadays tends to mean a disinterested, scientific kind of observing, and lacks the sense of a personal, polemical investment that Nietzsche’s usage of *Betrachtung* carries (1.466).¹⁰ However, throughout this dissertation I will refer to these essays by their established German abbreviation, composed of initials of their original title: *UB*.

¹⁰ Cf. Siemens (2001, 80–4) on Nietzsche’s usage of the word *betrachten*, with a focus on the agonistic elements inherent in it.

I. David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller: Nietzsche's Kulturkritik

“Whatever one generation learns from another, no generation learns the essentially human from a previous one.”¹

¹ Kierkegaard (1983, 121).

David Strauss der Bekenner und der Schriftsteller, the first of the *UB*, deals with an apparently very “timely” subject: it is a critical review of David Friedrich Strauss’ now long-forgotten book *Der alte und der neue Glaube*. This apparent datedness is the main reason for the scholarly neglect of it; Giorgio Colli’s claim that *DS* is “das schwächste Werk, das Nietzsche je veröffentlicht hat, gerade wegen seiner ‘Zeitgemäßheit’” (Colli 1999, 905) is exemplary of this attitude. However, the critical analyses of cultural philistinism and the intellectual outlook that underlies it, and of the conflict of this philistinism with genuine culture or self-cultivation that Nietzsche makes in this essay are integral to the overall argument of the *UB*. In order to bring out this relevance, it will be useful to recount how *DS* – and the entire project of the *UB* – came about. A key part of the prehistory of the *UB* is Nietzsche’s formative friendship with Richard Wagner. As is well known, Wagner was instrumental in the genesis of the *DS*, the first of the *UB*, and is the central figure of *WB*. Furthermore, Wagner’s project of cultural reform, as sketched e.g. in his *Beethoven*, was an important influence on Nietzsche’s own projects in *GT* and in the *UB*. A brief account of this friendship will be instrumental in elucidating Nietzsche’s perspective and motivating concerns in the *UB*, as well as the importance of Wagner as a person in this project.

I.1 Richard Wagner and the Origins of the *UB*

The two men first met at a dinner party in Leipzig on 8 November 1868 (Borchmeyer & Salaquarda 1994, 2.1225), had an enjoyable conversation about Schopenhauer, and apparently took immediate liking to each other. Wagner invited Nietzsche for a visit (Janz 1978, 1.291), and Nietzsche wrote a long letter about the meeting to his friend Erwin Rohde right on the following day. He writes that the evening offered him “wahrlich Genüsse so eigenthümlich pikanter Art” that he can do nothing but immediately relate them to Rohde, and he signed the letter as “der

Leipziger Eidylliker” (KGB I.2, 335–42).² A closer contact between them seemed at first quite unlikely, especially because of the distance between Leipzig, where Nietzsche was studying, and Tribschen, where Wagner resided. However, Nietzsche was soon thereafter offered a professorial position in Basel. He accepted this position, and he arrived to Basel on 19 April 1869 (15.10). This meant, among other things, that he now lived only some 100 kilometers away from Wagner. Nietzsche also found himself in an unfamiliar environment and somewhat socially isolated at his new workplace (Prange 2013, 44; cf. KGB II.1, 16). Thus he was more than happy to accept Wagner’s invitations to spend some time with him and his wife Cosima in Tribschen. Their friendship hereby entered its high point: between May 1869 and April 1872, when the Wagners moved to Bayreuth, Nietzsche visited Tribschen 23 times (Prange 2013, 45).

The time spent in intimate conversation with Richard Wagner and Cosima was clearly of great importance to Nietzsche. As late as in *Ecce Homo* he expresses glowing gratitude toward the Wagner of the Tribschen period (*EH* Klug 5):

Hier, wo ich von den Erholungen meines Lebens rede, habe ich ein Wort nöthig, um meine Dankbarkeit für das auszudrücken, was mich in ihm bei weitem am Tiefsten und Herzlichsten erholt hat. Dies ist ohne allen Zweifel der intimere Verkehr mit Richard Wagner gewesen. Ich lasse den Rest meiner menschlichen Beziehungen billig; ich möchte um keinen Preis die Tage von Tribschen aus meinem Leben weggeben, Tage des Vertrauens, der Heiterkeit, der sublimen Zufälle — der *tiefen* Augenblicke... Ich weiss nicht, was Andre mit Wagner erlebt haben: über unsern Himmel ist nie eine Wolke hinweggegangen.

Wagner exercised a wide-ranging influence on Nietzsche through these conversations. It involved personal issues, such as when Wagner dissuaded Nietzsche from vegetarianism, to which he was moved by the Schopenhauerian arguments of his friend Carl von Gersdorff (KGB II.1, 57). Wagner, also arguing on Schopenhauerian grounds, demonstrated to Nietzsche “alle die inneren

² Gray (1995, 401) points out that Nietzsche’s apparently first usage of the word *unzeitgemäss* refers to Wagner. In the letter to Erwin Rohde from 17 August 1869 he speaks of Wagner as of “meinem Juppiter” [*sic*], and describes him as “festgewurzelt durch eigne Kraft, mit seinem Blick immer drüber hinweg über alles Ephemere, und unzeitgemäß im schönsten Sinne” (KGB II.1, 42).

Verkehrtheiten jener Theorie und Praxis” (KGB II.1, 58): our very existence is the cause of great suffering, for us as well as for other living beings, and thinking that removing a tiny part of that suffering makes any meaningful difference is a piece of silly optimism. The only good reason for vegetarianism would be dietary, namely if one finds that such diet allows oneself to live better and more productively. But this doesn’t seem to be the case either: one of Wagner’s friends had apparently died of vegetarianism, and Wagner himself had “auf das allerstärkste empfunden” (ibid.) the negative physiological consequences of vegetarian diet when he had experimented with it once. Although Nietzsche admits that “eine zeitweilige Enthaltbarkeit von Fleisch, aus diätetischen Gründen, äusserst nützlich ist“ (KGB II.1, 59–60), in general he agrees with Wagner that “geistig productive und gemüthlich intensive Naturen *müssen* Fleisch haben”, as this provides them with the energy for the “*edleren und allgemein nützlicheren Bestrebungen*” (KGB II.1, 58–9).³ More generally, Nietzsche describes his conversations with Wagner as “mein praktischer Kursus der Schopenhauerschen Philosophie” in a (slightly earlier) letter to Rohde (KGB II.1, 17).⁴ Wagner was, in effect, teaching him how to live according to Schopenhauerian principles, and thus how to make philosophy the central determining force of one’s way of life, overall as well as in the particulars – an idea that will be of great importance to the thought of the *UB* as a whole (cf. 1.417).

³ Wagner also noted the apparent connection between vegetarianism and receptivity to “socialistisches ‘Allerlei’” (KGB II.1, 60).

⁴ Nietzsche expressed his gratitude to Wagner as an impulse to his development also in later letters, such as that to Rohde from 25 October 1872 (KGB II.3, 73), where Nietzsche says that Wagner “ist für mich wie ein gutes Gewissen, strafend und belohnend”. He voiced similar sentiments to Wagner himself several years later, in a letter from 21 May 1876 (KGB II.5, 59–60). In the same letter he also says that he celebrates the anniversary of his first visit to Tribschen as “meinen geistigen Geburtstag”.

Wagner's Beethoven

Besides personal matters, Wagner, and in particular his conception of cultural reform, was also an intellectual stimulus for the young Nietzsche. Wagner's 1870 *Beethoven* essay was particularly important for him,⁵ and I'll briefly restate Wagner's diagnosis of the problems of contemporary German culture and his planned remedies, as they are expressed in *Beethoven*. To this end, I'll focus on the last section of this essay, and on the place Wagner's art occupies in his conception.⁶

Wagner diagnoses contemporary German culture by contrast to an ideal culture, to "ein wahres Paradies von Produktivität des menschlichen Geistes" (Wagner 1983, 9.98/ 1966, V.116).⁷ He locates this "paradise" in the archaic Greece before the invention of writing, when "die *Poesie* nichts anderes [war] als wirkliche Erfindung von Mythen, d.h. von idealen Vorgängen", in which human life is reflected "mit objektiver Wirklichkeit" (ibid.). Myths are understood not as mere fictional stories or a primitive, underdeveloped way of understanding the world, but rather as a true reflection of the character of human life in the form of a story, of a work of art. This art can serve as an interpretive mirror for the individual's own life, and also to unite and shape the people to whom it belongs – to establish their way of life and guide them to greatness of spirit.

This paradise was lost with the invention of writing, after which "die Dichtkunst wird zur Kunst der Ausschmückung der alten, nun nicht mehr neu zu erfindenden Mythen" (ibid.). Further

⁵ Nietzsche wrote to Rohde on 15 December 1870 that "ein eben erschienenenes Buch von Wagner über *Beethoven* wird Dir Vieles andeuten können, was ich jetzt von der Zukunft will. Lies es, es ist eine Offenbarung des Geistes, in dem *wir – wir!* – in der Zukunft leben werden" (KGB II.1, 166). Also cf. Prange (2013, ch. 3) for a thorough account of Nietzsche's reception of Wagner's *Beethoven*, and of the differences in their respective artistic conceptions, in the period of writing *GT*.

⁶ Prange (2013, ch. 2) offers a more complete reading of *Beethoven*, but with less of an emphasis on the aspect of cultural reform that is central to my reading.

⁷ References to Wagner's *Beethoven* are first to the German original, then to the English translation.

technological progress – the printing press and especially the newspapers – deteriorates the culture-forming role of art ever more. The role of art is taken over by public opinions and by fashion [*Mode*], i.e. by empty, ever-changing conventions that constantly seek novelty for the sake of immediate excitement and entertainment. Wagner associates this rule of empty conventions over life and art particularly with the French, but it's clear that it's not unique to them or invented by them.

Such is the present state of European culture and peoples. Wagner writes that “dieser Mensch ist denn auch völlig ‘Journal’; ihm ist die bildende Kunst, wie nicht minder die Musik, ein Objekt des ‘Feuilleton’” (Wagner 1983, 9.101/ 1966, V.118). Hereby, as well as by its commercialization, art ceases to hold any kind of formative function for either individuals or a people. It becomes an entertainment that can be cheaply purchased from the art dealer, and which moreover has no stylistic unity: everyone can pick and choose and mix from all the past artistic styles according to their taste or current fashion. This historicist tendency of contemporary art also degrades artistic creativity, as “das Originelle derselben ist ihre gänzliche Originalitätslosigkeit” (Wagner 1983, 9.102/ 1966, V.119). The Germans are not an exception from this trend. Goethe and Schiller have warned against these tendencies of modern culture in the “großen Periode der deutschen Wiedergeburt” (Wagner 1983, 9.95/ 1966, V.113), but their warnings are not listened to anymore, and contemporary Germans tend to be complacent and satisfied with their culture. Perhaps this feeling is fueled by the recent German military victories over the French, but this too is completely unwarranted, for precisely now “unsere Abhängigkeit von [der französischen] Zivilisation” (Wagner 1983, 9.96/ 1966, V.114) becomes the more apparent. In short, contemporary German culture is an imitation of the French culture, with all its problems. Wagner

thus concludes that “so weit unser *Auge* schweift, beherrscht uns die *Mode*” (Wagner 1983, 9.103/ 1966, V.120).

Despite the role of technological progress in cultural decay, Wagner doesn't see this process as irreversible. It can be counteracted by the power of art, and especially of music. Wagner gives us a Schopenhauerian account of why this is so. Our consciousness of the world has two modes: the desiring, will-full perception of the world of appearances, and the will-less aesthetic perception [*willenfreie ästhetische Anschauung*]. The perception of the world of appearances is predominantly visual – hence Wagner's emphasis on *Auge* in the preceding paragraph. These two modes of our consciousness are negatively correlated: Wagner quotes Schopenhauer as saying that “je mehr nun die eine Seite des gesamten Bewußtseins hervortritt, desto mehr weicht die andere zurück” (Wagner 1983, 9.45/ 1966, V.67).

Because we apprehend the arts in *willenfreier ästhetischer Anschauung*, in this apprehension we enter the other mode of consciousness which takes us away from the appearances and toward the Thing-in-itself, i.e. the universal Will. Music has this power because it directly communicates to us the essence of the Will (Wagner 1983, 9.44–5/ 1966, V.66–7). Plastic arts have a complementary effect – when we take pleasure in “der willenfreien ästhetischen Anschauung” (Wagner 1983, 9.48/ 1966, V.70) of the beautiful works of plastic art, we are also aware of their illusory character, of their being *Schein* rather than anything real (Wagner here connects *Schein* with *Schönheit* also etymologically). Thus all arts communicate to us the true character of the world – either by the will-less aesthetic apprehension of the Will itself (music), or by the perception of the falsity of the appearances (plastic arts)⁸ – and thereby they move us (at

⁸ Since the plastic arts make us aware of the Thing-in-itself only negatively, music is the higher (in fact the highest) form of art (Wagner 1983, 9.55/ 1966, V.76).

least temporarily) away from the blind struggle of our will to life that consumes the majority of our existence, and on whose soil the realm of public opinions and fashions thrives.

It then follows that the greater an artist is, the more powerfully his art instills this effect in its audience, and the more beneficial culture-forming force it is. And Wagner indeed thinks that great artists of the past had created art with this effect “aus dem Geiste der Musik” (Wagner 1983, 9.104/ 1966, V.121): he mentions the ancient Greeks (ibid.), the artists of the Italian Renaissance (ibid.), Palestrina (Wagner 1983, 9.58/ 1966, V.79), Goethe and Schiller (Wagner 1983, 9.95/ 1966, V.113), and, of course, Beethoven. Beethoven managed to emancipate melody, the “Hauptform aller Musik” (1983, 9.83/ 1966, V.103), from the corrosive influence of fashion [*Mode*], or of the conventional expectations of what is ‘proper’ for a given musical form. Thereby he elevated music from the realm of the beautiful (where it’s been relegated by convention) to the realm of the sublime [*das Erhabene*], where it properly belongs.⁹ He also established – not theoretically, but by his greatest artistic deed, his Ninth Symphony – that vocal music must be subordinated to instrumental music (Wagner 1983, 9.85/ 1966, V.104). Wagner now relates music to drama: as music is “eine umfassende Idee der Welt”, so drama expresses “die einzige der Musik adäquate Idee der Welt” (Wagner 1983, 9.87/ 1966, V.106). Drama too affects us under the category of the sublime, and its structure is deeply analogous to that of music. Thus, the two greatest artists according to Wagner are Beethoven and Shakespeare, and he claims that their works differed only due to “die formellen Bedingungen der in [ihren Sphären] geltigen Gesetze der Apperzeption” (Wagner 1983, 9.90/ 1966, V.108).

⁹ Wagner explains earlier that judging music by the standard of “des *Gefallens an schönen Formen*” was a grave mistake rooted in thoughtlessly applying to music the aesthetic categories that are proper only to plastic art, and that because it brings us into contact with the universal Will, music “kann an und für sich einzig nach der Kategorie des *Erhabenen* beurteilt werden” (Wagner 1983, 9.56/ 1966, V.77).

Wagner continues by speculating about a possible combination of these two art forms: he says that “die vollendetste Kunstform müßte demnach von dem Grenzpunkte aus sich bilden, auf welchem jene Gesetze sich zu berühren vermöchten” (ibid.). Such a work of art would be, as Wagner tells us, a seamless union of drama and music, or “*das vollendetste Drama*”, in which the drama will be a “sichtbar gewordenes Gegenbild der Musik” (Wagner 1983, 9.93–4/ 1966, V.112). The effect of this most perfect work of art would be immense: an “ungeheuere Kraft” would awaken in the spectators, a force that arises “aus einer tiefsten Not” of which this work of art makes them aware. And this need [*Not*] is not just the deepest one, i.e. lying at the very core of our being, but also the highest one (Wagner 1983, 9.92–3/ 1966, V.111):

In dem einen wie dem anderen der an sich wesentlich identischen Fälle [i.e. the artworks of Shakespeare and of Beethoven] müßte die ungeheuere Kraft, welche hier, gegen die Ordnung der Naturgesetze, in dem angegebenen Sinne der Erscheinungsbildung von innen nach außen sich bewegte, aus einer tiefsten Not sich erzeugen, und es würde diese Not wahrscheinlich dieselbe sein, welche im gemeinen Lebensvorgange den Angstschrei des aus dem bedrängenden Traumgesichte des tiefen Schlafes plötzlich Erwachenden hervorbringt; nur daß hier [i.e. in the case of *vollendetsten Dramas*], im außerordentlichen, ungeheueren, das Leben des Genius der Menschheit gestaltenden Falle, die Not dem Erwachen in einer neuen, durch dieses Erwachen einzig offenzulegenden Welt hellsten Erkennens und höchster Befähigung zuführt.

This is what Wagner is trying to do in his art, *this* is what he promises to his audience – to create the highest possible works of art that will awaken them to their true being, that will enlighten them about the nature of their existence and enable them to live to the fullest of their capacities, to live according to their genius. Beethoven was a necessary precursor for this highest deed that Wagner is promising us: in the final paragraph of this essay, Wagner describes him as “den großen Bahnbrecher in der Wildnis des entarteten Paradies” (Wagner 1983, 9.109/ 1966, V.126). And now that the path has been blazed, Wagner may – and will – lead us to its goal.

Wagner's goal is a "neue, seelenvollere Zivilisation" (Wagner 1983, 9.106/ 1966, V.123) with a new religion that will arise thanks to this music.¹⁰ What would such a civilization consist in? It would be, in an important way, *natural*: that is, liberated from empty conventions and fashions. Instead, it would be aware of the true character of human life and of one's nation (Wagner speaks of *die richtige Selbsterkenntnis* here) and of the way of life that is most proper to it. It would awaken the genius that lies dormant within the human soul by the power of the perfect [or: complete] art at its core. The power of the awakened genius in Wagner's followers would then be used to reform German culture so that it ever more closely approximates the ideal conditions for the life of genius. It would be a civilization that knows what the highest human capacities consist in, and that consciously provides the conditions for their realization. In other words, it would be a civilization that is conscious of knowing what *the* best way of life – the truly human life – is, that values the best life above everything else, and whose culture is fully oriented on the best life, and in this sense is the best conceivable culture. It would be the best possible contemporary approximation¹¹ of the "paradise" in the sense quoted at the beginning of this section. Wagner remains very vague on what exactly this new civilization and the best way of life it will promote would look like. But he doesn't let this detract from his overall claim that his art is able to establish the best way of life *and* the best regime. To actually establish it in Germany, he needs the help of young, brave Germans: "*der Deutsche ist tapfer.*"¹² Und das ist etwas!" (Wagner 1983, 9.109/

¹⁰ I will leave aside Wagner's claim that this task is reserved for the German spirit (*ibid.*).

¹¹ Due to technological progress, whose influence cannot be ignored, it would hardly be possible to *fully* recover that paradise.

¹² This quotation, ascribed by Wagner to Goethe, is likely a paraphrase of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* IV.16 (*Werke* VII.265), where Aurelia tells Wilhelm Meister: "Lothar – lassen Sie mich meinen Freund mit seinem geliebten Vornamen nennen – hatte mir immer die Deutschen von der Seite der Tapferkeit vorgestellt, und mir gezeigt, daß keine bravere Nation in der Welt sei, wenn sie recht geführt werde". The qualification "wenn sie recht geführt werde" would likely be appealing to Wagner and his ambitions as well.

1966, V.126). And he wrote the manifesto that *Beethoven* is in order to attract them to his side, so they may help him establish this earthly paradise.

Wagner and GT

This paradise was not merely something to idly talk about, but in the first place something to work for and to bring about. And Wagner provided ample opportunities for his young friend to contribute to his project. At the highest level, he expressed the shared goal of their endeavors in the following terms: “helfen Sie mir, die grosse ‘Renaissance’ zu Stande zu bringen, in welcher Platon den Homer umarmt, und Homer, von Platons Ideen erfüllt, nun erst recht der allergrösste Homer wird”, as he wrote to Nietzsche in February 1870 (KGB II.2, 146): a union of mythopoetic art and of philosophy that can articulate the art’s true importance as the foundation of a great culture oriented on the production of the genius.¹³

This striving manifested itself in concrete ways in Nietzsche’s productive activity already with his first book. It was Wagner who inspired Nietzsche to write *GT*, by suggesting to him that it would be good to expand and deepen the arguments of his public lecture *Socrates und die Tragoedie* in the form of “einer grösseren umfassenden Arbeit” (KGB II.2, 137–8; cf. 15.19).

¹³ A couple of days later, on 15 February 1870, Nietzsche reacted to these words in a letter to Rohde (KGB II.1, 93–6) as follows: “Ich werde noch zur wandelnden Hoffnung: auch Richard Wagner hat mir in der rührendsten Weise zu erkennen gegeben, welche Bestimmung er mir vorgezeichnet sieht. Dies ist alles sehr beängstigend.” Prange (2013, 47–9) reads this letter as expressing Nietzsche’s first doubts about Wagner, due to Wagner’s apparent misunderstanding of how Nietzsche periodized Ancient Greek culture, and Nietzsche becoming aware of the unbridgeable gap between their respective outlooks. However, I believe that these words express genuine fear and doubt as to whether he, a young man of mere 25 years, will be able to fulfill such an enormous task, rather than doubts about the task itself.

GT can be fruitfully read as a more sophisticated version of the central claims and promises Wagner made in his *Beethoven*.¹⁴ This is visible already from the basic premises shared by these two works. *GT* agrees with *Beethoven* that art is the “eigentlich metaphysisch[e] Thätigkeit dieses Lebens” (1.24). It also divides the arts into the (Apollinian) plastic arts and (Dionysian) music, and argues that music is the higher form of art because it is, in Schopenhauer’s words, “unmittelbar Abbild des Willens selbst” (quoted at 1.106) – i.e. music is an image of that which truly is, and not of *Erscheinungen*, as plastic arts. But the absolutely highest form of art is, just as Wagner’s “vollendetste Kunstform”, the union of the Apollinian and the Dionysian forms of art – and the Attic tragedy, in particular the works of Aeschylus and Sophocles, were examples of such a union. Being such a union, tragedy and tragic myth communicate to us not just the Dionysian wisdom of individuated existence as suffering – the upshot of which is the wisdom of Silenus (1.35) – but also the metaphysical solace [*Trost*] that justifies our existence and makes life bearable by revealing to us that suffering is a necessary consequence of the Will’s eternal creative-destructive play with itself (1.109, 153). It is in this sense that “nur als *aesthetisches Phänomen* ist das Dasein und die Welt ewig *gerechtfertigt*” (1.47). Such myths are moreover indispensable to any healthy, creative human being and culture: they provide us with universal symbols by which we can understand our individual existence and relate it to the eternal truth expressed in the myths (1.145).

Greek tragedy died in its confrontation with Socratism, which was introduced into it by Euripides (1.76). Socratism is fundamentally the belief that being can be fully known and moreover corrected by knowledge, that human life can be made fully rational and thus perfected

¹⁴ Prange (2013, 131) makes the interesting argument that the primary audience of *GT* is in fact Wagner himself, and that one of its main purposes is to “teach Wagner what ‘Greekness’ was and how he could become ‘more Greek’”. In doing so, *GT* would also aim to reconcile the theoretical differences between Nietzsche and Wagner. Neymeyr (2020, 2.495) points out that the very phrase “Geist der Musik”, found in the title of the first edition of *GT*, was used by Wagner himself (e.g. in his *Beethoven* essay – cf. Wagner 1983, 9.104/ 1966, V.121).

(1.99). Ever since its victory over the tragic worldview, Socratism has been the dominant cultural force in Europe, for better (cf. 1.100) or worse. It is also the dominant force in the present-day German culture, and as such Socratism (in its various further developments and decayed forms) is ultimately responsible for manifold problems of contemporary culture, such as no longer taking Greek culture to be exemplary (1.129–30), the prominence of journalism in public life (1.130), the overvaluation of the theoretical man and the reduction of *Bildung* to scholarship (1.116), and especially the loss of any transcendent meaning in one's life (caused by the rationalist destruction of myth), accompanied by furious yet necessarily fruitless attempts to find such meaning in "Historie und Kritik" (1.146).¹⁵

However, the belief at the core of Socratism has been shown to be illusory [*Wahn*] by Kant's discovery of "der Grenzen und der Bedingtheit des Erkennens überhaupt" (1.118).¹⁶ It can no longer claim universal validity and consider itself as *the* true approach to the world and to human life in good faith; it is also shying away from its own consequences when these would reveal the "natürliche Grausamkeit der Dinge" and thus it contradicts its own driving principle, namely logic (1.119). Finally, it is about to destroy its own sociological basis by emancipating the workers (or "slaves") whose hard labor makes a culture possible.¹⁷ The time of the Socratic culture

¹⁵ Socratism thus is the root cause of the phenomena that Wagner sums up under the rubric of "fashion" [*Mode*] in *Beethoven*.

¹⁶ This means that Socratism too is another means that the Will uses to entice its creations to life. In fact, it is one of the three possible forms of higher culture, the other two being artistic (Apollinian) and tragic (Dionysian) culture (1.115–6).

¹⁷ In *Der griechische Staat*, Nietzsche expressly claims that "zum Wesen einer Kultur das Sklaventhum gehöre" (1.767). I take this "slavery" to mean the existence of a lower class whose labor can provide the elites with the leisure necessary to devote themselves to developing culture in all its forms (cf. Taylor 1997, 46; Church 2015, 214; or Drochon 2016, 97). On the face of it, the various leveling movements would be the anti-cultural forces *par excellence*; but it is questionable whether they can actually abolish social hierarchies or merely establish new ones in place of the old ones. On this reading, *the* political question for Nietzsche would be not whether a society should be organized hierarchically or not, whether it should have elites or not, but rather *what kind* of elites will it have: who will rule over whom, and to what ends will the elites use the resources at their disposal? What kind of *culture* will the elites pursue and develop?

is up, and as chance would have it, tragedy is being reborn at the same time. Wagner has namely understood its animating principle – the unity of Apollinian and Dionysian art – in his *Beethoven* (1.104), and put it into practice in his musical dramas. German music, with Wagner as its peak, has reawakened the Dionysian spirit in modern times (1.127), and German myth is being reborn together with it (1.147). This heralds a complete transformation of the German people, their way of life [*Sitte*], and their state [*Staat*] (ibid.), in a word: “eine neue Daseinsform” (1.128) is being born, which will be analogous to that of the tragic Greeks. More precisely, it will be an even higher achievement than that of the Greeks. It will be not merely a destruction of Socratism, but an overcoming of it that preserves its most valuable elements; in particular the education in this new culture will be Platonic, i.e. oriented on “Erzeugung des Genius” (1.101).¹⁸ It will likewise be an overcoming of the Ancient Greek tragedy, whose fatal flaw was that it “did not incorporate the Socratic moment of self-consciousness”, as Church (2015, 210) puts it. This synthesis of the tragic and the Socratic will come from its two progenitors – the tragic from Wagner and his art, and the Socratic from Nietzsche, who believes he has understood tragedy better than the Greeks, but unlike Socrates he wants to utilize the power of tragedy for cultural ends rather than suppress it, as he believes the historical Socrates did.¹⁹ The new, tragic, German-Dionysian culture will be the highest cultural achievement of all time; it will be the union of tragic-mythic art of and philosophy that understands and guides the power of this art. And it will be the work of the twin geniuses of Wagner and Nietzsche, the new Aeschylus and Socrates, or the new Homer and Plato.

¹⁸ An effort at developing such an education is hinted at in the letter to Rohde from 28 January 1872 (KGB II.1, 278–80): Nietzsche reports that “Ich habe mit Wagner eine Alliance geschlossen. Du kannst Dir gar nicht denken, wie nah wir uns jetzt stehen und wie unsre Pläne sich berühren”, and at the end of the letter he rues the missed opportunity “um eine wirkliche deutsche Bildungsanstalt, zur Regeneration des deutschen Geistes und zur Vernichtung der bisher. sog. ‘Cultur’, zu gründen” that was the founding of a new university in Strasbourg.

¹⁹ Nietzsche hints at his ‘Socratic’ role in the *Vorwort* to the second edition of *GT*, where he describes the present situation as a “Wirbel und Wendepunkt”, i.e. analogously to his description of Socrates at 1.100. This passage is not reprinted accurately in KSA or KGW; cf. Meier 2019, 88n5 for details.

Wagner's Open Letter and Beyond

GT scandalized the contemporary philological community by its bold speculations, its open admiration for Wagner, as well as by its lack of footnotes and other trappings of conventional classical scholarship. *GT* was attacked on these grounds by the young – even younger than Nietzsche – Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Möllendorff in the pamphlet *Zukunftsphilologie!*, published on 1 June 1872, which “in twenty-eight breathless pages attempted a total demolition of Nietzsche’s book and its author’s classical credentials” (Silk & Stern 1981, 95). Nietzsche’s friends came to his defense: Erwin Rohde wrote another pamphlet, entitled *Afterphilologie*, defending the unusual form of *GT*, the philological soundness of Nietzsche’s speculations, and attacking the ignorance and malice of Wilamowitz’s pamphlet (ibid., 99). And even before Rohde’s defense appeared, Wagner published an open letter on 12 June 1872 to support Nietzsche on broader cultural grounds (KGB II.4, 13–21). This letter is an example both of Wagner’s focusing of his general cultural project to a smaller and more concrete partial task, and of his guidance of the young Nietzsche.

Wagner opens the letter by agreeing with Wilamowitz that classical philology should play an important role in German *Bildung*, and approvingly quotes the concluding sentence of *Zukunftsphilologie!* to this effect. But although Wagner believes that in philology there is “die Tendenz einer höheren, das ist: wirklich produktiven Bildung” (ibid., 16), he sees nothing of this kind in philology as it actually exists in Germany, i.e. in the philological establishment in whose name Wilamowitz attacks Nietzsche. This establishment contributes nothing to the work of German artists and poets, its thorough study of the classical languages produces no comparable rigor in the proper usage of German language, and even the other sciences do perfectly well

without philology. Philology as a discipline is thus shown to be completely impractical and insular, its only goal being the production of more philologists, who “nur sich unter sich selbst von Nutzen werden” (ibid.).

Wagner believes there is a way to overcome this mismatch between the high ideals professed by philology and its actual practice. But the usual dry popularising lectures won't do. It would require someone to step forward and “ohne Gelehrtensprache und gräßliche Citate uns zu sagen, *was* denn die Eingeweihten unter der Hülle ihrer uns Laien so unbegreiflichen Forschungen gewahr werden” (ibid.). In other words, to present what one has understood of Antiquity not just as a collection of facts, but as a force that can contribute to the improvement of *Bildung* here and now, in a way that is comprehensible to non-specialists and that can have a real impact on German culture at large. However, in doing so, this person would have to step beyond the boundaries of what the establishment considers ‘philology proper’, and would thereby incur their wrath and censure; for the establishment he would be “keineswegs ein Emanzipirter, sondern nur ein Abtrünniger” (ibid., 17). And this, Wagner says, is exactly what Nietzsche attempted to do in publishing *GT* and what happened to him thereafter.

Nietzsche is then the currently best hope for the realization of the ideals of philology – one who is both an accomplished philologist and who also cares deeply about the advancement of German culture. And so Wagner turns to him in the name of “Denen, welche ich *wir* nenne” (ibid., 19), of the Wagnerian “we” who work with him on his project of cultural reform. It is on the basis of these credentials that Wagner poses to Nietzsche the question in which the entire letter culminates: “*Wie steht es um unsere deutschen Bildungsanstalten?*” (ibid., 20). Wagner closes the letter by emphasizing that the task which opens up by this question is for an entire lifetime, and says that its goal is to determine “welcher Art die deutsche Bildung sein müsse, wenn sie der

wiedererstandenen Nation zu ihren edelsten Zielen verhelfen soll” (ibid., 21), or how to shape educational institutions so they would really form the young to human greatness.

By asking Nietzsche to diagnose the actual state of the German educational institutions (their glowing reputation in the eyes of the public opinion notwithstanding) and to propose a reform that would address their current shortcomings, Wagner invites Nietzsche to answer the question in writing and thus to make another concrete contribution to the Wagnerian project of cultural renewal – this time a critique of the German educational system. This critique was to be an expanded version of *ZB*, which Wagner had read and appreciated.²⁰ Nietzsche indeed perceived this question as such an invitation: he wrote to his friend Malwida von Meysenbug that by this letter, “der Meister [i.e. Wagner] [diese Aufgabe] feierlich öffentlich auf meine Schulter gelegt hat” (KGB II.3, 127, February 1873).

In the same letter Nietzsche also expressed worries whether this task isn’t too large for as young a person as he was (he was 28 at the time), and ultimately he never published *ZB* in any form. But in general, Nietzsche appreciated Wagner’s gradual guidance in this respect, and on 24 June 1872 he wrote to Wagner thankfully, stating “Sie geben mir Zeit, meiner Aufgabe entgegen zu reifen” (KGB II.3, 15). The Wagners had influence also on other projects Nietzsche was working on in this period. The *Fünf Vorreden zu fünf ungeschriebenen Büchern* were written as a Christmas and/ or birthday present for Cosima Wagner (her birthday was 24 December), and given to her in December 1872 (cf. KGB II.3, 108, 110). Conversely, *Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen* was abandoned after Nietzsche presented this manuscript to Wagner on a visit to Tribschen between 6 and 12 April 1873, and Wagner apparently wasn’t interested in it

²⁰ Cf. Brooks (2018, 6–12) for an account of Nietzsche’s intention behind *ZB*.

(Golder 1990, 4). After this misunderstanding, Nietzsche began to work on the first *UB* on D. F. Strauss, which subject was suggested to him by the Wagners, both of whom voiced their contempt for Strauss' latest book to Nietzsche (Schaberg 1995, 32). In a *Nachlass* note from 1875 (5 [98], 8.66), entitled "Zur Einleitung der Gesammtherausgabe der 'Unzeitgemässen'", which consists of several bullet-point-like sentences about the origin of the *UB*, the last sentence – apparently describing the final impetus – reads "Ein paar Worte Wagner's in Strasbourg". Cosima Wagner's letter to Nietzsche from 12 February 1873 also contains some sarcastic remarks about Strauss's book.²¹ Nietzsche thus saw the polemic against D.F. Strauss' new book as a way to ingratiate himself to Wagner (Golder 1990, 5). Nietzsche then worked quickly: he reports to Wagner that he's working on *DS* already on 18 April 1873 (KGB II.3, 144–5), and he received the first printed copies of it on 8 August 1873 (Schaberg 1995, 33). Thus Nietzsche, influenced by the Wagnerian conceptions of cultural reform as the proper form of political reform and education as the production of genius – but quickly outgrowing the Wagnerian formulations of these concerns – embarked on the project of the *UB*. In these four essays he articulates a comprehensive critique of contemporary German culture, as Wagner expected him to do with *ZB* – and, as we shall see, much more than just that.

I.2 *DS* 1–3: Nietzsche's Critique of German Culture

DS opens with a reference to the Franco-Prussian war of 1870–71 that ended in a resounding Prussian victory and in the proclamation of the second German Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles. This victory was, Nietzsche says, a demonstration of the promising

²¹ "Im deutschen Reich habe ich grossen Enthusiasmus für das Buch von D. Strauss angetroffen, das auf Grund einiger Helmholtz'-schen Citate uns von Erlösung, Gebet, und Beethoven'scher Musik befreit" (KGB II.4, 209).

capacities that German nature possesses and that “nichts mit der Kultur zu thun haben”, namely “strenge Kriegszucht, natürliche Tapferkeit und Ausdauer, Ueberlegenheit der Führer, Einheit und Gehorsam unter den Geführten” (1.160). However, many aren’t satisfied with seeing this victory as merely a triumph of German nature. In the opinion of these many – which is actually the *public opinion*, i.e. the dominant view of its time – the war demonstrated also a victory of German *culture* over its French counterpart. Nietzsche thinks this is a serious and pernicious error, and not merely because it is an error – “denn es giebt die heilsamsten und segensreichsten Irrthümer” (1.159) – but, as we’ll see, because of its consequences for the kind of life that is being cultivated in Germany. It is by engaging with this popular error – with the contemporary *δόξα* – that we enter the territory of the *UB*: the realm of cultural politics in which the project of the *UB* will unfold.

In the first place, there can be no question about a victory of German *culture* over the French. Such a victory would mean imposing “eine originale deutsche Kultur” (1.163–4) on the French, and nothing of that kind has happened. If anything, the opposite is the case: German culture was and still is dependent on the French, and necessarily so, “denn bis jetzt giebt es keine deutsche originale Kultur” (1.164). Nietzsche quotes Goethe, the authority *par excellence* in matters of German culture, to support his view: the real problem of German culture is that it hardly even exists at this point.²² This claim opens up two questions: first, what a culture is; and second, if Germans *don’t* have a culture, what is this thing, this “Kultur sich nennende Etwas” (1.160), that according to public opinion prevailed over the French culture?

Nietzsche defines culture as “vor allem Einheit des künstlerischen Stiles in allen Lebensäusserungen eines Volkes”, and its opposite, barbarism, as “Stillosigkeit” or “chaotische[s]

²² Cf. Eckermann 2011, 611–2 (conversation from 3 May 1827). A few years later, Nietzsche would call Eckermann’s *Gespräche* “das beste deutsche Buch, das es giebt” (WS 109).

Durcheinander aller Stile” (1.163). Since culture is so pervasive in the life of a people (and of individuals), its presence or absence is easy to notice: everything, from fashions through furniture, architecture, to people’s manners and motions testifies to the kind of culture they possess. In the case of Germans, all these testify to their barbarism. Far from possessing any internal unifying principle, the contemporary German “culture” is rather a chaotic mixture of all kinds of styles and principles. The closest approximation of such a principle it has is actually its very opposite, namely “eine phlegmatische Gefühllosigkeit für die Kultur” (ibid.). German culture doesn’t just lack an organizing principle at its core – it doesn’t even care about acquiring one. What the public opinion considers to be German culture and *Bildung* is in fact merely *Gebildetheit*, scholarly learnedness that has no relation whatsoever to other spheres of human life.²³ As learned as the Germans may be, their learning is of no use “überall wo nicht das Wissen, sondern das Können, wo nicht die Kunde sondern die Kunst in Frage kommt” (1.162). Their learning is not the unifying principle of a productive culture, but merely a kind of *Fachidiotismus*. What is even worse, the myopia of the bearers of German *Gebildetheit* blinds them against any critical consideration of the merits of their “culture”. In fact, they believe that “ihre eigene Bildung die reifste und schönste Frucht der Zeit, ja aller Zeiten sei” (ibid.), that their learnedness is the peak of human cultural achievements so far.

The problem with this *Gebildetheit* is not just that it exists, but that it can cause a most serious damage to Germany, in the worst case even the “*Exstirpation des deutschen Geistes*” (1.160). What is at stake here is how the powerful German nature will be cultivated – for the

²³ Neymeyr (2020, 1.77) points out that Wager had used the same distinction in his 1869 essay *Über das Dirigieren*. In the following pages she documents the ubiquity of this distinction in other early writings of Nietzsche.

original, ancient meaning of the word ‘culture’, which is taken up by Nietzsche,²⁴ is a cultivation of nature (L. Strauss 1995, 3) – or rather, whether it will be cultivated at all or not. Either the natural German bravery [*Tapferkeit*] will be given a new direction and its energy will be used in *Bildung*²⁵ and in developing a genuine culture for the Germans – or the public opinion, which has no use for this courage, will prevail and do whatever it can to placate and neutralize the power inherent in such bravery. The first chapter of *DS* shows us that Nietzsche’s cultural critique will not target any foreign influences, but problems within the German culture itself.²⁶ In the first place, it will be a negative effort to turn the courageous German souls “gegen den inneren Feind” (1.160), against the pseudo-culture of *Gebildetheit*. Ultimately it will be a positive struggle to win these promising young souls for the course of genuine *Bildung*²⁷ and to teach them how to cultivate themselves, and so to contribute to the making of a productive German culture: in other words, to *educate* them.

But again, only very few see the glaring contrast between what a culture proper would be and what the present-day German *Gebildetheit* actually is. No such contrast exists for the public opinion because no such contrast exists for those who form the public opinion. These are the *Bildungsphilister*. Like all philistines, they are the “Gegensatz des Musensohnes, des Künstlers, des ächten Kulturmenschen” (1.165), and in addition to this basic characteristic, the

²⁴ This is well visible in the second definition of culture in the *UB*, culture as “neue und verbesserte Physis”, which we find at the end of *HL* (1.334). Cf. Hutter (2006, 18–22) on the interrelation of individual (self-)cultivation and culture at large.

²⁵ I don’t believe Brooks (2018, 26) is correct in reading Nietzsche as claiming that “warlike nations inevitably descend into barbarism”; the question is rather how should the warlike energies and qualities be directed.

²⁶ Nietzsche here quietly turns away from the view that German cultural renewal would mean the victory over French culture, expressed in Wagner’s *Beethoven* (Wagner 1983, 9.109/ 1966, V.126), as well as in *GT* (1.149).

²⁷ As Gadamer (1990, 16) notes, “das lateinische Äquivalent für Bildung ist ‘formatio’”, and we should keep in mind this relation it has to *shaping* together with its relation to image [*Bild*], which is frequently emphasized by Brooks (2018, 27, 139, 145–52). The connotations of shaping seem to be more important to Nietzsche himself: cf. the note 19 [307], 7.513.

Bildungsphilister are also unaware of their being philistines (Nietzsche says that a philistine like this “wähnt selber Musensohn und Kulturmensch zu sein” – 1.165).²⁸ The philistines are then distinguished from cultured humans by a threefold lack: first, they lack culture; second, they lack the knowledge of what culture is; and third, they lack the awareness of the first two lacks, i.e. they lack self-knowledge. The first lack makes them philistines in general, the two other lacks combined make them *Bildungsphilister*.²⁹

What does it mean to lack culture, i.e. to be a barbarian? As culture – of a people as well as of the individuals who constitute a cultured people – is distinguished by possessing a unifying principle on which all the expression of their life are based, the barbarian (in our case the philistine) lacks a principle that would order and guide his life. In the absence of such a principle, the philistine’s life, and his soul, are directed by the bodily needs that are present to each of us throughout our lives and always demand satisfaction.³⁰ These demands constitute his “Ernst des Lebens”, defined as “der Beruf, das Geschäft, sammt Weib und Kind” (1.170).³¹ He is serious about making money and providing himself and his family with a comfortable bourgeois existence. Moreover, the barbarian also desires to be acknowledged as good by others like him: his views are thus extremely susceptible to public opinion. And conversely, it is from the existence of a great mass of such susceptible people, who are anxious to present the ‘correct’ opinions in society in order to appear ‘fashionable’, to have their *Gebildetheit* validated,³² that public opinion gets its

²⁸ Nietzsche follows Schopenhauer in his definition of the philistine: cf. Neymeyr 2020, 1.89–90.

²⁹ In what follows, I will render *Bildungsphilister* simply as “philistine”, since Nietzsche himself tends to use these terms interchangeably in *DS*.

³⁰ More precisely, he follows whichever of them happens to be the strongest at the given moment; his soul is chaotic or shapeless already in this basic sense.

³¹ A similar point is made already in *GT* Vorwort (1.24) with the phrase “Ernst des Daseins”. Goethe’s comment to Eckermann from 22 March 18 1831 (Eckermann 2011, 473) – “denn worin besteht die Barbarei anders als darin, daß man das Vortreffliche nicht anerkennt” – is likewise highly relevant here.

³² Since *Gebildetheit* has no bearing on one’s practical life, it can exist in a barbaric soul without any friction.

power to compel conformity among the barbarians.³³ The content of these opinions is more or less irrelevant to them – they have no higher principle to which the opinions should conform – as long as they don't pose a challenge to their comfortable life. Anything that falls outside of these two overriding demands, for example art or philosophy, is automatically devoided of seriousness and relegated into the role of mere fun [*Spass*], or entertainment, or better yet: *divertissement*.³⁴

His opposite, the cultured human being, is defined not so much by (fully) possessing an organizing principle of one's soul and of one's life, but by ceaselessly *searching* for such a principle.³⁵ Or rather, his life is organized around this search for a principle that could give his soul an ever-fuller internal unity and consistency. In effect, the life of culture consists in a tireless effort to answer the question: *πῶς βιωτέον? How to live?*, and in a tireless effort to actually live according to the answer one has discovered, i.e. to order one's life in all its expressions and desires according to one's chosen principle.³⁶ This is an exceedingly difficult effort in two ways. First, intellectually: if one is to know what his best life is, one must *know oneself*, i.e. one's capacities, desires, natural tendencies, and the possibilities of their satisfaction and perfection. This is a long and difficult process that requires a powerful motivation: if one lacks such a motivation, as the self-satisfied philistines do, one will hardly attain much self-knowledge (cf. 1.163), and will likely fall into self-aggrandizing delusions, such as the philistines' belief in being the peak of mankind (1.162, 167). And second, it is difficult in terms of the self-discipline required to carry it out: hence

³³ In *SE* 6, Nietzsche will succinctly express this aspect of barbarism by declaring its bearers to be “Sklaven der drei M, des Moments, der Meinungen und der Moden” (1.392). Braatz (1988, 23) remarks that for Nietzsche, the cultured way of existing in a public space integrates individuals into society not via conformism, but via *agon*.

³⁴ Later on (1.203), Nietzsche will directly reference Pascal's idea of *divertissement* – entertaining activities whose purpose is to prevent us from confronting the question of the meaning of our existence, or (more precisely) the lack thereof. Cf. Pascal, *Pensées* §§ 165–71 (Pascal 1995, 44–9).

³⁵ Related to this is also their searching for the truth, which Neymeyr (2020, 1.96–7) highlights in relation to Lessing as he figures in *DS*.

³⁶ This is the second, higher sense in which the philistine is “der Missgestaltete” (1.162): his soul lacks a determinate *Gestalt* that would order all its activities. Cf. the related parable of “Land der Bucklichten” (1.223).

Nietzsche speaks of the “Tyrannis wirklicher Kulturforderungen” (1.169) that the philistines hate (since such demands implicitly but firmly belie their claim to be the peak of mankind).³⁷ Insofar as a cultured human being strives to live according to their own principles, they have no use and no respect for public opinion. Their *Ernst des Lebens* is oriented not on breadwinning and comfort, but on their search for the best way to live and on the activities that are conducive to their search, such as art, philosophy, or philology.

Nietzsche believes that philistinism was originally a somewhat healthy reaction to the culture-dangerous excesses of Romanticism. The Romantics and the idealist philosophers introduced a “Carneval aller Götter und Mythen” (1.168) into the still young German culture and thereby threw it into a chaos – and thus limiting the introduction of novelties was a good countermeasure.³⁸ However, the self-satisfied philistines, proud of their petty-bourgeois lives and limited horizons, absolutized this countermeasure into another culture-hostile extreme – namely into a rejection of seeking at all, i.e. of the very principle of culture. *Their* principle is that “es darf nicht mehr gesucht werden” (1.168), for everything worth looking for had already been found and is personified in the philistines themselves. This principle entails a thoroughgoing perversion of the meaning of culture, and according to Nietzsche that is precisely what the philistines accomplished. They perverted the character of the cultured human beings themselves: they are understood not as seekers [*Suchende*], i.e. as those who seek the good life, but as finders [*Findende*], i.e. as producers of the works of art which the philistines consume as after-work

³⁷ Goethe’s words to Eckermann from 14 March 1830 (Eckermann 2011, 709), quoted (and abridged) at 1.167, give us an example of the kind of (self-)tyranny in question. In the following sentence Goethe adds: “Wenn Jeder von sich dasselbe sagen kann, so wird es um Alle gut stehen”. The ‘tyranny’ of culture is, then, not just personal, but a universal demand that sets up the cultured human being as exemplary to all. Goethe is in effect asking that if *he* could devote his entire life to the pursuit of true culture, what is *your* excuse for not doing the same?

³⁸ Here Nietzsche touches upon the main problem of *HL*; cf. 1.250. Also cf. Neymeyr (2020, 1.97–9) for historical context.

entertainment and of public opinions (i.e. readily quotable authoritative statements that lend the quoting philistine an air of sophistication).³⁹ They perverted the proper way of honoring them – namely striving to follow in their footsteps and becoming a cultured human being oneself – into the above-mentioned consumption of their works as entertainment. They perverted the works of younger artists from being their own efforts to become more cultured into mere imitations of the earlier classics, into works of an alleged “Epigonen-Zeitalter” (1.169). And finally, they neutralized the academic disciplines that can contribute to culture, such as philosophy or philology (insofar as it presents Classical Antiquity as exemplary) into purely historical disciplines which raise no claims about human excellence.

All these characteristic efforts of the philistines, together with their superficial similarity to each other⁴⁰ that arises from their susceptibility to public opinion, ultimately amount to a “System der Nicht-Kultur” (1.166). This system is a conglomerate of philistines who everywhere form a “gleichförmige Gepräge” (1.165) and recognize themselves in each other, but this shared ‘form’ (actually: shared *formlessness* – an amorphous mass as opposed to an articulated unity – and consequent slavish conformity to public opinion) decidedly does not constitute a culture in Nietzsche’s sense. The philistine system is permissive as long as what one does has no bearing on practical life and the philistine supremacy in it (“nur [muss] um Gotteswillen bei uns alles beim Alten bleiben” – 1.170). However, those works and acts that are conducive to culture – such as all “künstlerisch produktive Formen und Forderungen eines wahren Stils” (1.166) – and thereby pose a challenge to the philistine system of non-culture, are met only with systematic negation and

³⁹ Braatz (1988, 36) notes in this context that the public opinion serves as the philistine ‘equivalent’ of *Bildung*; the philistines use this ‘*Bildung*’ not for self-cultivation, but to provide an appearance thereof, or “um der Täuschung seiner selbst und der anderen willen”.

⁴⁰ In contrast to this, it is the cultured human beings who are actually *individuals*.

exclusion from public discussion and consideration. This is how the philistines rule Germany (1.165, 173) – by producing and propagating a public opinion, a *δόξα*, that is conducive to their comfortable existence and deleterious to all striving for culture proper. And their rule is so strong, says Nietzsche, that they even openly admit some of their weaknesses that they're aware of. They admit that cultured human beings are stronger than them in terms of *Willenskraft* (1.172), and that it is precisely the strength of will that drives people like Hölderlin to strive for culture. They, being weak, have no such strength, no such drive, and no such striving. But, in a final perverse move, they see this weakness as an advantage. They are happy with their comfortable lives even without culture, and they intend to maintain the social conditions in which they rule and their lives are considered the best. In other words, their 'cultural' goal is a "dauerhaft begründete Barbarei" (1.166). That strong souls like Hölderlin, desiring of a better life, of a life of culture, may perish of such conditions is of no great concern to them.

The philistines and their barbaric, culture-hostile rule over Germany are the main target of Nietzsche's cultural critique in *DS*. In the remainder of this work he focuses on a particular target: the latest book of David Friedrich Strauss, *Der alte und der neue Glaube. Ein Bekenntniß*. Nietzsche has several reasons for this procedure. First, this book had been immensely popular among the philistines – it went through six editions in little more than a year (1.201) – and due to this we may consider it an exemplary compendium of the current philistine "public opinions". Second, the book's author is superior to other philistines in his courage, which makes him their leader, as it were, and a peak example of the philistine type (1.208). Third, this book presents by far the most ambitious project the philistine 'culture' has come up with yet – namely founding a new religion. As far as this project is concerned, though, Nietzsche finds it to be merely a

“Katechismus ‘der modernen Ideen’” (1.175) and utterly ineffective as a religious book.⁴¹ This book is a “confession” in a twofold sense: not just by the beliefs that Strauss voices in it, but also by the very fact that he thinks his beliefs worthy of being published and widely read – that he considers his beliefs to be *authoritative*.⁴² Thus it is ideally suited for Nietzsche to show us D.F. Strauss, this ‘peak of mankind’ and the peak of the philistine ‘culture’, as he really is, without the cover of his self-presentation and self-delusions. It is the possibility of laying bare the *missgestaltete* philistine soul that moves Nietzsche to engage with Strauss and his book of confessions; neither he nor his book is worthy of consideration on their own merits (cf. *EH* Weise 7). Before I go on to Nietzsche’s critique of *Der alte und der neue Glaube*, let us first take a brief look at that book itself, so that we may better comprehend Nietzsche’s critique and ridicule thereof.

I.3 *Der alte und der neue Glaube*

David Friedrich Strauss (1808–74) was a Protestant theologian who made his name in 1835–6 with the publication of the book *Das Leben Jesu, kritisch bearbeitet*. This book, a pioneer in the search for the “historical Jesus”, i.e. aiming to purify our image of Jesus from the mythological baggage added to him by the Gospel writers, depicted Jesus “as a mythological character whose historical existence is without proof” (van Tongeren 2000, 22) and scandalized contemporary Europe. Nietzsche had read *Das Leben Jesu* in 1864, and it apparently contributed to his break with Christianity and to the decision to abandon his theological studies and to concentrate on philology (ibid., 21–2; also cf. Golder 1990, 7). *Der alte und der neue Glaube. Ein*

⁴¹ It is not so much that Strauss wants to found a religion that draws Nietzsche’s criticism, as Church (2019, 38) thinks, but rather his complete failure at this.

⁴² It is significant that the criterion of a book’s worth is its usefulness to a *thinker* (1.174).

Bekennniß, Strauss' last major book, appeared in 1872. Unlike its predecessors, it was not a work of serious scholarship, but rather his 'confession of faith', or a summary of his beliefs and opinions.

D.F. Strauss states the intention of his new book right at the outset: to articulate the worldview, the "new faith" of the "we" of whom he is the representative person, and to raise their awareness of themselves as a cohesive group. These "we", "in deren Namen ich zu reden unternehme" (Strauss 1872, 7/ 1874, I.6),⁴³ are characterized as the progressive and intellectual middle class committed to the advancement of Germany (Strauss 1872, 294/ 1874, II.119–20):

Neben unsrem Berufe – denn wir gehören den verschiedensten Berufsarten an, sind keineswegs blos [*sic*] Gelehrte oder Künstler, sondern Beamte und Militärs, Gewerbtreibende und Gutsbesitzer, und noch einmal, wie schon gesagt, wir sind unsrer nicht wenige, sondern viele Tausende und nicht die Schlechtesten in allen Landen – neben unsrem Berufe, sage ich, suchen wir uns den Sinn möglichst offen zu erhalten für alle höheren Interessen der Menschheit.

The main concern of these "we" is what they perceive as the manifest inadequacy of Christian faith, even in its modernized forms, to the findings of modern Biblical philology and of modern natural science. As a consequence of choosing "neuere Wissenschaft" over "den alten Glauben" (Strauss 1872, 11/1874, I.11), they no longer consider themselves Christians. Since they reject Christianity, the established religion, the question naturally arises of what *do* they believe in, and what are the merits of their new worldview, or the "new faith", as Strauss calls it. Thus the main task of this book is to articulate the "new faith" of those for whom Strauss speaks, and to demonstrate its superiority over the obsolete Christian faith. And Strauss indeed makes big claims

⁴³ Two notes on the texts of *Der alte und der neue Glaube* I'm using:

1) The page numbers to this book refer first to the 1872 German edition (which is the edition Nietzsche is quoting in *DS*), then to the 1874 English edition (which is arbitrarily divided into two volumes). An additional advantage of quoting by page numbers rather than by chapters is that on four occasions, a pair of chapters has been fused into a single chapter in the English edition, resulting in 108 chapters as opposed to the original 112 chapters; most chapters thus have a different number in English than in German.

2) I'm citing according to the 1874 English edition rather than from the 1999 one. The translations in both editions are identical, but the 1999 edition is missing both appendices and the two concluding chapters (chs. 85–108 of the English edition), as well as the table of contents.

for the “new faith”: he wants to show that it is possible “das Gebäude eines wahrhaft menschlichen, d. h. sittlichen und dadurch glückseligen Lebens darauf zu gründen” (Strauss 1872, 12/ 1874, I.12). Strauss in effect claims that his “new faith” can serve as the basis for the actualization of our full humanity, and as a consequence, that it can provide its faithful with the greatest humanly attainable happiness: Strauss’ “new faith” makes the claim to provide *the* best way of life.

This claim is developed through the four major parts of the book. The **first** part, “Sind wir noch Christen?”, is devoted to showing why Christian faith is no longer believable for the “we”. The reasons for their disbelief range from intellectual (the Biblical account of the world and of its creation doesn’t agree with the history of Earth as natural science understands it – Strauss 1872, 15–20/ 1874, I.16–21), through moral (Strauss declares that the doctrine of the original sin “gleicherweise Vernunft wie Rechtsgefühl empört” – Strauss 1872, 24/ 1874, I.25), to philological reasons. The latter ones are, in a way, decisive, since the result of the modern philological discourse on Christianity was that “die Frage nach der Wahrheit des Christenthums sich zuletzt zu der nach der Persönlichkeit [bzw. Göttlichkeit] seines Stifters zugespitzt hat” (Strauss 1872, 47/ 1874, I.53). But philological criticism of the Bible gives us no reasons to believe in the divinity of Jesus. The story of his life, as presented in the Gospels, had clearly been contrived to make it seem as if it fulfills the various prophecies about the Messiah from the Old Testament, and is full of contradictions due to this (Strauss 1872, 52/ 1874, I.59). In particular the account of the resurrection of Jesus, the central article of Christian faith, is so absolutely baseless as to be “ein welthistorischer Humbug” (Strauss 1872, 72/ 1874, I.83). All this taken together means that Jesus was no god, and should not be worshipped as a god, but merely a man who “an dem Fortschritte der Menschheit Mitarbeiter vieler andern gewesen ist” (Strauss 1872, 86/ 1874, I.100), a worker

whose teachings have furthermore been surpassed by the progress of human reason. This leads Strauss to openly confess that “wir sind keine Christen mehr” (Strauss 1872, 90/ 1874, I.107).

But although the “we” are not Christian anymore, they are not irreligious. They even consider “die Anlage zur Religion als einen Vorzug der menschlichen Natur, ja geradezu als ihren vornehmsten Adelstitel” (Strauss 1872, 92/ 1874, I.108). The aim of the **second** part, “Haben wir noch Religion?” is to articulate the religiosity of the “we”, and how it constitutes a progress beyond the Christian dogmas. In this part, we learn that the progress of the sciences no longer allows us to believe in the efficacy of prayer (Strauss 1872, 111/ 1874, I.130), in a personal God in general (Strauss 1872, 112/ 1874, I.131), and in the immortality of the soul (Strauss 1872, 131/ 1874, I.153). The “old”, Christian faith is revealed by the scientific progress of mankind to be the way “eines angenehmen Selbstbetrugs” (Strauss 1872, 135/ 1874, I.157). Strauss’ way, the way “der Arbeit, der Cultur, der Erfindung” is much more effective in giving man “die gründliche, reale Befriedigung” of his needs (Strauss 1872, 134/ 1874, I.156). But it is not *fully* satisfying: human life still entails various kinds of inevitable misery, especially death. And it is the awareness of death that allows the “we” to retain “den Grundbestandtheil aller Religion, [d.h.] das Gefühl der unbedingten Abhängigkeit” (Strauss 1872, 138/ 1874, I.161), a Schleiermacherian acknowledgment of human finitude (Neymeyr 2020, 1.147). They feel dependent on an impersonal and eternal Cosmos, which they regard as the best of all possible worlds – not as already perfect, but rather as attaining an ever-greater perfection, as “die Werkstätte des Vernünftigen und Guten” (Strauss 1872, 140/ 1874, I.163). And “we”, the believers of this “new faith”, purified of all the falsity and wishful thinking of earlier, more primitive religions, “fordern für unser Universum dieselbe Pietät, wie der Fromme alten Stils für seinen Gott” (Strauss 1872, 143/ 1874, I.168), as Strauss demonstrates by reacting “religiös” to Schopenhauer’s pessimism (ibid.).

In the **third** part, “Wie begreifen wir die Welt?”, Strauss develops the understanding of this Cosmos and of man’s place in it on the basis of modern science. The Cosmos is “nicht bloß der Inbegriff aller Erscheinungen, sondern zugleich aller Kräfte und Gesetze” (Strauss 1872, 147/ 1874, I.171); it is eternal and contains “einen unendlichen Inbegriff von Welten in allen Stadien des Werdens und Vergehens” (Strauss 1872, 149/ 1874, I.174). Earth is just one of these worlds and it will eventually cease to exist. Life on Earth came about by natural processes: “das Leben ist nur eine besondere, und zwar die complicirteste Art der Mechanik” (Strauss 1872, 171/ 1874, I.199). The variety of forms of life has developed by Darwinian evolution, which also produced human beings. Strauss sees these lowly origins with pride, since their flipside is that humanity “sich von elenden thierischen Anfängen durch die fortgesetzte Arbeit einer unzählbaren Geschlechterreihe allmählig zu ihrem jetzigen Standpunkt emporgearbeitet hat” (Strauss 1872, 194/ 1874, II.4–5). The most significant difference between humans and other animals is our capacity to speak, which led to abstract thought and a great acceleration of mental development. Morality originates in our social instincts and in those related to childrearing (Strauss 1872, 203/ 1874, II.15). Strauss then defends his Cosmos against Schopenhauer’s pessimism, which sees such a universe as a theatre of endless, meaningless suffering. In response, Strauss invokes Lessing’s wish to strive for the truth rather than to possess it; thereby he claims that struggle and suffering are necessary for the progressive development of ever-higher forms of existence, up to forms that are able to comprehend this necessity, such as David Friedrich Strauss himself (Strauss 1872, 218–20/ 1874, II.32–3).

In the **fourth** part, “Wie ordnen wir unser Leben?”, Strauss finally gets to explain the ethics entailed by his “new faith”. He sees humans as included in the “Naturgesetz der Entwicklung” (Strauss 1872, 225/ 1874, II.39), and thus progressing to ever-greater moral perfection – as

opposed to Christian morality, which sees man as separate from the rest of nature and as irredeemably corrupt without God's grace. From this law he also derives human dignity: it is in humanity that the Cosmos gets to know itself (Strauss 1872, 240/ 1874, II.56). In fact, the development of our intellectual capacities is the very purpose of mankind, "wie überhaupt kein Wesen um desjenigen willen da ist, was schon auf frühern Lebensstufen gegeben war, sondern um dessen willen, was in ihm neu errungen worden ist" (Strauss 1872, 241/ 1874, II.57). This understanding also justifies and supports our scientific endeavors, which, Strauss says, are for Christianity merely "Verschwendung von Zeit und Kraft" (Strauss 1872, 240/ 1874, II.56) compared to caring for the salvation of one's soul.

Moral precepts should be grounded not in divine command, but in human nature, and Strauss believes to offer such a theoretical grounding in saying that "alles sittliche Handeln des Menschen [...] ist ein Sichbestimmen des Einzelnen nach der Idee der Gattung" (Strauss 1872, 236/ 1874, II.51). From this definition he derives negative duties – not to harm others – and positive duties of justice and philanthropy. These then branch out into various specific duties to family, to the state, to the nation, and to humanity, as well as professional and class duties. This also means we should strive to rule over our inner nature, i.e. over our irrational impulses. The goal of our striving and hard work is the progress of civilization.

After this rather basic sketch Strauss moves to particular issues. He believes that divorce should be legal, that pacifism is futile (and furthermore wrong-headed, since wars often contribute to the progress of civilization) and that wars are being fought for better reasons lately than in the more distant past (if we exclude colonialism), that patriotism is superior to cosmopolitanism

(behind which he sees the twin diabolical influences of the Pope and of socialism),⁴⁴ or that his “we” are satisfied with Bismarck’s *Reich* and “an ein gewaltsames Wiederfordern der deutschen Gebiete der Schweiz, oder der russischen Ostseeprovinzen, ja selbst der deutschen Provinzen Oesterreichs, nicht denken” (Strauss 1872, 258/ 1874, II.77–8). He prefers monarchy to a republic, which “beinahe unvermeidlich zu immer roherer Demokratie, jedenfalls der schlechtesten aller Staatsformen, heruntergleitet” (Strauss 1872, 264/ 1874, II.84), and supports the existence of nobility as a social class. He is strongly opposed to socialists, “die Hunnen und Vandalen unsrer modernen Cultur” (Strauss 1872, 273/ 1874, II.96), although he acknowledges that something should be done to improve the situation of the workers. He is against abolishing property qualification for suffrage, thinks capital punishment should be applied only in cases of premeditated murder, and would like to limit the role of churches in public life, although he thinks this will happen only after a decrease in the number of the faithful in the future.

Strauss then continues with two **appendices** on German poets (Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller) and composers (Bach, Händel, Gluck, Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven). This makes it appear as if art were only of marginal interest, something to be appended to the book – just entertainment after the serious business of science and statecraft – despite his grouping art among the “höheren Interessen der Menschheit” (Strauss 1872, 294/ 1874, II.120). Strauss even says that the effect of art “geschieht und gilt nur im Reiche der Phantasie” (Strauss 1872, 363/ 1874, II.211). The basic thrust of these appendices is to show the superiority of German culture to that of the other nations, especially in the more theoretical opening chapter of each appendix. Strauss’ opinions on the poets and composers don’t show any deeper understanding of their subject matter

⁴⁴ Thus, contrary to Brooks (2018, 54), D.F. Strauss is decidedly not a cosmopolitan.

and often are beholden to others' opinions. He manages to dismiss *Faust II* (Strauss 1872, 308/ 1874, II.139) – which Goethe considered to be the completion of his life's work (Eckermann 2011, 490, conversation from 6 June 1831) – and Beethoven's programmatic symphonies (Strauss 1872, 359/ 1874, II.206) as subpar works with just a couple of sentences.

Strauss gets serious again in the two **concluding chapters**. His “new faith” offers no metaphysical solace in the face of hardships and sufferings of life, but only what we win for ourselves by hard work. But isn't this Cosmos a cold and uncaring mechanism, as Schopenhauer insisted? Strauss responds that his Cosmos contains not just the “unbarmherzige Räder”, but also “linderndes Oel” (Strauss 1872, 365/ 1874, II.213). This “soothing oil” consists in the understanding that the Cosmos is good, because in moving only according to necessity it is fully rational, and this rational development is progressive. Then he adds, pointing to the courage necessary to give up the comforts of Christian faith, that “wer hier sich nicht selbst zu helfen weiß, dem ist überhaupt nicht zu helfen, der ist für unsern Standpunkt noch nicht reif” (Strauss 1872, 366/ 1874, II.214). Strauss parts with his readers by comparing his “new faith” to a newly-built road that is not yet fully comfortable, but will get better over time, while the defects of the old, Christian road, will only become more manifest over time.⁴⁵

For now I'll add just a few comments, so as not to anticipate Nietzsche's critique of this book. There is an important premise that D. F. Strauss shares with Nietzsche: the conviction that “God is dead”, that “der Glaube an den christlichen Gott unglaubwürdig geworden ist” (*FW* 343), and that it needs to be replaced in its role as a lynchpin of culture by something better. Strauss' cultural program is, in effect, generic secular humanism that claims to progress beyond Christianity

⁴⁵ This seems to be a variation on the image from the closing paragraph of Kant's *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (B 884), but Strauss modernizes the image in his typical clumsy way (cf. 1.223), and thereby weakens its impact.

and aims to replace it by natural science and hard work, which make the world an ever-better place to live;⁴⁶ he furthermore believes this is a process that's already happening. This program of spreading science and enlightenment is based on the (implicitly Christian) premise that "the truth will set you free", that an increased rationalization of life will lead to greater happiness for all. In the terms of *HL*, this amounts to thinking that science should rule life.

Unsurprisingly, this picture doesn't leave much space for philosophy and art. Art appears to be relegated into the role of mere entertainment, and philosophy is to be transformed into methodology of natural sciences (Darwinism is said to be a child of such a union of philosophy and science) and into a consideration of the ultimate metaphysical problems – although it's not clear which problems, since Strauss seems to have definitive answers to all of them (Strauss 1872, 209–10/ 1874, II.22–3).

The biggest surprise concerning the "new faith" is how little ethics it gives us. Strauss claims to want no major social changes, nor to establish any particular practices. It is a faith without any form of worship or structured activities that it would require from its faithful. Nor does it ask its faithful to change their lives in any way – they are to keep going on as before, to persevere in their work and in patriotic citizenship, and to be happy as the world gets slowly but steadily better. Furthermore, Strauss has a very limited idea of human greatness: "wer sich nicht selbst aufbläht, der kennt auch das bescheidene Maß seiner Anlagen" (Strauss 1872, 128/ 1874, I.149). We are now in position to see what is *the* best way of life, the "sittliche und dadurch glückselige Leben" (Strauss 1872, 12/ 1874, I.12): namely the regular life of a 19th-century bourgeois who does little besides what their job requires of them, but who nevertheless is the peak of human development

⁴⁶ Pinker 2019 is a contemporary version of this ideology.

simply by the virtue of existing at its currently latest point, or (to put it more pompously) of being the end result of the progress of the Cosmos so far. Strauss is aware of the somewhat dissatisfactory nature of this picture, in particular as it is haunted by two specters – that of socialist radicalism and that of Schopenhauerian pessimism – but he holds that, since the rational progress of civilization will become ever more apparent to everyone, ultimately his “faith” will be able to deal with these challenges.

I.4 DS 4–12: The Portrait of the Cultural Philistine

In the first paragraph of *DS* 4, Nietzsche announces that his reading of D. F. Strauss’ book and of its “new faith” will be organized around three questions: “Erstens: wie denkt sich der Neugläubige seinen Himmel? Zweitens: wie weit reicht der Muth, den ihm der neue Glaube verleiht? und drittens: wie schreibt er seine Bücher?” (1.177). These questions structure the remainder of *DS*: chapters 4–5 answer the question of the philistine heaven, i.e. his idea of the good life. Chapters 6–7 examine his courage, that is, how is he able to deal with difficulties on the path toward his “heaven” or with challenges to it. Chapters 8–12 deal with the style of Strauss’ book. Since culture was defined earlier as a unity of style, the style of the book will most directly reveal us how (un)cultured Strauss is: his style will *demonstrate* the level of his internal culture. “Der *Stil* ist die Physiognomie des Geistes. Sie ist untrüglicher als die des Leibes”, as Schopenhauer put it (*Werke* V.605). All three questions are, then, in effect asking about the philistines’ project of the good life: how they practice it now, what they want to become in the future, and how they want to attain this goal.⁴⁷ Both their internal and external culture, and their

⁴⁷ Contrary to Church’s (2019, 38) view, the three questions of *DS* 4 that are answered in the remainder of *DS* are not just “three features of Strauss’s argument”, but they form a synoptic account thereof. The critique of Strauss’ style is integral to this argument; I thus disagree with Brooks (2018, 56), who believes that “these literary criticisms are not

conception thereof, is included in the questioning. Nietzsche is reviewing Strauss' book from the perspective of cultivation of the human soul.

Philistine 'Heaven'

The "heaven" of the philistines, the best life they can imagine, turns out to be simply *the life they are already living*. They cannot imagine anything better – and that's why nothing else should be sought. This life is, as Strauss describes it (Strauss 1872, 294/ 1874, II.119–20),⁴⁸ a middle class life centered on one's profession. Despite the centrality of one's profession to this life, there are no high standards by which to judge the profession one should choose: the believers of the "new faith" are not just artists or scholars, but also civil servants, soldiers, or even merchants. And it is *besides* their profession (Strauss says "neben unserem Berufe") that they occupy themselves with what Strauss calls "alle höheren Interessen der Menschheit", i.e. with political discussion, popular science, literature and music. It is clear that despite Strauss' claims to the contrary, the philistines do not see the arts and sciences as *higher* interests – for if they did, they would devote their lives to what is higher rather than to their ostensibly "lower" professions. In fact, the "higher" interests are at best secondary for the philistines, and Nietzsche drives this point home by imagining their "self-cultivation" as visits to the beer hall or to the zoo, or as newspaper reading (1.179).⁴⁹

Nietzsche is particularly interested in the role of art in the philistines' lives, since here the philistine type appears in its purity, as Strauss says (1.180). Again, it is only used for entertainment

as important for demonstrating the unity of the *Untimely Meditations* as their theoretical counterparts" and judges *DS* 8–12 to be "five tendentious sections".

⁴⁸ I quoted a part of this passage at the beginning of Chapter I.3, and Nietzsche quotes it in full at 1.178–9.

⁴⁹ This association of newspaper reading with philistinism was made already by Goethe in *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* I.4 (*Werke* VIII.39).

or *divertissement* from the “rauhe Wirklichkeit” (1.180) in which the *actual*, serious life takes place.⁵⁰ Strauss has a lot to say about the German poets and composers, but it’s of little value. His approach to them is “critical” in the worst sense of the word. Although he cannot compare at all to someone like Goethe in terms of artistic output, he is quick to pass sweeping judgments on him – judgments that often are not even the fruit of his own understanding, but simply borrowed from someone else (in one case, Strauss quotes Gervinus to “prove” Goethe had no dramatic talent – 1.181). Conspicuously missing from Strauss’ chapters on the German artists is any personal engagement with their great works. It doesn’t seem as if there was anything that, say, Goethe’s *Faust* or Schiller’s *Wallenstein* could teach the philistine, or as if they could lead him to a serious reflection over his own life. Instead, he provides his readers with some piece of textual criticism that is likely meant to be “objective”, as opposed to the “subjective” opinions that a personal engagement with a work would produce. In this manner, the philistine’s understanding of art is based in the pre-existing public opinions and results in the production of several new opinions that are added to this supposedly authoritative body of opinion (cf. 1.205–6). This is a typical philistine procedure, of which Goethe had complained to Eckermann already on 16 December 1828 (Eckermann 2011, 292–3):

Die Deutschen, sagte [Goethe], können die Philisterei nicht loswerden. – Da quängeln und streiten sie jetzt über verschiedene Distichen, die sich bei Schiller gedruckt finden und auch bei mir, und sie meinen, es wäre von Wichtigkeit, entschieden herauszubringen, welche denn wirklich Schillern gehören und welche mir. Als ob etwas darauf ankäme, als ob etwas damit gewonnen würde, und als ob es nicht genug wäre, daß die Sachen da sind!

This kind of textual criticism or *Quellenforschung* is by itself pointless, says Goethe, because it misses the main thing – the *person* who was able to write the work in question. It is the person that

⁵⁰ It should be pointed out that the use of *divertissement* also protects from solitude and from the fundamental questions that tend to occur to us when we’re not occupied by worldly pursuits. The consumption of culture as *divertissement* thus also shields the philistine from questioning his self-complacency.

matters rather than their spiritual nourishment, for we are all nourished in one way or another, but what we do with the strength derived from the nourishment is our own accomplishment: “man könnte eben so gut einen wohlgenährten Mann nach den Ochsen, Schafen und Schweinen fragen, die er gegessen und die ihm Kräfte gegeben” (Eckermann 2011, 293). Goethe concludes that “die Hauptsache ist, daß man eine Seele habe, die das Wahre liebt, und die es aufnimmt wo sie es findet” (ibid.). The philistines then clearly miss the main benefit art offers us, namely its potential as a means for the cultivation of our soul.

The same superficial interest is the rule of the philistine’s engagement with music. Nietzsche reserves particular contempt for Strauss’ treatment of Beethoven (whom, it should be remembered, Wagner understood as the trailblazer for his own artistic project). Strauss dismisses his Sixth and Ninth Symphonies as inferior works with great ease. What is even worse, in doing so he implies his own superiority in matters of art over Beethoven, who – unlike Strauss – apparently didn’t have the good fortune of being accompanied by the Muses throughout his life and works (1.186).⁵¹ To conclude this section, Nietzsche likens Strauss’ approach to art to worshiping idols [*Götzen*] with a sacrificial fire: the idols are those artists and works that conform to his opinions, and those that don’t conform are cast into the (figurative) fire in order to “das Bild des Meisters rein zu halten” (1.187).⁵² Ultimately this is because the philistine believes he has nothing to learn, since the best is already known to him and nothing more should be sought. Works of art can therefore be either a confirmation of his views (and celebrated as such) or fall short of this standard (and thereby be deficient). For in the philistine’s eyes it is himself and his own views

⁵¹ Nietzsche is quick to point to us the comic value of a scene in which “ein unästhetisches Magisterlein über Beethoven zu Gerichte sitzt” (1.187)

⁵² Nietzsche doesn’t doubt that if Strauss had the chance to actually burn the “problematic” symphonies and thus to “improve” the image of Beethoven, he would do it (1.187).

that are the measure of all things: his worldview in effect amounts to saying “ich finde Niemanden, der beständig Recht hätte, als mich” (1.187).

So *this* is the philistine heaven: entertaining oneself with consumption and superficial discussion of those works of art that fit the philistine’s prejudices – “jenes widrige Erholungs-Bedürfniss und jenes beiläufige mit halber Aufmerksamkeit hinhörende Sich-Abfinden mit der Philosophie und Kultur und überhaupt mit allem Ernste des Daseins” (1.204) – as a means of recovering from life in the “rauhe Wirklichkeit” in which his daily toils take place, of appearing “cultured” to other philistines, and as a means of *divertissement*, of preventing any disconcerting thoughts from occurring to him.

Philistine ‘Courage’

Strauss prides himself on his courage to live without the comforting fictions of Christianity, such as the immortality of the soul and divine providence. Nietzsche doesn’t deny that this requires courage; he rather asks how far Strauss’ courage to live in a godless world extends. Schopenhauer and Eduard von Hartmann offered us a clear and bleak picture of such a world as senseless suffering, and they concluded it would be better if no life (Schopenhauer) or even no cosmos at all (von Hartmann) had existed. Strauss quotes these arguments in his book (Strauss 1872, 142/ 1874, I.166). But instead of engaging with their conclusions, Strauss quickly dispatches pessimism with a sophism: if the world is a bad thing, the thinking that came to this conclusion is also a bad thing, and hence it invalidates itself.⁵³ The point of this sophism is to persuade his “faithful” that

⁵³ Strauss’ conclusion obviously does not follow: even if the world is “bad” (i.e. full of senseless suffering), this doesn’t make the thinking that comes to this conclusion “bad” (i.e. faulty reasoning).

pessimism is intellectually worthless, “als ob es gar nichts wäre, Schopenhauer zu widerlegen” (1.192).

Pessimism had apparently been refuted by the “new faith’s” belief in the rationality of the Cosmos that leads to an ever-greater perfection of the beings within it, especially of human beings. However, this belief turns out to have shaky foundations. Nietzsche points out that the Cosmos is not just the source of all life, reason and goodness, but also of their opposites – of decay, unreason, and evil (1.196). Strauss responds to this kind of criticism by portraying his Cosmos as being not rational *stricto sensu*, but as a process of developing ever-greater rationality through the struggle of various forces. But such a claim is not grounded in what modern science teaches us about the world and can be only accepted on *faith* (Zuckert 1970, 31). The “rationality” of the Cosmos that is supposed to be a solace to the believers of the “new faith” turns out to be a metaphysical trick – a reinsertion of providence into a godless world that has no ground for it – that Strauss employs because he cannot reveal to them the extent to which the Cosmos is cold and careless. Strauss’ entire *cosmodicea* amounts to a “*Vergötterung des Erfolges*”, of whatever comes to pass, as the supposed rational necessity governing the universe (1.197). Considered from the perspective of Schopenhauerian courage, this is nothing but “ein bitterer Hohn über die namenlosen Leiden der Menschheit” (1.192; quoting *WWVI*, § 59; *Werke* I.447): this faith simply ignores the omnipresent reality of suffering and always looks on the bright side of life instead.

This is the limit of Strauss’ “courage”: it goes farther than that of the average philistine, but nowhere near far enough to actually confront the realities of a godless world. Nietzsche then shows us a similar issue in Strauss’ ethics. Despite extolling Darwin as a great benefactor of mankind and spending a large portion of the third part of his book by explaining Darwinian evolution, he fails to derive his ethics from a Darwinian understanding of the human being. That

would namely mean “aus dem bellum omnium contra omnes und dem Vorrechte des Stärkeren Moralvorschriften für das Leben ab[zu]leiten”, and to try to derive the (actually existing) “Phänomene menschlicher Güte, Barmherzigkeit, Liebe und Selbstverneinung” from these naturalistic premises – but that would scare off his philistine audience (1.194–5). Instead, he derives his ethics from the idea of providential progress. Apart from that, grounding morality is extremely difficult, just as preaching it is easy – and to confirm this observation of Schopenhauer,⁵⁴ Strauss makes no such effort and instead proceeds to preach. And his preaching is again at odds with his avowed Darwinism. He defines morality as “ein Sichbestimmen des Einzelnen nach der Idee der Gattung” (Strauss 1872, 236/ 1874, II.51). However, species are in flux according to Darwin and it is the *differences* among the various individuals and groups who struggle for survival in competition with others *of the same species* that drive the evolution of that species. This diversity is particularly visible in humans, who have developed countless ways of life, and Strauss’ definition of morality is so empty as to provide no reasons for choosing any one of them. Nietzsche thus paraphrases Strauss’ moral imperative as “lebe als Mensch und nicht als Affe oder Seehund” (1.195). But the real question remains unanswered: *what kind* of human being should we live like?

Strauss does provide an answer of sorts to this question: he says we should treat everyone as an equal, as having “die gleiche Bedürfnisse und Ansprüche wie du” (Strauss 1872, 238–9/ 1874, II.54). But this is decidedly not a Darwinist answer: a Darwinist knows that we have developed from lower animality “bis zur Höhe des Menschen” (1.197) by prioritizing our own needs over those of others, i.e. precisely by *forgetting* that others “ebenso berechtigt seien” as

⁵⁴ The sentence comes from Schopenhauer’s *Über den Willen in der Natur* (*Werke* III.472); he later adopted it as the motto of his *Über die Grundlage der Moral* (*Werke* III.629).

oneself.⁵⁵ Had he been honest with himself and his “faithful”, Strauss would have to admit that “an answer to the question of morality had to be found within scientific Darwinism” (Johnson 2001, 72). Instead, he covertly reinserts a basic principle of Christian morality – the equality of all humans – into his ethics to easily get to the conclusion his readers, who after all live the best imaginable life, are expecting. But he isn’t reverting back to Christian morality; he rather believes to progress beyond it. This notion of a ceaseless progress is a general feature of Strauss’ thinking, a kind of corrupt Hegelianism. This quasi-providential progress allows Strauss to ignore Kant’s critical philosophy and its implications for the notion of science he’s operating with (1.191), to imbue his Darwinism with “an implied notion of improvement, higher morality, or progressively superior forms” (Johnson 2001, 71), and to keep a central tenet of Christian morality despite having disavowed the premises that support this tenet.

Besides these two instances of cowardice in the face of a godless world, Zuckert (1970, 37–9) also brings out the implications of Strauss’ facile progressivism for his fear of socialism that Nietzsche points out (1.199). Socialists share with the philistines the idea that *Ernst des Lebens* consists in providing for one’s livelihood, or (more widely) in economic activity. They also share their “heaven”: there is no substantial difference between the philistine’s lifecycle of work and consumption of cultural goods after work, and Marx’ hunting in the morning, fishing in the afternoon, rearing cattle in the evening, and criticizing after dinner (cf. Tucker 1978, 160). They also share the maxim that “nothing more should be sought” than their respective accounts of the good life. Finally, they both believe their “heaven” can be attained by force: the philistines had already attained their heaven with the establishment of the German Empire, while socialists plan

⁵⁵ Survival of the fittest means that the evolutionarily fit exemplars of a given species survive and reproduce at the expense of the less fit exemplars of *the same species*. Again, this doesn’t mean that Nietzsche regards phenomena such as love or self-denial as unreal – but it means their origin is left unaccounted for by Strauss.

to attain it by revolution. The socialists merely plan to extend the middle-class philistine “heaven” into a universal one.⁵⁶ And because the philistines also share the socialist belief in fundamental human equality, they have no intellectual resources to defend their “heaven” against the socialist push to democratize it; they can only defend against socialism by force (which is a good reason for them to glorify it). An intellectual defense against socialism would require a new, non-egalitarian account of human excellence – one in which a certain kind of human being stands higher than others and therefore is exemplary. Nietzsche hints at such an account in proposing a counter-imperative to Strauss’ empty “lebe als Mensch” – namely “lebe als Genie, das heisst eben als idealer Ausdruck der Gattung Mensch” (1.195).

We have seen that Strauss’ courage, although marginally greater than that of his followers, exists in fact solely in the realm of words (1.194). He can face the challenges of pessimism, Darwinism, and socialism only by mockery, or by reverting to religious prejudices he supposedly surpassed, such as (Cosmic) providence, or by force. His religion turns out to be “religious” in the worst possible sense – it is an irrational superstition.

Philistine ‘Style’

We enter the question of the style of Strauss’ writing through an examination of the intended audience of his ‘religion’. Nietzsche says that on the basis of the excited reception it had had among the educated Germans – six editions within a single year – the book is supposed to be “ein *Religionsbuch für den Gelehrten*” (1.201); it should show the life of the scholar as exemplary. But this would mean that scholars, the products of the famed German gymnasias and universities, the pride of German culture and education, somehow fall together with the philistines, who were

⁵⁶ Cf. Carl Schmitt’s (2008, 22) remark that “der große Unternehmer hat kein anderes Ideal als Lenin, nämlich eine ‘elektrifizierte Erde’. Beide streiten eigentlich nur um die richtige Methode der Elektrifizierung.”

until now described by Nietzsche as Strauss' primary audience. The blossoms of contemporary German culture, the thorough and methodical scientific spirits, would turn out to be a force deleterious to culture proper. How is this possible?

Nietzsche believes it is a consequence of their being scientific spirits, i.e. of the way in which they pursue the science in which they specialize. There is namely a paradox "im Wesen des wissenschaftlichen Menschen" (1.202): the scholars study their specialized fields as if they had no need to think about their own lives and their meaning, about questions "Wozu? Wohin? Woher?" (ibid.). They share the philistine self-satisfaction with their middle-class existence. Their science has no bearing on who they are, they pursue it "als ob die Wissenschaft eine Fabrik sei", and they live as if they were factory workers or even slaves (ibid.; cf. 1.300). Their lives also take on the structure of the philistine life with its cycle of labor and relax, labor being understood chiefly as means for making a livelihood, and relax as after-work consumption of culture as entertainment or *divertissement*. Their knowledge – be it of physics, philology, or anything else – is as much a work tool for them as a hammer is for the worker: whatever it may be, it is decidedly not a means of self-cultivation. As it was the case with the ordinary philistines, their 'culture' is mere *Gebildetheit*, or learnedness. German education had degenerated from a serious effort to form cultured human beings into a mass production of spiritual laborers: that is Nietzsche's diagnosis of contemporary scholarship.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Nietzsche would later say that the main subject of *DS* was German *Bildung* (*EH* Unzeitgemässen 1). The core of his critique in this respect is showcasing the reduction of *Bildung* to *Gebildetheit* and the integration of this degenerated form of education into the philistine system of public opinion. In the passage currently discussed he adds that this isn't merely a problem of the intellectually mediocre philistines, but that this problem is all-pervasive in German education and affects even the greatest scholars – that this is an essential problem of the celebrated contemporary German educational system.

Like philistines, the scholars are proud of their ‘*Bildung*’ and believe nothing else should be sought. This is why they appreciate Strauss’ book so much: it validates their self-satisfaction and their feelings of superiority over everyone else. It likewise fits their understanding of engaging with culture as the production of a “Compendium gelehrter Meinungen über Kunst, Litteratur und Philosophie” (1.205). Thus, although they may disagree with Strauss’ opinions on one or another subject (especially on theological matters), in general they consider *The Old Faith and the New* as the “Ideal eines Buches” (1.207). But such criteria do not belong to culture proper. Since culture is a unity of style, Nietzsche begins his examination of Strauss’ book-writing style by asking about “die Architektur des Buches” (1.209): does his book form a unified whole? Is there a structuring principle – logical or artistic – that orders its composition?

Nietzsche doesn’t see a logical order in the four parts of Strauss’ book (1.209–13). The first question – Are We Still Christians? – gives the rest of the book an unpleasant theological hue; but it is also unrelated to the other three questions, as the fact that one is not a Christian doesn’t imply anything about his positive beliefs. The question “What is Our Conception of the Universe?” has nothing in common with the question “Have We Still a Religion?”: for the intellectual honesty of a scientist shows itself precisely by *not* taking his faith into account in his scientific research. Strauss’ confusion here is due to the fact that his “new faith” has little to do with faith and for the most part “fällt mit der modernen Wissenschaft zusammen” (1.211). But modern science cannot provide Strauss’ ‘faith’ with any of the comforts of the old, Christian faith; he could establish these only by fraudulently reinserting metaphysical progress and providence into his worldview. Strauss’ ‘new faith’ is likewise unrelated to the question “What is Our Rule of Life?” – the philistines have no need of this faith, as their lives were the same self-satisfied cycle of work and relax already before Strauss published his book, and they won’t change even if they accept the

tenets of the ‘new faith’. Finally, also the question “What is Our Conception of the Universe?” has no bearing on “What is Our Rule of Life?” – we have seen how little Strauss’ avowed Darwinism bears on his ethics, and it bears even less on his discussion of subjects such as divorce or the death penalty. Strauss’ book turns out not to be a logical whole, but rather a product of the typical scholarly procedure of “ein Buch aus Stücken zusammensetzen” (1.209).

Doesn’t the book form at least a rhetorical or artistic whole, then? It indeed does – but the purpose of this whole, ridiculed by Nietzsche as a “Gartenhaus” (1.215–6), is in the first place to show what a cultured man and great writer Strauss is. To this effect he strives to imitate his two models, Lessing and Voltaire, and he has even grasped that a main feature of a genius’ writing is “*Simplicität des Stiles*” (1.217). Unfortunately for Strauss, the genius is also marked by an understanding of the profundity of the problems of human life and of the good life in particular, problems that “ernst und schrecklich sind und als solche von den Weisen aller Jahrtausende behandelt wurden” (ibid.). But, as had been amply demonstrated by this point, Strauss has no such understanding: in taking his scholarly-philistine life as the peak of human progress, the good life ceased being a question at all to him, and he doesn’t even try particularly hard to justify the excellence of his own life.⁵⁸ As a consequence, the simplicity of his style serves only to underline the shallowness of his understanding. In Nietzsche’s metaphor, Strauss attempted to imitate the naked goddess Truth, but failed to convey any truths and managed only to publicly strip himself naked. After this big reveal, Nietzsche offers us a diagnosis of D.F. Strauss: he used to be a great scholar who did valuable work in his field (namely *Das Leben Jesu*), but he abandoned this work for the sake of becoming a leading figure of the philistine ‘culture’, the German Voltaire or the

⁵⁸ The closest Strauss came to recognizing the good life as a problem was in his glossing over the most difficult consequences of his faith in the godless Cosmos. However, it is unclear whether he did this intentionally – to hide the difficult truths from his audience – or whether he simply was unable to face these truths himself.

French Lessing. But in doing this he ruined his proper, scholarly genius, and became merely a bad actor and “ein ganz nichtswürdiger Stilist” (1.219–20).

The last sentence refers to Strauss’ style in a stricter sense, and in this respect he’s once again symptomatic of the philistine pseudo-culture.⁵⁹ This pseudo-culture does not cultivate its German – spoken or written – and the worst offenders are those who disseminate public opinion: the newspaper writers. In the absence of a simple and grammatically correct style, the philistines produce all kinds of strange innovations: metaphors that seem new by their use of modern technology, the use of short sentences for persuasion and long sentences for didactic purposes, and even grammatical ‘innovations’ that are actually just bad German.⁶⁰ All of these innovations – which do not belong to a style in the proper sense, but are its corruptions – are amply used by Strauss, as Nietzsche documents in *DS* 11 and 12. The use of such unnatural (contrary to the nature of the language) ‘innovations’ serves the needs of the philistine ‘culture’: the philistines are tired after their work, and so they need such powerful stimuli to react and to be excited and entertained.

This language-corrupting industry of public opinion is moreover a part of the system of non-culture that Nietzsche analyzed in *DS* 2. It is supportive of everything similar to already existing opinions, and actively celebrates new ‘classics’ who fall into this mold, but it consistently rejects and marginalizes anything that falls outside of it or challenges its premises. But, Nietzsche urges us, “*anstössig [...] ist alles wahrhaft Produktive*” (1.222) – that is, offensive to the philistines, because in order to actually be a cultural effort, it *must* challenge the philistine system

⁵⁹ Nietzsche’s analysis of the forces corrupting the German language draws heavily on Schopenhauer’s essay *Über Schriftstellerei Und Stil* (*Werke* V.589–650), as well as on his *nachgelassen* essay *Materialien zu einer Abhandlung über den argen Unfug, der in jetziger Zeit mit der deutschen Sprache getrieben wird* (Nietzsche quotes the latter directly at 1.227; cf. Neymeyr 2020, 1.224–5).

⁶⁰ Nietzsche catalogues these under the heading “Sprachfehler, verwirnte Bilder, unklare Verkürzungen, Geschmacklosigkeiten und Geschraubtheiten” (1.225).

and thereby become offensive to it (and not just “in tone”, as Church 2019, 52 writes). This system also has deleterious consequences on those who strive to cultivate themselves, who find themselves alone and in contradiction to seemingly everyone, i.e. to the masses who listen to the public opinion. The lack of support and the uniformly dismissive general view of their efforts thus forms another, artificial obstacle on the already difficult path of self-cultivation. Besides the above-mentioned Hölderlin, Nietzsche also uses the example of Lessing to show the practical consequences of this system of non-culture (1.182–4). D.F. Strauss praises Lessing’s “universality”, his ceaseless polemical interventions in all kinds of public debates, without realizing that this polemical activity was actually a heavy burden for Lessing. Nietzsche invokes the authority of Goethe to convey that Lessing’s polemics were a result of the pitiful level of culture of his time (cf. Eckermann 2011, 234–5; conversation from 7 February 1827). It is actually *despite* the philistines and with the added burden of polemics against them that great spirits like Lessing composed their works: and how much more could they have done without that unnecessary burden!⁶¹

Nietzsche’s examination of David Friedrich Strauss’ soul is now finished. It is a soul utterly unconcerned with what the genuine good is, and fully satisfied with its current – miserable – way of life. It uses the great works of German culture not to cultivate and unify itself, but only to relax after the petty everyday concerns that constitute its *Ernst des Lebens* and as *divertissement* from the actually serious questions. Moreover, despite being completely unartistic, it considers itself better than the great men of culture who lived earlier simply because they lived earlier, which makes them “less cultured” in its eyes. Its courage exists only in speech: even if it avows some

⁶¹ Cf. 1.183–4; this closing passage of *DS* 4 (1.183, line 14 – 1.184, line 5) is taken almost verbatim from *ZB* IV (1.724–5). The comments about Schiller in this passage are likely a reference to Goethe’s words from 18 January 1827 (Eckermann 2011, 213–4).

difficult truths, such as the nonexistence of God, it cannot face the consequences such truths have for their lives and uses metaphysical tricks to avoid these consequences and to live as complacently as before. This soul has no unity of its own; its ‘style’ consists in indiscriminate imitation of popular models in an effort to win a similar popularity for itself. This ‘style’ is in fact mere subservience to public opinion, i.e. a chaotic mix of popular views whose only ‘principle’ is the systematic exclusion of a unifying principle, of real style and culture. It is fully integrated into the system of public opinion, supports it and draws its strength from it. The soul of D.F. Strauss is, then, completely barbaric – and takes itself to be the peak of human development so far. And *this* exemplar of barbarism is supposed to be the leader of German youth and the author of a “Canon für starke Geister” (1.201)! They would never become cultured under such a leadership; they would either be destroyed by the continual frustration of their desire for culture in a society that systematically suppresses it, or simply join the ranks of the philistines. This is the upshot of *DS*: to show its (yet-unspecified) audience the philistine soul in its full misery, and to drive them away from its pernicious influence by ridiculing this pitiful exemplar.

* * *

The final paragraph of *DS* characterizes it as *Nietzsche’s* confession (1.241). Leo Strauss has commented that “one writes as one reads” (1988, 230), i.e. that the method a thinker uses to read other books is also instructive for how his own books should be read. Let us therefore ask Nietzsche’s three questions from *DS* 4 about *DS* itself in order to see what will it tell us about Nietzsche and his project in the *UB*.⁶² Nietzsche’s **heaven** seems to be the life of culture, both

⁶² Church (2019, 51) makes a similar, but more limited point about the form of the *UB*.

internally – as the cultivating of one’s own soul – and externally, as the establishment of a national (and even supra-national) culture that promotes, aids and honors this self-cultivation. But we know very little yet about the finer details of either internal or external culture. Nietzsche hints at his intellectual **courage** to face squarely the consequences of a godless world by criticizing Strauss for failing to do so, but we have yet to see how he will do it. He has also shown his practical courage in standing up against the philistine culture despite being just a single man against many (1.242). Thereby he identifies himself as one of the few “kämpfenden Kultur-Menschen”,⁶³ whose dedication to culture in a culture-hostile society forces them to live in a perpetual contradiction with the world (1.206). But he clearly believes that his goal is attainable and that the sacrifices he makes in the struggle for it are worth it. His method in this struggle is to speak the truth – as opposed to the false, but comfortable and comforting public opinions – and this is what makes him *unzeitgemäss*. By extension – and with the awareness that Nietzsche will characterize the term *unzeitgemäss* also in other ways throughout the *UB*⁶⁴ – we may say that every cultured human being living in a barbaric period is *unzeitgemäss* as well, and that one of the meanings of this term is to express the contradiction in which they find themselves. Nietzsche’s **style** shows us that he looks up to his cultural superiors (of whom Goethe and Schopenhauer figure prominently in *DS*), but he is not imitating them like Strauss imitates Lessing and Voltaire; for Nietzsche they rather are examples from whom he can learn the ways of self-cultivation. Nietzsche has also shown himself to be a fluent user of satire and ridicule. Finally, he seems to feel an affinity to Lessing as understood by Goethe, to Lessing the productive spirit who got mired in various polemics against his will. In the letter to Carl von Gersdorff from 1 April 1874 he says that he seeks the freedom to

⁶³ As Brooks (2018, 4–9) suggests, this may be a polemical reference to Bismarck’s *Kulturkampf*. Cf. Neymeyr (2020, 2.430) on Nietzsche’s “Kampf-Rhetorik, die auf die Kultur zielt” more generally.

⁶⁴ At 1.246–7, 346, 362, and 432.

be truly productive, and to this end “wehre [ich] mich, empöre mich gegen das viele, unsäglich viele Unfreie, was mir anhaftet” (KGB II.3, 214). And in the letter to Malwida von Meysenbug from 25 October 1874 he explicitly ascribes to the *UB* the purpose of eventually “alles Negative und Empörte, was in mir steckt, aus mir heraus gestellt zu haben” (KGB II.3, 268).

David Friedrich Strauss believed that his worldview based on modern science can replace the declining Christianity as a basis of culture. But his worldview turned out to be the opposite of culture. Nietzsche’s “Attentat” (*EH UB 2*) on Strauss thus opens up a set of larger questions that will be the central topics of the remaining three *UB*.⁶⁵ The first of these questions is why Strauss failed in his effort to replace Christianity despite the power that the philistines have in Germany. Is there perhaps a single cause for their social power and their cultural impotence? Is modern science, on which Strauss relied so much, self-defeating in relation to the needs of human life? Is Strauss a symptom of some deficiency of modern science? These questions will be the subject of *HL*. Second, we need to know what worldview *can* replace Christianity as a basis of culture at this world-historical juncture. We need to ask what is culture proper, a culture that responds to the natural human needs and channels natural human powers. This leads us to a set of interrelated questions: what is the human being and its proper excellence, or its “genius”; how can one achieve the level of one’s genius, or what are the inner workings of an individual’s *Bildung*;⁶⁶ and, how can a society contribute to this process, or what does a true external culture look like? In short, the second set of questions asks about Nietzsche’s project in the *UB*, both internal (the project of cultivating the souls of the individual readers, of those who despise philistinism and yearn for

⁶⁵ Thus it indeed is an example of Nietzsche’s “Kriegs-Praxis”, as he claims in *EH Weise 7*.

⁶⁶ In this respect, Zuckert (1970, 48) highlights the apparent paradox that culture consists in seeking an organizing principle rather than in possessing it. This seems to imply that self-cultivation in the current sense would cease to be possible once a principle is found – or that it can *never* be found, which would make self-cultivation a fundamentally futile effort.

genuine culture like Nietzsche does) and external (the project of establishing new institutions that would support genuine culture and that could become the basis for a large-scale cultural reform). Third, we need to know who Nietzsche's audience is. They appear to be young Germans who would be otherwise attracted or at least influenced by Strauss' worldview, but this is far from a satisfactory answer. So far, we may say that his intended audience appears to be young and brave [*tapfer*], but we don't know why precisely these, and not some other, qualities matter to Nietzsche. The third set of questions then can be summarized as asking about who Nietzsche's audience is, and what makes them his intended audience. The latter two sets of questions will be answered in *SE* and *WB*.

II. Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben: The Human Soul and Its Modern Deformation

“I decided that I must be careful not to suffer the misfortune which happens to people who look at the sun and watch it during an eclipse. For some of them ruin their eyes unless they look at its image in water or something of the sort. I thought of that danger, and I was afraid my soul would be blinded if I looked at things with my eyes and tried to grasp them with any of my senses.”¹

¹ Plato, *Phaedo* 99d–e.

The overt subject of *HL* is, as announced in the *Vorwort*, a critical examination of modern scientific history and of the historical *Bildung* that is based on it. Contemporary Germany is proud of this historical *Bildung*, and rightly so (“mit Recht” – 1.246), according to Nietzsche. It is a great achievement in the search for truth about the past. However, knowledge is not the highest good for Nietzsche of the *UB*. Human life should not serve knowledge, but the other way round – and knowledge is not indiscriminately beneficial, as we learn from Goethe’s words that open *HL*. There is knowledge that is beneficial in the sense of increasing one’s will and capacity to act, but there is also “Wissen, bei dem die Thätigkeit erschlaft” (1.245), or even outright deadly knowledge. The question thus opens up of how does the knowledge produced by modern scientific history, and inculcated into the young by modern historical *Bildung*, affect the lives of the knowers. In other words, what is its worth for “life”, i.e. for the good life as Nietzsche understands it? Does scientific history serve life, or stifle it? And more broadly, what is the relation of life and truth in general, of which the problem of scientific history is just one manifestation?

HL will argue that scientific history indeed contradicts the needs of life. Active life requires certain necessary conditions to grow, and scientific history does not provide these for it. Thus it can be at best an inessential luxury to *Bildung* proper, to the cultivation of life. But the situation is even worse: the pursuit of scientific history has become excessive and feverish. The inessential kind of cultivation has taken the place of the essential; and the inessential kind of cultivation, if not preceded by the essential kind, is actively harmful to the development of those capacities of the soul which are necessary for active, growing life. Nietzsche learned this from two sources: first, from his self-examination, from his own feelings of being stifled by his historical knowledge and consequently being unable to act. And second, from his own ‘historical’ education – from his

studies of Greek culture and thought. This is our first direct indication that history can be beneficial to life if used properly.

In order to properly develop the arguments outlined in the *Vorwort*, *HL* will first outline the nature of the human soul: what does it consist of and what does it mean for it to “grow” in the light of its structure. This articulation of the human soul will be of central importance to the entire *UB*. On its basis the proper ways of cultivating the soul can be discerned. It will also become possible precisely to articulate the ways in which scientific history and historical education are damaging to the soul, or to “life”. Finally, Nietzsche will outline some suggestions to counteract the damage caused to the young souls by historical education.

II.1 *HL* 1: The Erotic-Historic Soul

The first chapter of *HL* opens with the image of a grazing herd of animals. These animals are said to live “unhistorically”: they are construed as having no memory and no awareness of time. The animal lives absorbed in the present moment, it appears “in jedem Momente ganz und gar als das was es ist” (1.249); the animal needs not become what it is, for it always already is what it is. The “unhistorical” is, however, a negative designation of this mode of perception: if the animals don’t perceive “historically”, how *do* they perceive? Following Zuckert (1976, 57), we can take our bearing on this question from 1.253, where Nietzsche tells us that the force underlying the unhistorical mode of perception is passion, or more generally: desiring. The animal is then constructed as pure immediacy of desiring with no memory, and the horizon of its perception is as if reduced to the single point of its present desire. The life of an animal consists in following and satisfying its momentary desire, which in their case is rather easy to satisfy, and this ease of satisfaction makes them happy. Desiring is the fundamental faculty of all living beings, including

humans – and the fact that we all are desiring beings is one of the main reasons why there is no *cardinal* difference between man and animal (1.319):² all living beings have needs and desires, and the striving to satisfy these is the motive force behind all their actions.

However, the human mode of desiring is in an important way different from the simple unhistoricity of the animal. The source of this difference is the other basic faculty of the human soul, acquired during the long millennia of our becoming-human: memory. Memory, the “historical” force within us, means at the most basic level our awareness of time and its passing, of the “es war”; and by the same token it also opens up the dimension of the future to us. This awareness has far-reaching consequences for the human way of being, and in this sense it constitutes our specific difference from other animals. Nietzsche brings up first the kinds of suffering this brings: we suffer because we cannot change what already happened, because of our impotence vis-à-vis the past; we suffer because we see the changeable and perishable character of all things; and most importantly, we suffer from our own changeability or subjectedness to the flux of things. Man’s memory reveals to him “was sein Dasein im Grunde ist – ein nie zu vollendendes Imperfectum” (1.249): that we cannot live simply as “what we are” (as the animals do), because we are always already different than we used to be and because all our striving to become something concrete will necessarily be frustrated by the impermanence of all things, ourselves included.³ Whatever we may want to become, our strivings will never be fulfilled and our desire will never be fully satisfied. Hence, human life cannot be completed or perfected; it can only be –

² Other important reasons include the fact that we have a natural history just as other animals do, and that we have evolved from ‘lower’ species. The latter is also an example of “der Flüssigkeit aller Begriffe, Typen und Arten” (1.319), another of the “deadly truths”.

³ Cf. Nietzsche’s example of the man who would remember everything (1.250), and Jensen’s (2016, 49) helpful illustration of such a man’s problems.

and it inevitably will be – terminated by death.⁴ This is what we realize (to a varying degree) when we are submerged in the “historical” mode of perception, and hence we as humans, as “historical” beings, suffer from the past.⁵

The second significant consequence of having memory is the way it transforms our desiring. When our perception of external things is combined with the capacity to remember, we become aware of a lot more than is strictly necessary for the satisfaction of our momentary desires, and thus our minds get burdened with all sorts of unnecessary information. In order to clean up this mental clutter, humans possess the capacity of *active* forgetting (as in *GM* II.1). Active forgetting is possible and necessary only for beings capable of remembering in the first place, and thereby it is distinct from the animal lack of remembering.⁶ Forgetting is a part of the “unhistorical”, which means that the principle on the basis of which we select what to remember and what to forget are the needs of our dominant passion, which is to say the needs of “life” (since desiring is the basic characteristic of all living beings).⁷ Forgetting occurs in two modalities: first, on a more immediate level, one temporarily forgets the passage of time and its consequences, and thereby becomes capable of acting. “Zu allem Handeln gehört Vergessen” (1.250), says Nietzsche: only by setting aside our historicity and imperfective character can we become absorbed in our

⁴ I don’t think death necessarily gives “wholeness or completion” (Church 2015, 37), as opposed to termination, to human life.

⁵ Lemm (2007a, 175) argues that suffering from the past is merely “the result of a particular conception of the past: one that ignores the ways in which the human animal needs forgetfulness.” I believe this account fails to consider just how deeply our suffering from the past is bound up with having memory at all, regardless of what conception of the past one may hold: I take it to be a constitutive limitation of the human animal.

I also believe that my reading of these passages refutes Jensen’s (2016, 46) claim that “as with many of his theses in *HL*, there is no real argument [that humans indeed suffer from the past] that Nietzsche presents for our evaluation, but an insight surrounded by illustrations and examples that he leaves up to his reader to accept or reject.”

⁶ The animal who is asked about its happiness in the first paragraph of *HL* 1 is said to “forget” its answer, but this forgetting is as rhetorical as its willingness to answer to man. It ‘forgets’ in the sense that it’s construed as incapable of forming memories at all. The active capacity of forgetting presupposes memory, and so is unique to humans.

⁷ Nietzsche considers the capacity to perceive unhistorically, i.e. to be governed by our desiring, to be “die wichtigere und ursprünglichere” than the “historical” mode of perception (1.252). These characteristics of it arise from desiring being the fundamental force of all living beings.

passions and act on them. On this account, accomplishing any goal we may have requires that we assign to this goal a (fictitious) permanence and importance – which would not pass the scrutiny of the historically perceiving mind – and acting on this temporary fiction.

Second, on a more ‘global’ level, forgetting is instrumental in the forming of horizons that limit our worlds. These horizons are fundamentally erotic in that they are formed on the basis of the passion or desire that rules within us – be it passion “für ein Weib oder für einen grossen Gedanken” (1.253), or for anything else.⁸ This desire forms (or re-forms) how we see the world: in the grip of a powerful, ruling passion, all our (previous) “Werthschätzungen sind verändert und entwerthet” (1.253), and the goal of this ruling passion becomes the new highest ‘value’, so to speak. As such, this goal also becomes the criterion of significance for everything we perceive or learn: if it is conducive to our goal, i.e. if it is significant, it remains in our memory; if it is insignificant, it will be forgotten. Our horizons are, fundamentally, horizons of significance. These horizons delimit the world in which a given human being lives in that they enclose everything one considers important to one’s life, and exclude whatever is not relevant to it. They are maintained by the power of active forgetting which selects what is to be included within it and what not. Within such a horizon lies our world, the contents of which are ordered in terms of their meaning for our life, for what we strive for. In this manner, our ruling desire is the “unhistorical” force that

⁸ Contrary to Taylor (1997, 74), the horizons of significance are not merely an “assumption” of Nietzsche’s psychology, but an integral part thereof, and they are not exclusively or necessarily mythical. Dannhauser (1990, 78) believes these horizons are “constituted by [one’s] fundamental set of assumptions about all things, by what [one] takes, or mistakes, for the absolute truth which cannot be questioned.” However, it makes more sense to conceive of the horizons as formed not by indifferent truths, but rather as beliefs (taken to be true, of course) about what is meaningful, significant, and valuable in one’s life on the basis of one’s ruling passion – to conceive of them as erotic. Such a reading can answer one of Dannhauser’s own objections against the notion of a horizon (ibid., 83): “if horizons are the subjective creations of human beings, why do we not – why can’t we – find, in principle at least, as many horizons as there are human beings?” On my reading, there *are* as many horizons, and worlds bounded by those horizons, as there are human beings. Which of course doesn’t mean that many people’s worlds can’t be quite similar to each other – whether due to the influence of external forces such as upbringing in the same culture, or (more significantly) because of the similarity of their respective ruling passions.

determines the structure and the limits of our world. Nietzsche stresses that being in the grip of a ruling desire is “der ungerechteste Zustand von der Welt” (1.253), i.e. that our desires don’t consider things⁹ as they are, but solely as what good they can be to *us* and to our goals. Yet this fundamental injustice of the human way of being is the mother of *every* deed, and hence also of any *possible* kind of justice: it is “der Geburtsschooss nicht nur einer ungerechten, sondern vielmehr jeder rechten That” (1.253).

The third crucial consequence of being endowed with memory is that this makes us truly human, i.e. capable of what is highest in man. In an earlier version of *HL* 1 (note 30 [2], 7.726), Nietzsche suggests that our memory is praiseworthy

[...] eben deshalb, weil das Vergangene in uns nicht sterben kann und uns wie ein eingepfelter fremder Tropfen Blutes rastlos weiter treibt, die ganze Stufenleiter alles dessen hinauf, was die Menschen gross erstaunlich unsterblich göttlich nennen.

There is a similar statement in the published version of *HL* 1 (1.252–3):

[...] erst dadurch, dass der Mensch denkend, überdenkend, vergleichend, trennend, zusammenschliessend jenes unhistorische Element einschränkt, erst dadurch dass innerhalb jener umschliessenden Dunstwolke ein heller, blitzender Lichtschein entsteht,¹⁰ also erst durch die Kraft, das Vergangene zum Leben zu gebrauchen [...] wird der Mensch zum Menschen[.]

By enlarging our horizons beyond the present moment, beyond the point which constitutes the horizon of an animal, our memory makes it possible for us to hold the past in mind together with the present, and to *compare* them.¹¹ Comparing is an operation of measuring, and measuring requires a measure, a standard according to which the compared objects are judged: comparing the past with the present is thus the original form of evaluation, of valuing. This comparing allows us

⁹ I understand “things” in the sense of the Greek *πράγματα* or of the Latin *res* – as objects of our actions, of our *πράττειν*, and not exclusively as physical objects.

¹⁰ This is likely a reference to Heraclitus B 64; cf. Patočka 1996, 42–3.

¹¹ Cf. note 29 [29], 7.636: “Alles Erinnern ist Vergleichen d. h. Gleichsetzen. Jeder Begriff sagt uns das; es ist das ‘historische’ Urphänomen”. As Salaquarda (1984, 18) points out, and as Nietzsche himself says in his discussion of monumental history (1.261), all such comparisons are necessarily inaccurate and therefore strictly speaking untrue. But they are nevertheless necessary for the growth and extension of one’s life.

not just to find more suitable means for our goals, but also to evaluate our goals themselves by comparing them to those of other people, or to our own past goals. But, contrary to Church (2019, 64), this doesn't mean that Nietzsche thinks of memory "in normative terms". While memory enables our 'normative' capacities to exist by providing things to compare, the *criterion* by which we compare them is supplied by our ruling desire. Given that desire as desire is constituted by a lack – we desire something we don't have and perceive as necessary or good for us – in Nietzsche as well as in Plato (*Symposium* 200e), I describe our desiring with the Platonic word *erotic*.

Thus, the comparing of goals is the source of our capacity to grow, to overcome ourselves as we are now, and to extend the range of our possibilities (and so, in the limit case, the range of the possibilities of mankind as a whole), which is precisely the kind of life that Nietzsche wants to foster in his readers (cf. 1.259, 317, 319). This growth and extension of our powers, perspectives, and possibilities is more than simple change of goals over time, which occurs already in animals (who need now to eat, then to drink, then to sleep), and more than simple projecting on the basis of a fixed and unchanging goal (a farmer in archaic Greece may well spend his life in the belief that farming is his lot in this life, assigned to him by Zeus). It is a manifestation of the fact that man is the not-yet-determined animal (*JGB* 62). Here lies the true human privilege over other animals, our true humanity: namely in the potential for reaching the yet-unreached heights of life, for doing and making great, amazing, or even divine things.¹²

¹² While I appreciate James Conant's (2014, 351–6) distinction between "das Schichttortenkonzepit der geistigen Verfaßtheit des Menschen" and "das transformative Konzept" thereof, on the basis of my reading I cannot agree with his claim that "das Schichttortenkonzepit sitzt [...] sehr tief in Nietzsches fröhem Denken" (ibid., 353). On the contrary, I believe that my account of how memory transforms human desiring into a specifically *human* capacity shows *HL* 1 to be a fine example of Conant's "transformative concept".

Thus, what we find in *HL* 1 is a conception of the human soul as arising from the two basic parts of desiring and memory; desiring is understood as a manifold of desires that vie for rule over the others (otherwise there would be no *ruling* desire); and the desires then express themselves through memory-based structures such as evaluating or conscience in ways more complex than a simple drive for immediate satisfaction – a conception I call *erotic-historic* after its two constituent parts. Its chief experiential correlative is that we naturally find ourselves within worlds ordered by our ruling passion, expanded beyond the limits of the present desire by our capacity to remember, and bounded by erotic horizons – and in this way we experience our lives as meaningful. This conception is the root of what the later Nietzsche will call “perspectivism” (cf. *JGB Vorrede*).¹³ At the center of these worlds are our ruling passions and their desiderata, in terms of which everything else is considered (or ignored).¹⁴ We strive to attain these, and thus we conceive of our lives in terms of future-oriented projects that we hope to accomplish (and having *hope* is a sign of having such a project that underlies it). Our ruling desires, and the projects arising out of them, are consequently the basis of the manifold human ways of life, i.e. ways of ordering our lives toward the goals that we, as individuals or as communities, seek to attain. A world thus understood is here

¹³ Goethe is an important forerunner of this conception, as evident from his aphorism *Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer* 155 from *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* (*Werke* VIII.306). Nietzsche was an avid reader of Goethe, and there is a piece of indirect evidence that he had the *Wanderjahre* in mind while writing *HL*: his paraphrase of Goethe at 1.301 to the effect that sciences, being by their nature “esoterisch”, should contribute to public life “nur durch eine erhöhte Praxis”. The source of this statement is *Aus Makariens Archiv* 78 (*Werke* VIII.471) – and not the other collection of aphorisms in the *Wanderjahre, Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer*, as is mistakenly indicated at 14.70. However, the said aphorism is also reprinted in *Maximen und Reflexionen* 474 (*Werke* XII.430). A full consideration of Goethe’s influence on Nietzsche’s conception of the world and/ or perspectivism is beyond the scope of the present study.

Graham Parkes discusses the notion of productive imagination in Nietzsche’s predecessors (1994, 256–67); in *GT* with reference to 1.71 in particular (*ibid.*, 66); in *Ueber Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne* (*ibid.*, 97); and in Nietzsche’s later works (*ibid.*, 289–305).

¹⁴ Our worlds thus are of human making in the sense that they result from the activity of our soul, not in the sense that they would be arbitrary fabrications that we could make and unmake as we please. This also doesn’t mean that one’s world and its horizons have to be entirely or chiefly of one’s own ‘making’ – a tradition may well form a significant part of one’s horizon, and tradition is by definition not of one’s own making.

a universal structure correlative to human subjectivity, an integral part of ‘human nature’:¹⁵ it is not just a feature of pre-modern humanity, as Church (2019, 100, 111, 117, 134 and elsewhere) claims. For Nietzsche, there cannot be such a fundamental break between pre-modern and modern cultures, as all these cultures cater to humans with the same basic psychic structure. A “universal horizon”, claimed by Church to be a particular achievement of modern culture (2019, 159), may for Nietzsche be at best an aspiration, and only for an individual (cf. the *hypothetical* “mächtigste und ungeheuerste Natur” at 1.251; also cf. *JGB* 39) as opposed to an entire culture; the mistaken striving for (something like) it will turn out to be the root of the ‘historical sickness’.

However, a world, ordered and bounded by a horizon as it may be, is not a closed system. On one hand, things within our worlds change and pass away, and on the other hand, new things come into being or enter our worlds from outside. One’s world thus is constantly changing, and there is always a wealth of phenomena in it that have not yet been ordered within its structure. This ceaseless process of ordering the external things (which include our knowledge of the past), or “incorporation” [*Einverleiben*] is, however, a demanding activity, and one can incorporate only as much of the external things as their “*plastische Kraft*” (1.251) is capable of processing. This notion of plastic force serves as an index of the strength of one’s nature: the more we can incorporate into our world, the better we are equipped to pursue our goals.¹⁶ It also determines the optimal size of the horizon of one’s world – normally, our worlds are only as large as we can ‘stomach’, and the capacity of active forgetting is a mechanism of psychic excretion of superfluous knowledge.

¹⁵ Here lies my main disagreement with Brooks’ reading of *HL*, which culminates in the claim that human nature is “malleable by the culture that cultivates it” (Brooks 2018, 108). There is a lot the not-yet-determined animal can change about itself and its way of being, but certainly not these basic psychic structures, which constitute human nature in an eminent sense.

¹⁶ Compare the idea of “Ueberschuss an plastischen, ausheilenden, nachbildenden und wiederherstellenden Kräften, welcher eben das Zeichen der *grossen* Gesundheit ist” in *MA I* Vorrede 4. Friedrich Schiller and Jacob Burckhardt are likely sources for Nietzsche’s usage of this term (Neymeyr 202, 1.417–8).

However, if the horizon of our world comes to encompass more than we are able to incorporate, the structures which order our world begin to break down, and our world turns into chaos in which we are unable to proceed with action – just as our digestive system is unable to do its work when we suffer from dyspeptic states.

This conception of the world ordered in terms of meaningfulness is clearly visible in the “historical humans”, who live in the hopes of accomplishing their projects in the future, yet their projects are fundamentally unhistoric (i.e. erotic) even if they are not aware of it: “sie wissen gar nicht, wie unhistorisch sie trotz aller ihrer Historie denken und handeln” (1.255). It is more difficult to see how the “überhistorischen Menschen” fit into this framework: after all, they are said to see history as “Allgegenwart unvergänglicher Typen” (1.256) and, because they see human being as determined in this way, to have no hopes to accomplish anything beyond the already given human possibilities. However, as already Zuckert has pointed out, also the suprahistorical men are motivated by a powerful passion (and hence unhistorically).¹⁷ In their case it is the passion for justice – and this passion had been frustrated so much by their awareness of the necessary “Blindheit und Ungerechtigkeit in der Seele des Handelnden” (1.254) that they have no hope left for attaining it. In this situation – which is a case of suffering from the “es war”, from their impotence to change the world according to their desires – they find solace in some kind of moralistic or ascetic doctrine. These doctrines teach “Glück oder Resignation oder Tugend oder Busse” (1.256), as opposed to action, as the purpose of human existence.¹⁸ However, this

¹⁷ Zuckert (1976, 57n4); also cf. Ansell-Pearson (2013, 245). Here it is important to note that, unlike the “unhistorical” and the “historical”, the “suprahistorical” does *not* refer to a ‘part’ of our soul, but rather to human cultural productions like art and religion (1.330). In other words, the “suprahistorical” exists on a different order of being than the “unhistorical” and the “historical”.

¹⁸ The Buddhist Four Noble Truths seem like a good example of what Nietzsche has in mind here: they describe life as essentially suffering, and offer ascetic practices as one’s only chance for release from it.

description shows the key problem of these doctrines: they are ignorant of the nature of human life insofar as they pretend it is possible not to act ‘unjustly’, without a motivating passion (and they are blind to *their own* motivating passion).¹⁹ As a consequence, they ask men to live “justly”, i.e. in ways that makes genuine action impossible. We may therefore call this justice deadening, or, to use the later Nietzsche’s word, life-denying. This tension between life on the one hand and truth and justice on the other pervades not just *HL*, but the *UB* as a whole, and to my knowledge is not resolved anywhere in them.²⁰ Nietzsche certainly leaves this issue unresolved at the end of *HL* 1 and turns instead to the three useful kinds of history, or three ways in which knowledge of the past can be conducive to our growth and self-overcoming.

II.2 *HL* 2–3: *Historia Magistra Vitae*

Life is in need of history so that it may form ever higher goals and pursue them ever more competently, and the three useful kinds of history are “useful” insofar as they “serve life”, i.e. fulfill this need. The “life” in question is defined as an insatiable appetite for more, it is “jene dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht” (1.269).²¹ In other words, it is life

¹⁹ Church (2015, 65; 2019, 76) suggests that Nietzsche’s own perspective, his “untimeliness”, should be identified with the suprahistorical standpoint. This seems unlikely to me due to the implied but powerful critique of the suprahistorical perspective at the end of *HL* 1.

²⁰ Thus I cannot agree with Church (2019, 73) that justice is a constitutive human need and that “Nietzsche does not simply enjoin cultures to embrace illusion [...] all such illusions are unjust, and [...] we must provide a new [and truthful] justification for modern culture”. The basis of this claim is his thesis that in the *UB*, “Nietzsche portrays the modern exemplar as categorically distinct from pre-modern individuals in virtue of the modern achievement of transcending all historical horizons” (ibid., 235), for which I find no textual basis in the *UB*. All human life – and indeed all life in general – is fundamentally unjust, for all humans share the same fundamental psychic structures, and there is no suggestion in the *UB* that modern human beings are somehow different in this crucial respect. Besides, if this were the case, how could the *ancient* Greeks have suffered from the same problem as the modern Germans and be a model for overcoming it (1.333)?

²¹ Jensen (2016, 43) must have overlooked this characterization of life when he wrote that “what Nietzsche means by ‘life’ is not clear in *HL*”. Brooks (2018, 72–3) likewise doesn’t see this as a “robust prerequisite account of what ‘life’ is”, and later on goes so far as to claim that Nietzsche “seems explicitly to abandon the power of rational proofs on the very first page of the foreword [to *HL*]” (ibid., 78). Taylor (1997, 14n32) too speaks disapprovingly of Nietzsche’s alleged “tendency to substitute assertion for argument”.

not simply as the perpetuation of one's existence, but life as the capacity to grow, expand, and overcome itself, whose specifically human form is the capacity to compare various goals and to set ever-higher goals for ourselves. Taking stock from Vanessa Lemm's (2011, 170) suggestion that plastic force is "at the core of each of the three forms of history in the service of life", we may conversely consider the three useful kinds of history as ways of artificially or consciously aiding our plastic force in its task of incorporating the past into our ordered view of the world. In other words, the useful kinds of history are ways of making the facts about the past meaningful in such a way that we remain oriented toward, and capable of, further growth.

History (i.e. the study of the past) is given this privileged position in our world because history (i.e. the past) is the realm constituted by human action. History as the study of the past is then in effect the study of human action, its ends, and its consequences. This makes it eminently suited for the tasks of our self-orientation in the vast world that our memory opens up to us (both as being oriented within a certain space: where do I stand in relation to others? – and as being directed at a goal: whither am I trying to get, and whence?), and for deliberation about *our own* actions and ends. History can help us deliberate about what consequences our planned actions are likely to have, how to act to make accomplishing our goal as likely as possible, and what goal to accomplish in the first place. It is the accumulated experience of the past generations of human beings that is our best source of guidance for life. This is why history, and the ways in which we approach it, is of such eminent importance for our lives – for good or for bad – and why it matters not just for how we incorporate the events of the past, but also for how we deal with external things here and now, and how we conduct ourselves in general.²² The three useful kinds of history are in

²² In this regard Nietzsche's attitude to history is characteristic of modern philosophy more generally, as described by Leo Strauss (1963, 95): "[the] special subject [of history] is the study of aims and projects. By the distinction between good (i.e. successful) and bad (i.e. unsuccessful) aims, it makes possible a knowledge of the norms for human action."

effect Nietzsche's way of taking the ancient wisdom that *historia* is *magistra vitae* and explicating what it means in terms of the erotic-historic soul that needs to process and incorporate the past and the foreign.²³

From the above follows that conceptions such as those of Most (2002, 32), Emden,²⁴ Large (2012, 93), Jensen,²⁵ or Brooks,²⁶ which see Nietzsche's *Historie* as roughly identical with academic historiography, offer far too narrow a view of the scope of Nietzsche's argument in *HL*. We get a more accurate picture from the note 30 [2], 7.730, where *die Historie* is defined as "jede Beschäftigung mit Geschichte". The three useful kinds of history are not just kinds of historiography, but ways in which an individual (or a group) may perceive and incorporate facts about the past in a fruitful manner. Generally speaking, Nietzsche's *Historie* is more akin to the Ancient Greek *ἵστορία*, "inquiry" or "observation", than to modern notions of history that mean exclusively the study of past events (and that can be conceived as a subset of *ἵστορία*). And this

However, philosophy in the *UB* is not limited to practical matters (in a broad sense), unlike in Hobbes or Bacon (as discussed by Strauss 1963); therefore, unlike them, Nietzsche doesn't tend to "replace philosophy by history" (ibid.).²³ This sentence from Cicero's *De Oratore* II.36 has its precedent in Polybius I.1, who says that ἀληθινωτάτην μὲν εἶναι παιδείαν καὶ γυμνασίαν πρὸς τὰς πολιτικὰς πράξεις τὴν ἐκ τῆς ἱστορίας μάθησιν. Nietzsche paraphrases this sentence at 1.258: "Polybius [nennt] die politische Historie die rechte Vorbereitung zur Regierung eines Staates und die vorzüglichste Lehrmeisterin". This paraphrase takes place in the context of monumental history, but, as will be shown below, the other useful kinds of history are just as much teachers of life – just of different kinds of human life. But cf. Neymeyr (2020, 1.432–5) on the different thrust of Nietzsche's and Polybius's understanding of history.

²⁴ Emden's understanding of the three useful kinds of history is interesting, but it relies on examples that go beyond Nietzsche's text and are contrary to Nietzsche's own examples. To give two salient cases: Nietzsche's monumental history is oriented on *individuals*, not nations, the chief example being the men of the Renaissance rather than something like Emden's Valhalla temple (2006, 14); and antiquarian history is oriented on *one's own* past, such as the history of one's city or people, not at a foreign past, as philology, Emden's chief example (ibid., 18–22). This results in his understanding of critical history as "impossible" (ibid., 23), and his consequent evaluation of *HL* as an "inconclusive and transitional work" (ibid., 30).

²⁵ Jensen (2016, 68–78) interprets monumental, antiquarian, and critical history rather narrowly, as modes of historiography which stem from the fixed personal biases of the historiographer. As a consequence, he doesn't find much of interest in them. In order to explain how history can be useful to life, he comes up with a new concept – "affirmative history", which consists in such a combination of monumental, antiquarian, and critical history as is actually conducive for life and growth (ibid., 146–8). This category does the work which, on my reading, the three useful kinds of history already do by themselves if they are understood properly.

²⁶ Brooks's (2018, 72) claim that *Historie* in *HL* means "the scientific study of history" is untenable given that the three useful kinds of history are also called *Historie*.

expansive understanding of *Historie* is not just a peculiarity of *HL*. When we consider later passages that deal with the ‘historical sense’, such as *MA* 274, *VM* 223, or *JGB* 224, we see that in all these aphorisms it refers to a general capacity to understand humans and entire cultures that are external and foreign to us, be they external to us in time (such as a culture from the past) or in space (such as a culture from a different present-day corner of the Earth). Despite the somewhat misleading name, ‘historical sense’ for Nietzsche is not necessarily connected with understanding of humans of the past (although those are its frequent objects): it is rather a sense for how to inquire into the conditions, values, and lives of those who don’t live like we do (the object of historical inquiry must be at least to a certain degree foreign to us; that which is familiar and known to us, that which strikes us as ‘self-evident’, does not call for a historical way of approaching it).

The useful kinds of history are not mutually exclusive: a single person may use different kinds of history even regarding the same events, according to their present need. By this I do not mean that we can arbitrarily choose which kind to use in any given situation, but rather that our psychic growth may necessitate a ‘revaluation’ of an event, which in the framework of *HL* would mean approaching it with a different kind of history. Nietzsche himself presents the men of the Renaissance in quick succession both as exemplars of monumental history (1.260–1) and as models of antiquarian history (1.266), implying that their original antiquarianism reawakened “den antiken italischen Genius” (1.266) within them, which subsequently enabled them to pursue further endeavors of monumental character. The useful kinds of history remember and forget selectively – they do not aim at the truth at any cost, but serve life, i.e. the goals of our ruling passion – and so the past “suffers” (i.e. is falsified to a certain extent) under each of them. They are kinds of ‘poetic’ or ‘artistic’ rather than ‘theoretic’ or ‘scientific’ history: they are creative interpretations which necessarily make a certain selection of the available facts and which interpret them from a

certain perspective,²⁷ this perspective being (in the ideal case) determined by the needs of the interpreter in question. These interpretations involve not just constructing narratives of events, but also the (re)evaluation of events particularly important to oneself.

The proper use of the useful kinds of history is such that contributes to the growth of the user's horizons and capacity for action; the improper uses, their “disadvantages”, are such that undermine this function in one way or another.²⁸ Insofar as they are used in the latter way, Nietzsche calls such ‘service’ “Entartung” (e.g. 1.268). The useful kinds of history correspond to three different kinds of needs or desires that shape particular kinds of human life: monumental history serves “dem Thätigen und Strebendem” (1.258) or to one who “Grosses schaffen will” (1.264); antiquarian history serves “dem Bewahrenden und Verehrenden” (1.258) or to one who “im Gewohnten und Altverehrten beharren mag” (1.264); and critical history to “dem Leidenden und der Befreiung Bedürftigen” (1.258) or to one who “um jeden Preis die Last von sich abwerfen will” (1.264). But all these uses are different modalities of the single overarching need of life to grow beyond what it currently is. With this in mind, I believe the unity of the three useful kinds of history can be expressed as follows. Monumental history is a means to *produce* the conditions of growth of a certain (namely the interpreter’s) kind of life; antiquarian history is a means to *preserve* such conditions; and critical history is a means to *destroy* the conditions which prevent us from

²⁷ Jensen (2016, 92) explains that the historian *qua* historian necessarily performs two kinds of mental construction upon the past. First, he introduces “generalizing concepts that abbreviate the welter of experience into intellectually manageable units”, and second, he provides “the ‘links’, so to say, between events, times, places, and agents that take an account of the past from pure chronicle to a genuine history imbued with narrative structure”. Such falsifications are necessary features of *any* history, and thus they do not constitute a particular shortcoming of the three useful kinds of history, contrary to Jenkins’ (2014, 173) and Church’s (2019, 72–3) views.

²⁸ Nietzsche recognizes two basic kinds of improper uses of each of the useful kinds of history. The first arises from inexpert application of the given kind of history, e.g. when an attempt at a monumental history results in a mythic fiction (1.262). The second is using history as a weapon to hinder the growth of others rather than as a tool for one’s own growth, as the philistines tend to use it (1.263).

growth.²⁹ Thus I disagree with Heidegger’s interpretation of monumental history as corresponding to the future, antiquarian history to the past, and critical history to the present. They all are rather interpretations of the past (or of the foreign), in the present (situation), for the sake of the future (growth or action).³⁰

Monumental History

From Nietzsche’s perspective, history belongs first of all – “vor Allem” (1.258) – to the active men who strive to accomplish great things, to those who *make* history.³¹ They aim to bring forth “irgend ein Glück” (1.259), but they think of this happiness on a grand scale: it is not merely their own, private happiness, but the happiness of their nation or even of mankind as a whole. In return for these great benefactions they expect glory (*Ruhm*), or what Heraclitus (B 29) called *κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν*: they wish to be remembered and celebrated for their benefactions, and in this way to attain a humanly possible immortality.³² The meaning (*Sinn* – 1.258) of history for them – i.e. the use of history for their ruling passion – is that it helps them to accomplish their deeds, and monumental history serves them to make their lives meaningful by facilitating such accomplishments. The past is to provide them with examples of men who have already

²⁹ Cf. note 29 [115], 7.683 with the following scheme:

Der Mensch will schaffen	monumentalisch
im Gewohnten verharren	antiquarisch
von Noth sich befreien	kritisch.

³⁰ Heidegger, *SuZ*, 396–7. Heidegger’s lectures on *HL* (2003, 91) give fundamentally the same account thereof as *SuZ*. This account has been criticized by Zuckert (1976, 64n26), who noted that the three useful kinds of history “seem, however, actually to describe three different pursuits of knowledge which different men have undertaken at different times”. Geisenhanslüke (1999, 134) also argues that Heidegger’s account is a “forcierte Interpretation” and points out that “jede der drei Historien auch alle drei Modi der Zeit umfaßt”. However, his claim that they are oriented on the present rather than on the future (ibid.) is indefensible when one considers that the activity or ‘life’ of the human soul, as it was developed in *HL* 1, is fundamentally a future-oriented projecting of goals to be attained.

³¹ Cf. Goethe, *Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer* 56 (*Werke* VIII.292).

³² Church (2019, 81) puzzlingly claims that since “we will not be around to experience our own immortal fame”, this “cannot be a matter of self-love”. I believe – and it has been believed at least since Heraclitus and Plato (*Symposium* 208c) – that the desire for immortal fame is one of the main ways in which our self-love is able to project itself beyond our inevitable death.

accomplished similar great things, and in these they find “die Anreizungen zum Nachahmen und Bessermachen” (1.258). These examples then serve them to improve their own efforts, to attain “eine erhöhte Praxis” (1.263).

Those who appropriate the past monumentally in effect act out what was described above as our true humanity: their actions bring out new, yet-unseen human possibilities, and thus drive the development of the human species. Hence, Nietzsche speaks of their great deeds as of expressions of the “Grundgedanke im Glauben an die Humanität” (1.259), of a ‘Nietzschean humanism’, as it were.³³ It is thanks to them that ever-new human potential first becomes visible and eventually becomes a reality. He also interprets the principle on which they act as the appropriation and actualization of those qualities and capacities which “einmal vermochte[n], den Begriff ‘Mensch’ weiter auszuspannen und schöner zu erfüllen” (1.259): *interprets*, for they themselves need not, and for the most part do not, think that the purpose of their actions is to extend the range of human possibilities. This is a formal principle which admits of various kinds of content, of various kinds of cultivation of the human soul and of various kinds of deeds. Machiavelli provides an illustration of this use of history for life and action when he recommends that “a prince should read histories and consider in them the actions of excellent men”, and that

Above all he should do as some excellent man has done in the past who found someone to imitate who had been praised and glorified before him, whose exploits and action he always kept beside himself, as they say Alexander the Great imitated Achilles; Caesar, Alexander; Scipio, Cyrus.³⁴

³³ Neymeyr (2020, 1.439) mentions Schiller as a precursor of this idea.

³⁴ Machiavelli (1998, 60). Cf. note 29 [87], 7.669, where (although using a different conceptual framework than in the published version of *HL*) Machiavelli is grouped together with Livy and Tacitus – historians whose works are, I believe, well suited for monumental appropriation. I believe this passage from the *Prince* is a better reflection of Nietzsche’s conception of monumental history than the passage from Machiavelli’s famous letter to Vettori quoted by Jenkins (2014, 172). Nietzsche had read Machiavelli’s *Prince* as early as 1862 (Brobjer 2008, 44).

The main use of monumental history is, then, that it provides one with the examples to imitate (as much as the different circumstances permit it), and thereby in the best case to attain greatness of one's own.

However, the monumental mode of appropriating the past is highly selective and inaccurate. When one looks for examples to imitate, one has to shoehorn “die Individualität des Vergangenen in eine allgemeine Form” (1.261), and in doing so ignore that in fact there are no truly identical actions or persons. But it is only by ignoring or falsifying this uniqueness of each event that monumental history can provide lessons for the present. As a consequence, the exemplary men of the monumental history begin to appear as “Effecte an sich” (1.261), or as isolated singular events that stand apart from the otherwise uninteresting stream of becoming. In an extreme case, monumental history can turn into a “mythische Fiction”, which surely is *subjectively* meaningful, but, unlike history proper, doesn't provide any concrete guidance for action (cf. 1.262). This disadvantage is particularly obvious when the incompetent use monumental history in their attempts at great actions, resulting in wars, murders, revolutions, and other upheavals, which despite involving lots of human beings and shedding lots of blood fail to accomplish their intended goals, and in that sense often are meaningless (at least as far as their authors are concerned).

Another disadvantage of monumental history is that in striving to become great themselves, the ambitious men are faced with the opposition of the many who don't have the sense for any higher goals than simply “leben um jeden Preis” (1.259). This kind of life is, in effect, animal life: there is nothing that would distinguish it from mere animal existence apart from more intricate ways of ensuring one's survival. Those who would appropriate history monumentally must be aware of this danger and find ways to deal with it – but monumental history itself does not provide

help with this task, and this help must be found elsewhere. Even worse, those who want simply to live can (ab)use monumental history against the monumental men. By painting the greatness of the past monumental men in vivid colors they can show the (current) smallness of the present-day would-be monumental men, and thereby they can dissuade them from attempting to grow (1.264). This is the philistines' preferred method of dealing with artists and with anyone who strives to cultivate themselves in general, as we saw in *DS* (1.167–9).

Antiquarian History

Antiquarian appropriation of the past is essentially the history of one's own,³⁵ of the tradition that one has been raised in and finds familiar and comfortable, of one's "home". This tradition is recognized as the origin that made us what we are – as a good origin for which we are grateful. This distinguishes it both from monumental history, which tends to draw its examples from more foreign sources and strives to imitate their deeds rather than conserve what they accomplished, and from critical history, whose attitude to its objects is the opposite of the antiquarian veneration. The objects of antiquarian history are then chronicled and catalogued so they may be preserved as fully as possible even despite the inevitable decay of all things. Its scope is very limited – it cares only about its particular object – but within this limited scope it strives to preserve everything, no matter how small or insignificant it otherwise would seem, as faithfully as possible. As such, this is the principle of all kinds of local and national historiographies, which engage in precisely this kind of cataloguing the past of "one's own" – they preserve the memory

³⁵ On this cf. Nachlass 1873, note 29 [178], 7.705, which quotes Aristotle's *Politics* 1262b22 ff. (cf. Huang 2017). The passage from the *Politics* discusses a thing's being "one's own" and its rarity as the two main sources of attachment to it, and Nietzsche goes on to discuss antiquarian history with reference to it. Cf. Patočka's (1989, 251) analysis of how the natural world of human existence is "in its very being" divided into the familiar [i.e. one's own] and the alien or foreign. Freud (2016, 48) remarks that people enjoy even the smell of their own farts.

of all rulers, events, and poets that belong to one's country, region, or city, regardless of how uninteresting they may be to an external observer who would compare them with events or poets from other places. For the antiquarian historian of Slovakia, a Martin Kukučín is infinitely more important than Shakespeare or Goethe, for the sole reason that Kukučín was Slovak and the latter two poets weren't. Given this character of antiquarian history, Nietzsche says that its greatest value lies in that it "auch die minder begünstigten Geschlechter und Bevölkerungen an ihre Heimat und Heimatsitte anknüpft" (1.266), that it gives the common people an elementary satisfaction with their hard and unexciting life and teaches them to think of themselves as parts of a greater, more glorious whole, from which they can derive a certain pride and satisfaction. At its core, antiquarian history creates *traditions*: narratives that bind a people or a group of people together as parts of a shared project established by a great founder³⁶ in the past. Thus it is essential for the creation of communities of unequals, in which the lesser men can find a meaningful way of participating in the projects devised by greater men.³⁷

It is, however, only of limited immediate use for the great men themselves. While it can preserve and perpetuate the conditions of greatness – as Nietzsche says the Renaissance Italians recovered ancient poetry which spurs to great deeds (1.266) – it cannot *make* such conditions. This characteristic leads to two distinct disadvantages of antiquarian history. First, it can lead to mummification of life by overly focusing it on the past glories and/ or injustices,³⁸ without these

³⁶ I.e. by a monumental man (Zuckert 1976, 60). Zuckert (ibid., 64) also notes that antiquarian history is instrumental for preserving the achievements of the past great men (or at least knowledge thereof) for the following generations, and so allows the posterity to build and expand upon them.

³⁷ Emden (2006, 13–18) is correct that national histories, especially those of larger and imperially minded nations, often have significant monumental traits. However, I would argue that even these national histories exhort in the first place to preserving and continuing the glories of the past rather than to establishing something radically new, and thus also they are fundamentally antiquarian.

³⁸ Hungarian national history, with its memories of 900 years of kingdom and of the Treaty of Trianon which broke this kingdom apart after World War I, is in my view a good example of such a mummification of the past.

having any clear beneficial effect for the future. Second, the antiquarian preference for piously preserving the old and the traditional “lähmt den Handelnden” (1.268): in effect it asks the would-be innovator ‘who are *you* to challenge the ways our great ancestors have established?’ It is in this sense that “*anstössig aber ist alles wahrhaft Produktive*”, as Nietzsche declared in *DS* (1.222). Whoever wants to act, to make something new, to make history, must be ready to offend those who revere the *status quo*, and the antiquarian mode of history is always on the side of the *status quo*.

Critical History

The purpose of the critical mode of appropriating the past is destroying the conditions which are unsuitable for one’s growth.³⁹ This takes place by exposing the given piece of the past as unjust and unworthy of being preserved and revered, and thus breaking its hold over one’s mind. A past condemned in this manner then ceases to be an obstacle for one’s growth, for one’s project. Even though justice (and lack thereof) is the ostensible criterion by which the critically appropriated cast is condemned, such condemnations do not occur for the sake of justice. Critical history operates with the self-contradictory conception of justice which we saw in action among the suprahistorical men in *HL* 1 – according to this conception, all life is essentially unjust, and therefore worthy of condemnation.⁴⁰ Critical history uses this conception of justice selectively – namely only on those pieces of the past which are hindering to the practitioner of critical history –

³⁹ Heidegger (2003, 79) points out that critical history is not just liberation from something, but also liberation *for* the pursuit of a particular goal. In this sense it is connected and ministerial to monumental history. However, I do not find his larger claim – that “*die kritische Historie ist philosophische Besinnung*” (ibid., 106) – to be supported by Nietzsche’s text.

⁴⁰ Neymeyr (2020, 1.462–3) remarks that this conception is actually Schopenhauer’s. Nietzsche’s distancing from it is thus another sign of his distance from Schopenhauer already at this point.

and in this manner it serves his life, as defined at 1.269. By being just selectively, critical history is unjust according to its own criterion of justice.

For, were it to apply its justice universally, it would have to condemn also its own practitioners, who too are “die Resultate früherer Geschlechter” (1.270), and thus carry at least traces of the condemned past within themselves. The most extreme example of such a universal application of justice are the suprahistorical men, who are aware of the injustice inherent in all action, including their own actions, and thus they are unable to act and have to seek refuge in life-denying moralistic doctrines (1.256, 269). In this way they demonstrate one of the chief dangers of critical history: “es bleibt zu häufig bei einem Erkennen des Guten, ohne es zu thun, weil man auch das Bessere kennt [in this case, the good of their alleged justice], ohne es thun zu können” (1.270). This kind of “justice” is also readily visible in one of the most obvious examples of critical history, namely in the way how revolutionary movements treat their respective *ancien regime*: all that belongs to the past is treated with suspicion and removed to make room for the new, revolutionary, just order. However, the new, just order inevitably fails to materialize, for the good that had been accomplished by the revolution always pales in comparison with the ideal which animates the revolution, the perfect but humanly unattainable justice. As this failure of the revolution becomes evident, ever more and more of the past is being condemned – the revolution begins to eat its own children, with the consequences we know from the history of the French or the Bolshevik revolutions.

However, if done properly, critical history remains unaware of its injustice.⁴¹ Its real aim is to serve life by condemning what hinders it, not to bring about universal justice of the life-

⁴¹ Contrary to Lemm (2007a, 186), it is not a “premise” of critical history that “jede Vergangenheit [...] ist werth verurtheilt zu werden” (1.269), but rather its unstated *implication*.

denying kind. This service at its best consists in breaking up old habits and traditions for the sake of establishing new ones that are suitable to the needs of the practitioner's life: "wir pflanzen eine neue Gewöhnung, einen neuen Instinct, eine zweite Natur an, so dass die erste Natur abdorrt" (1.270). Plato's critique of the traditional Greek poetry and of the habits and attitudes this poetry instills in its audience (*Republic* 376e–398b) would in Nietzsche's view be a prime example of such critical practice for the sake of establishing something yet-unseen.⁴² If all goes well, this second nature will over time become a new 'first nature':⁴³ it will open up the mental space for new traditions and for new endeavors to the humans of the present.

II.3 *HL* 4–9: The Problem of Scientific History

If the useful kinds of history represent the "natürliche Beziehung" (1.271) to the past and the foreign by virtue of allowing us to incorporate their objects into our structured worlds, the opposite is true of the currently dominant scientific history.⁴⁴ Scientific history claims to strive to discover the full, undistorted truth about the past: it presents itself as one of the peaks of modern truthfulness. The past is to be known "wie es eigentlich gewesen [ist]", in Leopold von Ranke's famous words, and so it will no longer 'suffer', as it does under each of the three useful kinds of

⁴² Cf. Acampora (2013, 48): "Nietzsche regards Platonic Socratic philosophy as fundamentally organized in terms of contesting Homer". Howard Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* is another good example of critical history.

⁴³ The "nature" Nietzsche means here is the ruling passion within one's soul, and by extension the order of one's soul. In other words, the perspective from which critical history conducts its critique will over time become the perspective which guides one's overall actions and strivings.

⁴⁴ Church takes the three useful kinds of history to be "ancient or pre-modern" (2019, 77, 91), as opposed to the "modern" scientific history, and claims that Nietzsche is trying to "dialectically synthesise" them (*ibid.*, 57). I disagree with this conception for the reasons given in fn. 20 above, and also because Nietzsche given us ample modern examples of the useful kinds of history, such as the men of the Renaissance (1.261, 266), or Goethe's antiquarian appreciation of Gothic architecture (1.266; cf. Goethe, *Werke* XII.7–15). I would articulate the difference between the useful kinds of history and scientific history as follows. The useful kinds of history are natural in the phenomenological sense, in the sense in which Jan Patočka talks of the natural world (1989) or of "the *natural* human stance" (2002, 36); and scientific history is a derivative modification of this natural stance (cf. *SuZ* § 13).

history. In being more truthful than the past generations, scientific history also promises to make us more just, to do justice to the past in a way that was previously impossible. It is then unsurprising that contemporary German scholars see scientific history as a great achievement and that modern education has become identical with “historical education”, in which the proper education of a young person is believed to hinge upon attaining a wide overview of world history according to the best current scientific knowledge. Furthermore, even those who suffer from scientific history – who feel on themselves its deadening influence on life, analyzed by Nietzsche in these chapters – are so enchanted by its promises that they are unwilling to abandon it. They believe “an die *Nothwendigkeit* jener Erziehungs-Operation” (1.326), because their suffering appears negligible in contrast with the promise of scientific history to make us wiser and thereby more just – in effect, to make us better human beings. Seen in this light, their suffering may be just a kind of growing pains. Abandoning the path to wisdom and justice for the sake of something as petty as personal comfort appears to them positively base and cowardly.

Nietzsche’s analysis of scientific history aims at dispelling this mythology. He will show that the promises of scientific history are false: its ‘justice’ is far removed from justice proper, and it won’t make better human beings out of its practitioners. In fact, the opposite is true: the changed constellation of life and history that pursues the truth at any cost carries the cost of destroying its practitioners’ life as growing or ascending life. This “historische Krankheit” (1.329) weakens those who practice scientific history in manifold ways, which Nietzsche will describe in these chapters. The suffering from scientific history is, then, no growing pain, but a sign of real damage being done to one’s soul. In terms of the psychology of *HL*, this damage can be described as follows. Scientific history – understood as the disinterested pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, without regard for the practitioner himself – is unnatural (i.e. the opposite of the above-mentioned

“natürliche Beziehung” to the past) because its effects on its practitioners are the opposite of healthy incorporation. Insofar as it posits the indiscriminate pursuit of knowledge about various ways of life as an unquestionable good, it effectively hijacks the structures of meaningfulness and turns them against themselves. Those who accept this ‘good’ as their own good, who accept the limitless pursuit of knowledge as their ruling passion, are led to learn more and more, without regard for the limits of their plastic force – and thus they will eventually cease to be able to incorporate what they learn and to order their worlds. Their soul becomes dyspeptic. Nietzsche recognizes two broad classes of psychic damage caused by scientific history. The first of these is the damage to our plastic force and so to our *capacity* for growth, which is treated in *HL* 4–5. The second is the destruction of the hopes and illusions which are (at least for the vast majority of humans) necessary for growth and action, whereby it destroys our *will* to strive for growth at all – the topic of *HL* 7–9.⁴⁵

HL 4–5: The Excess of History

Nietzsche focuses first on the issue that historical education burdens its pupils with an overload of facts that are of no particular use to them. This is a burden for our plastic force, which strives to order the new knowledge into our preexisting structures of desiring, but this proves impossible for two reasons. First, because of the sheer amount one is expected to learn and know (and consequently to incorporate); and second, because the new knowledge is not organized according to either of the three useful kinds of appropriating history (if it were, it could foster a tendency beneficial to life in one’s soul). The various parts of the newly-acquired knowledge are

⁴⁵ Thus the problem here is physiological, and not just that we “lose sight of the sublime”, as Ansell-Pearson (2013, 244) thinks. Contrary to Brooks (2018, 75, 94–103), scientific history is not a degenerated form of antiquarian history, but an altogether different beast; cf. 1.267 with 1.271.

“im Kampfe mit einander” (1.272), pointing the knower in a variety of different directions, and thereby cancelling each other’s potentially beneficial effects out – no useful lessons can be learned from this unordered and contradictory manifold of knowledge. One eventually learns how to live in these conditions, and develops a “zweite Natur” (1.272), a new order of the soul oriented on knowing as much as possible, on becoming a walking encyclopedia (1.274). What this weaker and sicker nature amounts to is a dissolution of order in one’s world: the horizons that used to bound one’s world have been pushed back “ins Unendliche” (1.272) in all directions, and one thereby loses track of what is the meaning of the possibilities in one’s life. What before seemed clearly desirable and important now becomes simply one possibility among many others, and this chaos cannot be ordered into a new, larger whole because one cannot encompass the whole any longer. This is what happens when one’s historical knowledge exceeds the limits of one’s ‘plastic force’, or power of incorporation.

This condition, i.e. this (dis)order of the soul, has now become commonplace thanks to historical education of the young. Historical education has transformed *Bildung* from the process of formation, ordering, and strengthening of one’s soul into “nur eine Art Wissen um die Bildung” (1.273), into a catalogue of how peoples in other times and places have lived that has no bearing of how one should live oneself. Thus emerges a disorder peculiar to modern humans, namely their split personality, or “der merkwürdige Gegensatz eines Inneren, dem kein Aeusseres, eines Aeusseren, dem kein Inneres entspricht” (1.272). Such a person suffers from a ‘split’ of one’s personality into ineffectual knowledge and unreflective practical life. This split of the inner and the outer actually means the weakening of one’s “instinct”, of one’s ruling or motivating passion, which is now no longer capable of shaping one’s life in its entirety. The sufferer of the historical sickness no longer feels capable of that, he becomes “zaghaft und unsicher und darf sich nicht

mehr glauben” (1.280). And this means in effect, according to the definition of culture as a unity of style, that they become uncultured, i.e. barbarians in the sense of *DS*. More precisely, they lose their *capacity* for self-cultivation. Historical education is then not identical with education, as the moderns believe (despite the Greeks providing evidence to the contrary – 1.273, 307), and already this negative consequence shows that actually it works contrary to *Bildung* or *Erziehung* proper.

In practical life this manifests itself by the false opposition of “form” and “content”, which sees formalism in external action as an empty convention, and believes that by abandoning such conventions one will become more ‘natural’. This view misses how important ‘form’ is important for making the ‘content’ of one’s mind effectual in practical life. The consequence, especially with modern, historically educated men, is “die Bequemlichkeit und das möglichst kleine Maass von Selbstüberwindung” (1.275). In the absence of any higher ordering principle and even of a form of behavior, all that remains to guide one’s actions are the basic desires that can be summed as the desire for comfortable life. The freedom these modern barbarians have won for themselves by abandoning the stifling conventions is not a freedom that would drive them to great deeds or works, but the false freedom of simply doing ‘whatever feels good’. This results in a life of bourgeois conformity, in which individuality and cultivation thereof is feared, and replaced by inhabiting of socially determined roles (professional, class, etc.). Since “die historische Bildung und der bürgerliche Universal-Rock herrschen zu gleicher Zeit” (1.281), the ‘content’ of such men’s mind, says Nietzsche, is most apparent in their books (1.276). This is the reason why *DS* was a review of David Strauss’ book. This review showed us that even one of the most celebrated German scholars of his time has next to nothing to offer in terms of culture, and here we see why.

This issue of the split, weakened character and its consequences is manifest in the contemporary approach to philosophy. In the Antiquity, philosophy was a *way of life*, a way of

forming one's soul in accordance with the philosophic doctrines of the school to which one subscribed, so that it may attain what was thought to be its proper good, and this effort informed everything the philosophizing person did or undertook. As Pierre Hadot (1995, 265) describes it, "philosophy was a mode of existing-in-the-world, which had to be practiced at each instant, and the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life". The ancient philosophers understood philosophy not as a set of any given doctrines, but rather as an agreement of one's life with those doctrines that is outwardly visible in one's conduct of life. It was a way of ordering of one's goals and values according to a single principle, so that this principle shines forth in everything one does, from great deeds to the smallest everyday activities: a way of shaping one's soul and one's entire existence. Wagner's leading of Nietzsche to live according to Schopenhauerian principles, which we have seen in Chapter I.1, was at least in the direction to a way of life thus understood. Philosophy as a way of life understood in *this* sense – which, as we will see in Chapter V.2, is quite different from the philosophic life as the mature Nietzsche understood it – is a type of moral practice, a shaping of one's self according to externally given standards which are publicly known, and the results of this practice are publicly visible.

However, things look very different in modern times. Hadot (2002, 258–61) explains that philosophy has ever since the Middle Ages been reduced to a purely theoretical or speculative activity. Observing the results of this development, Nietzsche comments that "Niemand lebt philosophisch" anymore in the contemporary world (1.282; cf. 1.812), and that philosophy is for the most part reduced to idle academic chatter, whose authors live the same kind of bourgeois life as any other middle-class person. Philosophy was thereby stripped of almost all its value for the individual existence. In the note 31 [4] (7.749), Nietzsche expresses this quite pointedly: "Ich glaube dass die Vegetarianer, mit ihrer Vorschrift, weniger und einfacher zu essen, mehr genützt

haben als alle neueren Moralsysteme zusammen genommen”.⁴⁶ Despite this, or rather because of this, philosophy is more popular than ever before: “denn [die Philosophie] quält die Menschen nicht mehr, ja viele werden von ihr unterhalten und alle dürfen ihren Mund aufthun, ohne alle Gefahr, und los schwätzen” (note 31 [5], 7.750). And if a genuine philosopher, one who strives to live as his philosophy teaches him, appears by any chance in these conditions, he will necessarily become a ‘solitary walker’ whose wisdom will be his alone because (almost) no one else cares for it. Kant, whom Nietzsche singles out in *SE* as an emblem of this degradation of philosophy to mere speculation (1.351, 1.414) and in this sense the opposite of Schopenhauer, was actually painfully aware of this issue, but considered it impossible to live philosophically in the modern times (Kant 1980, 12; cf. Hadot 2002, 267):

Wann willst du anfangen Tugendhaft zu leben, sagte Plato zu einem alten Mann, der ihm erzählte, daß er die Vorlesungen über Tugend anhörte. – Man muß doch nicht immer speculiren, sondern auch einmal an die Ausübung denken. Allein heut zu Tage hält man den für einen Schwärmer, der so lebt wie er lehrt.⁴⁷

The issue at stake between Kant and Schopenhauer or Nietzsche is then not so much the awareness of the degraded character of modern philosophy, but rather the *courage* to do something about it – or lack thereof.⁴⁸ And the weakening of modern character effected by historical education is certainly not helping in this respect.

Having put forward all this evidence of negative physiological consequences of excessive exposure to history, Nietzsche suggests “*die Geschichte wird nur von starken Persönlichkeiten ertragen, die schwachen löscht sie vollends aus*” (1.283). The majority of the historically educated

⁴⁶ The significance of this remark becomes more apparent when we recall that Nietzsche was no friend of vegetarianism: cf. Chapter I, fn. 3 and context.

⁴⁷ To fully appreciate the force of this comment, we need to realize that *Schwärmerei* – as distinguished from *Enthusiasmus* – is Kant’s term for *fanaticism*, a powerful condemnation of various irrational but highly passionate human attachments (cf. Banham, Schulting, & Hems 2012, 191).

⁴⁸ This is not to say that Kant lacked courage altogether: cf. Neymeyr (2020, 2.264–9) on various instances of his civic courage.

turn into “eunuchs” – i.e. people incapable of any passion, of any higher desiring, and therefore impotent in the sense of being incapable of ruling over themselves. Their lives are thus shaped exclusively by the external circumstances they find themselves in. Such people are incapable not just of making history, but even of properly understanding those historical figures they presume to study: they have no access to what was central to their achievements – to the motivating passion that led the great men of the past to accomplish their achievements – because they have no experience of a similar ruling passion in themselves. Thus their accounts of the men and works of the past, e.g. in the form of their historical or philological works, will necessarily fail to give a faithful account of their topics – their ‘objectivity’ stems from their authors’ “Subjectlosigkeit” (1.284), from their lack of passionate investment that is a necessary prerequisite for any non-superficial understanding of a subject. Their works will consequently never have any real effect on others’ life, they will never motivate anyone to change their life, as e.g. Plutarch’s works can do (1.295; cf. KGW II.5, 266–7: “selbst bei mittlerer Begabung”). Their only effect is others’ production of critiques of their work – but “alles [bleibt] beim Alten” (1.285; cf. 1.170) in life, in their uniform bourgeois existence.

HL 7–9: The Sapping of the Will to Growth

A second group of negative consequences of overexposure to scientific history is destructive of our will to grow itself. That is, while the previously discussed problem is the damage it causes to one’s capacity to order one’s life in accordance with one’s ruling passion, this problem is the destruction of the will to order one’s life in this way at all, or the destruction of the ruling passion itself. This happens because for a motivating desire to be truly motivating, the object of our desire must be “umschattet von der Illusion der Liebe” (1.296). In other words, for a desire to

be as strong as to allow us to order the entirety of our life according to it, one must first possess “unbedingten Glauben an das Vollkommene und Rechte” of the desire’s object (1.296): one must believe that he is truly striving for the best possible thing there is, that he is striving for genuine happiness and a genuine good. This is in most cases an illusion, as scientific history correctly teaches us: what past generations considered to be “das Vollkommene und Rechte” is for later generations often just a result of folly and ignorance, and Nietzsche himself is of the opinion that the vast majority of human efforts amount to little more than to meaningless suffering (cf. 1.377–8). Here Nietzsche shows us this effect on the example of Christianity which, after being subjected to scientific history, was cleansed of so many follies and injustices (which in the past were seen through the illusions of love and considered essential parts of the faith) that what remained of it has assumed a “kaum sichtbare Form” (1.297), i.e. has almost ceased to exist. And Nietzsche worries that a similar fate may befall other great objects of human desire, especially the belief in “eine umwälzende und reformirende Heilkraft der deutschen Musik” (1.297–8) – the belief in the capacity of Wagner’s art to work toward establishing a genuine culture in Germany, which will play a major role in *WB*.

However, despite the falsity of “unbedingten Glaubens an das Vollkommene und Rechte”, i.e. despite this belief being (almost necessarily) an illusion, it is indispensable to possess such a belief in order to begin to grow, or to form a project at all, in the first place. One may outgrow such illusions eventually, but one never reaches that stage if one doesn’t begin supported by an illusion of this kind. Goethe provides us with a fitting example of such a salutary illusion from his own life (Eckermann 2010, 174, conversation from 16 February 1826; Nietzsche wrote down this quotation in the note 29 [77], 7.663):

Hätte ich aber [als ich jung war] so deutlich wie jetzt gewußt, wie viel Vortreffliches seit Jahrhunderten und Jahrtausenden da ist, ich hätte keine Zeile geschrieben, sondern etwas anderes getan.

Even the greatest German poet needed to believe in the absolute value of his youthful strivings. The reality of their limited value in comparison to other great works of the human spirit had to wait until he grew strong enough for it.⁴⁹ However, if a young person is by their education bereft of such illusions, they become “heimatlos” and “zweifelt an allen Sitten und Begriffen” (1.299), on those that were able to guide the lives of those in past generations as well as those he was taught to believe in. The question arises: if everything the past generations believed in has been shown to belong to a ceaseless and meaningless line of follies, by what right do *we* think ourselves exempt from this universal rule? – and no satisfactory answer may appear. In such a case, one is bound to conclude that “in allen Zeiten war es anders, es kommt nicht darauf an, wie du bist” (1.300). This attitude – that nothing one may strive for truly matters, for eventually it will all be revealed as a folly, just as everything men of the past believed in – is the core of what Nietzsche calls “eine *ironische* Existenz” (1.302).

The excess of scientific history may promote an ironic existence also by instilling the belief in the old age of mankind (1.307). This belief amounts to thinking that any new major project or goal one may set for themselves is ultimately meaningless, because everything truly important had already been accomplished. This is originally a Christian belief: for the Christian, the decisive events in history were the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, from which we should derive the rules for our life; and the only great event to come is the Last Judgment, in which we will be judged on how obedient to those rules we had been. Christianity is therefore hostile to every culture – to every kind of self-cultivation – “die zum Weiterstreben reizt” (1.305), which is striving for anything radically new and thereby challenges the Christian claim to complete truth. Any such

⁴⁹ I thus do not consider this aspect of Nietzsche’s argument to come close to a “sacrificium intellectus”, as Neymeyr (2020, 1.399) does; nor do I think that *Wahn* is a kind of “geheimnisvollen Fluidum” (ibid., 1.515).

culture is for Christianity a “Verführer zum Dasein” and thereby a “Lügner über den Werth des Daseins” (1.304): Christianity is for Nietzsche not just hostile to any new growth and striving, but more radically it sees this-worldly existence as worthless in itself, and of worth only insofar as it prepares us for the true life after death. Christianity is therefore life-denying.⁵⁰ As we saw above (cf. 1.297), the Christian God may be dead now; however, the belief in the old age of mankind, the belief that everything meaningful had already been done, persists as one of his “shadows” (in the language of *FW* 108). It has reappeared in a stream of contemporary thinking about history (represented here by Wackernagel) that sees the contemporary humanity simply as epigones of the ancient world. It can also be a consequence of believing one lives after the ‘absolute moment’ postulated by Hegel’s philosophy. But regardless of the reason why, if one takes himself to be an epigone, he will live ironically, for all his efforts will never go beyond the shadow of his great predecessors.

The belief in the old age of mankind also takes another form, which Nietzsche dubs “Cynismus”. Cynicism is a particularly self-satisfied interpretation of Hegel’s philosophy of history. Hegel (1970, 30) writes that “die Substanz, das Wesen des Geistes [ist] die Freiheit”, and that history of the world is the progressive realization [*Verwirklichung*] of this freedom. This realization proceeds in three major stages, first of which was represented by the oriental nations, second by the Classical Antiquity, and the third by the Germanic world (Hegel 1970, 31):

⁵⁰ In *SE* (1.389), Nietzsche will claim that “das Christenthum ist gewiss eine der reinsten Offenbarungen jenes Dranges nach Kultur”. How it is possible for Christianity to be both life-denying and one of the purest forms of culture, of what Nietzsche is trying to promote? I believe that insofar as culture is unity of style, Christianity may well be considered a life-denying unity of style. The sentence from *SE* would then be an expression of admiration for the manifold ingenious *methods* of self-discipline and self-cultivation that Christianity has developed (for example the Christian focus on the individual and his soul, and the concomitant shunning of worldly success – cf. 1.321), but not for the *ends* these methods aim to produce. In other words, Christianity can produce a genuine culture, but only a Christian culture, and Nietzsche is seeking a culture that would develop all kinds of human genius. Cf. Hutter (2009, 212–3) for a more detailed account.

Die Orientalen wissen es noch nicht, daß der Geist oder der Mensch als solcher an sich frei ist; weil sie es nicht wissen, sind sie es nicht; sie wissen nur, daß *Einer* frei ist, aber ebendarum ist solche Freiheit nur Willkür, Wildheit, Dumpfheit der Leidenschaft, oder auch eine Milde, Zähmheit derselben, die selbst nur ein Naturzufall oder eine Willkür ist. Dieser Eine ist darum nur ein Despot, nicht ein freier Mann. – In den Griechen ist erst das Bewußtsein der Freiheit aufgegangen, und darum sind sie frei gewesen; aber sie, wie auch die Römer, wußten nur, daß einige frei sind, nicht der Mensch als solcher. Dieß wußten selbst Platon und Aristoteles nicht. [...] – Erst die germanischen Nationen sind im Christenthum zum Bewußtsein gekommen, daß der Mensch als Mensch frei [ist], die Freiheit des Geistes seine eigenste Natur ausmacht.

The Germanic nations, under the influence of Christianity, have realized that man as such is free, and thereby attained the self-consciousness of freedom. This is the ‘absolute moment’ of world history, the moment in which the development of the spirit is completed or perfected, the moment toward which the entire *Weltprozess* was leading: the “*Endzweck der Welt*” is “das Bewußtsein des Geistes von seiner Freiheit und ebendamit die Wirklichkeit seiner Freiheit überhaupt” (ibid., 32). All that is left to do now is fully to realize this self-consciousness of freedom, “dieses Prinzip auch in das weltliche Wesen einzubilden” (ibid., 31). The substantial self-consciousness of freedom had been attained with the appearance of Hegel’s philosophy; and thus Nietzsche glosses that “für Hegel der Höhepunkt und der Endpunkt des Weltprozesses in seiner eigenen Berliner Existenz zusammenfielen” (1.308).

The cynics appropriate Hegel’s thought of the *Weltprozess* as the progressive and now accomplished development of the self-consciousness of freedom, and conclude from it that they, the modern Europeans, are the necessary peak of human development: that “wir sind das Ziel [des Weltprozesses], wir sind die vollendete Natur” (1.313) – and this exalted status requires no effort or achievements of one’s own, it is attained simply by being born at the right period of history. Such a debased form of the belief in the end of history conveniently absolves the philistines from any need to form projects⁵¹ and cultivate their souls: they are already perfect as they are. The concomitant view of the past events amounts to “Götzendienst des Thatsächlichen” (1.309), to a

⁵¹ Or at least any projects that go beyond the maintenance of a comfortable bourgeois existence.

worship of whichever force managed to prevail over other competing forces, for every such victorious force must have been a necessary contribution to the historical process. But all human greatness stems from the will to resist that which already is, to pursue one's own project rather than to be a cog in someone else's project; it resides in one who "sich gegen jene blinde Macht der Facta, gegen die Tyrannei des Wirklichen empört" (1.311). No such will is to be found in the self-satisfied cynic. Cynicism is the form the historical sickness takes in the philistines, as is evident not just from the similarity of the preceding description to the account of the philistine 'culture' in *DS* 1–3, but also more directly from the fact that D.F. Strauss' book was described as cynical in precisely this sense in *DS* (cf. 1.173, 197).

This fetishizing of the *Weltprozess* reaches its peak in the work of Eduard von Hartmann, who surpasses Strauss in arguing that the present-day state of mankind completes and justifies the existence of humanity as such "nicht nur von hinten, ex causis efficientibus, sondern sogar von vorne, ex causa finali" (1.314). Von Hartmann's doctrine is presented by Nietzsche as taking the premises of the *Weltprozess*-thinking *ad absurdum*:⁵² he shows us the modern men in their misery and pettiness, the bourgeois philistines who strive for nothing beyond their own comfortable existence (cf. 1.315), as the peaks and conclusions of the *Weltprozess*, and thus exposes what was for Nietzsche the central contradiction of this line of thinking. The only step remaining to be taken, according to von Hartmann, is the widespread realization of the meaninglessness of human existence, and the consequent collective suicide.⁵³

⁵² Cf. note 29 [52], 7.648: "Hartmann ist wichtig, weil er den Gedanken eines Weltprozesses todtmacht, dadurch dass er consequent ist." A more detailed account of the importance of von Hartmann in *HL* can be found in Salaquarda 1984 (esp. pp. 41–5). Since the function of the discussion of von Hartmann's thought in *HL* is quite clear, I cannot agree with Jensen's (2016, 123) view that "Nietzsche treats Hartmann in a singularly bizarre fashion."

⁵³ This is how I understand Salaquarda's (1984, 40) summary of this final stage of von Hartmann's *Weltprozess*: "Dann mag es geschehen, daß [die Menschheit] sich in ihrer großen Mehrheit dafür entscheidet, das unselige Streben zu

* * *

We have seen that scientific history is destructive of our motivating or ruling passion in three distinct ways: it may show all human goals to be valuable only relatively to their age and therefore ultimately meaningless; it may show all *new* goals – all goals one may pursue himself – as radically inferior to what had already been attained; or it may make us believe that we are already as perfect as humanly possible, and so sap the desire to make a serious effort to lead and order our lives. All these three disadvantages stem from a single root: from the realization, brought about by scientific history, of the radically transitory character of all things – not just of material things but of human beliefs, valuations, and desiderata as well.⁵⁴ Nietzsche therefore dubs scientific history “Wissenschaft des universalen Werdens” (1.272): it shows us all that has ever occurred as a part of a ceaseless chaotic stream of generation, change, and destruction.⁵⁵ This – the idea that nothing is actually permanent, that there is no stable being – is the core insight of the “deadly truths” (1.319):

Die Lehren vom souverainen Werden, von der Flüssigkeit aller Begriffe, Typen und Arten, von dem Mangel aller cardinalen Verschiedenheit zwischen Mensch und Thier – Lehren, die ich für wahr, aber tödtlich halte[.]

I take the most important reason why these truths are “deadly” to be that they (insofar one knows these truths) remove any kind of transhistorical support to our desiderata and make them all appear historically conditioned.⁵⁶ Thereby they discredit any possible belief in the *unconditional* goodness

beenden und in das Nichts einzugehen”. Cf. Neymeyr 2020, 1.542. Contary to Pearson’s (2018, 6) opinion, this is certainly not a “whiggish conviction”.

⁵⁴ This is obviously so in the case of the first disadvantage mentioned; the latter two cases derive from the transitory character of all things by taking away the possibility to meaningfully compare ourselves to humans of the past.

⁵⁵ It also makes us much more aware of the uniqueness of each historical event, and thus of its incommensurability with any other, earlier or later, event.

⁵⁶ Nietzsche treats the deadly truths together with writing history “vom Standpunkte der *Massen*” (1.319) because he seems to think that all constructions of history as a meaningful process unduly privilege masses at the expense of the individuals, who can be considered only “als der deutlichste Ausdruck” of the mass-driven historical process (1.320, cf. 1.317). A construction of history as a stream of becoming *against the run of which* a great individual may appear by his own effort would not read history from the standpoint of the masses, nor as a *meaningful* process; but it would still have to deal with the issue of *panta rhei*, of there not being anything stable or permanent.

of our desiderata, which is necessary for our motivating passion to rule and order our life. They also cause the useful kinds of history – the purpose of which is precisely aiding our ruling passion in attaining its ends – to be “als Fälschung empfunden” (1.296), and thus they become useless. The deadly truths are deadly because they destroy the psychic conditions which are essential to life in the sense of growing or expanding life, of the truly human and not merely animal life.

Nietzsche extrapolates from this that the widespread exposure to deadly truths, and to scientific history more widely, effects a thorough anti-cultural transformation of society. A historically educated people will lose its sense of unity that stems from antiquarian history and stops “Volk zu sein” (1.319), and historically educated individuals will no longer be able or even willing to grow. The effort to grow will then be replaced by the effort to secure a comfortable existence, and society will be transformed so as to facilitate this new, low goal: it will become a collection of “Systeme von Einzelegoismen” (1.319). The only constraint is that these petty egoisms are to be “klug”, i.e. such that do not (visibly) harm anyone else. The state is only to provide a legal framework securing the peaceful coexistence of these clever petty egoisms: “er soll der Patron aller klugen Egoismen werden” (1.322). This is in effect the liberal-capitalist state, and this is why Nietzsche had called liberalism the “eigentlich kulturwidrige Doktrin” in a longer, unpublished version of *Vorwort an Richard Wagner* (note 11 [1], 7.355). The ultimate consequence of these trends would be what Catherine Zuckert (1970, 105; cf. Zuckert 1976, 67) has called “an end of history” (as opposed to *the* end of history): a state of humanity in which no new great events would transpire – not because everything great had already been done, but because there would be no humans capable of greatness anymore.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Nietzsche wonders out loud whether “es nämlich überhaupt *kommende Zeiten*, im Sinne der Cultur verstanden, geben wird” (1.311) – whether, if these tendencies continue to exert their influence, there will be in the future anyone

II.4 Curing the Historical Sickness

After the preceding account of the dangers that scientific history, and truth itself more generally, pose to life, two major questions have to be addressed. First, are we as humans really condemned to live in untruth? Is the truth simply deadly and to be avoided? Is it even *possible* to willfully choose untruth over the truth, however painful or even “deadly” may the truth be? And second, how does Nietzsche propose to counteract the harmful influence of the “historical sickness” in its various forms?

Justice, Truth, and Philosophy

Justice and the various claims to it play an important, if somewhat understated role in *HL*. Already in *HL* 1 Nietzsche observed the “Blindheit und Ungerechtigkeit in der Seele des Handelnden” (1.254) that is a necessary condition for any human action at all, and how this injustice motivates the “suprahistorical men” to devise life-denying doctrines which, if followed, would supposedly justify human existence. Furthermore, justice is also “der oberste Anspruch des modernen Menschen” (1.288): the contemporary humanity’s claim to preeminence over the previous periods rests on the promise of scientific history that by knowing more of the truth, we will become more just than ever before. And Nietzsche claims himself in *HL* 6 that “nur insofern der Wahrhafte den unbedingten Willen hat, gerecht zu sein, ist an dem überall so gedankenlos glorificirten Streben nach Wahrheit etwas Grosses” (1.287), that truth is great and worthy of the suffering it carries with itself only in the service of justice. Nietzsche thus clearly sees justice –

left capable of self-cultivation and thus also of making history. Hutter (2009, 216) has a more detailed treatment of liberalism’s hostility toward genuine culture as a result of its “completely Mammonistic orientation” that is incapable of understanding and dealing with the *thymos* of the “young souls” (and other thymotic characters). Cf. Chapter III.1 below on the central role of *thymos* in Nietzsche’s project in the *UB* of establishing a new, genuine culture.

and truth, insofar it serves justice – to be of paramount importance to human life. But what *is* justice in the first place?

Nietzsche explains clearly enough what justice is *not*. First, it is not the disinterested ‘objectivity’ (i.e. subjectlessness) of the scientific historians. Indeed, the highest form of ‘objectivity’ – in which the artist (be it a painter, a historian, or a dramatist) as it were depicts the constellation of events as if it were purely reflected in him without any personal interest – is in fact a highly personal creative act, “der kräftigste und selbstthätigste Moment im Innern des Künstlers” (1.290), not disinterested at all. Calling this ‘objectivity’ misses precisely the subjective moment at the core of such depictions, the artist’s motivating passion. The ‘subjectless’ account of ‘objectivity’ is unable to see in the ‘objective’ artist precisely the same thing it misses in the actors of the past.⁵⁸ Second, it is also not the life-denying justice of the suprahistorical men, who (correctly) judge that all action is based on error and injustice, but fail to apply this judgment to themselves. If they did so, they would realize how their condemnation of mankind is based on their own, frustrated, passion for justice – and thus is itself unjust. They fail to understand the difficult knowledge that the unjust unhistorical passion is “der Geburtsschooss nicht nur einer ungerechten, sondern jeder rechten That” (1.253), of any humanly possible goodness and justice (cf. Lemm 2011, 172). The doctrines which they develop for consolation are consequently life-denying.

Nietzsche presents his idea of justice proper in the second paragraph of *HL* 6. Becoming just is described as a movement of ascending from a preparatory stage: “aus lässlichem Zweifel zu strenger Gewissheit, aus duldsamer Milde zum Imperativ ‘du musst’, aus der seltenen Tugend der

⁵⁸ Cf. Jensen (2016, 98–104) and Zuckert (1976, 65–6) for more thorough accounts of Nietzsche’s critique of historical ‘objectivity’.

Grossmuth zur allerseltensten der Gerechtigkeit” (1.286). I believe this is the same movement as that described in a famous passage from *WB* (1.445):

Mir scheint dagegen die wichtigste Frage aller Philosophie zu sein, wie weit die Dinge eine unabänderliche Artung und Gestalt haben: um dann, wenn diese Frage beantwortet ist, mit der rücksichtslosesten Tapferkeit auf die *Verbesserung der als veränderlich erkannten Seite der Welt* loszugehen.

What is described in these passages is first attaining as much knowledge about human beings and the world as is in one’s powers. This knowledge is characterized by magnanimity, by an effort to take things as they are regardless of how much one may dislike them; and by doubt as to whether one really knows things correctly and magnanimously enough. This knowing is marked by a particular attention to what is special about human beings, what in them makes them great and beautiful, and what kind of conditions are conducive to the thriving of such human qualities and of those humans who embody them. The second step is using this truth “als die ordnende und strafende Richterin” (1.286), as a basis for legislating such an order of the human things (and “Abschätzung ihrer Wichtigkeit” – note 29 [21], 7.633), for establishing such ways of individual and collective life that actually fulfill the needs of the growing or ascending life to the greatest possible extent. As Heidegger (2003, 171) suggests, this justice is “*Vermögen zum ursprünglichen Richten*, d.h. Gesetzgebung, nicht bloße *Anwendung* eines Gültigen [Gesetzes]”.⁵⁹ What Nietzsche describes here is justice as the highest practical task of the philosopher, as the establishment of a social order that corresponds to the natural order of rank among humans and fosters the cultivation of the higher human types – justice as Nietzsche saw it in the works of Plato.⁶⁰ This is “Wahrheit

⁵⁹ A similar suggestion has been made by Lampert (1993, 289–91) before Heidegger’s lectures on *HL* were published.

⁶⁰ There can be little doubt that the young Nietzsche saw Plato as a political thinker of this kind. Cf. the note 14 [11], 7.379, where he claims that “*Die Organisation des Geniestaates – das ist die wahre platonische Republik*”. Two later notes (both from 1873) describe Plato’s ideal state as the peak of philosophy: “Plato’s Staat als *überhellenisch*, als nicht unmöglich. Philosophie erreicht hier ihre Höhe, als Staatengründerin eines metaphysisch geordneten Staates.” (29 [170], 7.701); and the note 29 [174], 7.704, describes Plato himself as in the first place a legislator of this kind: “Theorie: Plato hauptsächlich Legislator und Reformator, nie darin Skeptiker”. Also cf. the accounts of Nietzsche’s Platonic understanding of politics in Drochon (2016, 40–6) and Lampert (2017, 50–3).

mit einem Worte als Weltgericht” (1.287),⁶¹ for no institution or organization in the world is exempt from this forensic examination as to whether it serves life or hinders it. But unlike the suprahistorical ‘justice’, this justice seeks to help life rather than to condemn it: its judgments and its legislation serve not to suppress life, but to fulfill its potential as much as possible.

Only this kind of striving for truth is beneficial to life – for, as we have seen, truth is deadly in almost all other cases – and only insofar as truth can in this way aid life “ist an dem überall so gedankenlos glorificirten Streben nach Wahrheit etwas Grosses” (1.287).⁶² However, the deadening effect of truth can be avoided only by *concealing* the truth. The doubts of the thinker must be hidden behind the legislator’s veneer of “Gewissheit”. The thinker’s magnanimity, necessary for giving things their due, must be replaced by imperatives and by punishments for those who disobey them. In other words, the just legislator in this sense must act as if he had full certainty that his legislation is an expression of *the* truth, while in truth he cannot have any such certainty. But while this truth may – and in fact must – be concealed from the many, the legislator doesn’t have this luxury. Being just in this sense means for him personally that he “in jedem Augenblicke an sich selbst sein Menschenthum zu büßen hat und sich selbst an einer unmöglichen Tugend tragisch verzehrt” (1.286). The just man has to bear the burden of his imperatives that are justified by lies, even though they be lies in the name of his “truth” about what is best for human beings (cf. *MA* 241). He may never admit the doubts he, as a thinker, necessarily has. He has to live in awareness of the not-completely-fulfillable nature of the standards he sets up for others. He must do without the comforting illusions that are helpful and even indispensable to the vast

⁶¹ The idiom of philosophy as *Weltgericht* will go on to enjoy a long presence in Nietzsche’s thought. As late as in an unsent draft of a letter to Georg Brandes from early December 1888, *Der Antichrist* is described as “wirklich ein *Weltgericht*” (KGB II.5, 502).

⁶² This is the reason why philosophy is “die wahrhaftigste aller Wissenschaften” (1.282).

majority of other humans. He is aware of the perishable character of all things, including of whatever he may be able to establish himself. And finally, he suffers the greatest and most spiritual sufferings (cf. 1.451–2) that are beyond the comprehension of the many who live in the atmosphere of life-promoting illusions. In short, the legislator’s soul becomes the site of the conflict between truth and life and has to carry this conflict within himself without having any hope of resolving it: that is his tragedy (cf. Lampert 2017, 63, 66). In *HL*, and in the *UB* as a whole, the conflict between truth and life is fundamental and insoluble; it can at best be concealed by the legislator.⁶³

Thus, in the young Nietzsche’s conception, the highest form of justice is inextricably bound up with philosophy in the proper sense of the word. In his lectures on the pre-Platonic philosophers, he says “es ist eine Gesetzgebung der Größe, ein Namengeben mit der Philosophie verbunden: ‘Das ist groß’, sagt sie, u. dadurch erhebt sie den Menschen” (KGW II.4, 218n8; cf. the note 19 [83], 7.447–8). This legislation is the proper work of the philosophic legislators, of men such as Pythagoras or Empedocles (1.758), or Plato. These thinkers legislate out of their philanthropy, out of their love for what is great in humans and their will to help it come to fruition, which Nietzsche calls “Mitleid” in *HL* (1.278; cf. 1.758).⁶⁴ In this sense, justice as legislation of greatness is the application of the “Grundgedanke der Kultur” (1.756; cf. 1.382), of the cultivation of the human soul toward yet-unseen greatness. Therefore, in *Ueber das Pathos der Wahrheit*, the philosophic legislators are described as “die verwegenen Ritter unter diesen Ruhmsüchtigen” (1.757) right after the passages that are used in *HL 2* to describe the monumental men (cf. 1.755–7 with 1.259–60). The philosophic legislators are the greatest monumental men, for they deliberately strive to

⁶³ One significant consequence of this idea is the premium Nietzsche places on belief, and even *unconditional* belief, in places such as 1.296. In contrast, the mature Nietzsche will consider “den Geschmack für das Unbedingte” as “den schlechtesten aller Geschmäcker” in *JGB* 31.

⁶⁴ Nietzsche will say in *WB* that it is because of these hopes that philosophers have always been writing books “und ihre Weisheit nicht für sich behielten” (1.445).

foster what the lesser monumental men do “instinctively”. Consequently, they are hated by the many just like the monumental men are (1.259, 287, 756). This conception of philosophy as the legislation of human greatness understands religion and art as inferior and ministerial to philosophy, rather than the other way round. In *HL*, these forces are called “wahre Helferinnen” of the philosophic legislator in his task of “eine Cultur anzupflanzen, die wahren Bedürfnissen entspricht” (1.281): they would be the providers of the ‘lies in the name of truth’, of the salutary illusions that comprise the outward form of the philosophic legislation.

Nietzsche himself has the ambition to become a legislator of greatness for the Germans, as can be seen from the closing paragraph of *HL* 4 (1.277–8). However, he recognizes that such legislation cannot be simply proclaimed – it requires a people willing to receive such a legislation and able to fulfill its commandments. But the contemporary Germans are no such people: they are divided both internally, suffering from the “split personality”, and externally, in that “die Einheit der Volksempfindung verloren ging” (1.277) and the desire for true culture is now the privilege of only a small group. In these conditions, Nietzsche could at best legislate only to this small group, to a “sect”. Thus, before he can proceed to the task of legislation, he must accomplish a preliminary destructive task: “als Richter wenigstens das zu verurtheilen, was für ihn den Lebenden und Lebenzeugenden Vernichtung und Entwürdigung ist” (1.278), i.e. to expose and condemn scientific history and historical education that caused the divisions within and between the Germans. In doing this “hofft er ein Bedürfniss zu pflanzen” (1.278), a powerful motivating desire for self-cultivation that would be able to restore the order within one’s soul and guide one’s life. And if this desire becomes widespread, if many people come to live as it were in a shared world with a shared ruling passion and a shared goal – then they will become a people again, and they will be ready to accept Nietzsche’s legislation which will help them attain their goal. I take this, in

broad terms, to be Nietzsche's goal in writing the *UB*; and more broadly, as his first programmatic statement of what he as a thinker and a practical man aims to accomplish – of his *project*.

Negative Countermeasures

The first step of this program is finding ways to fight the dangers of scientific history. For this it is essential to spell out these dangers in the first place, and that's why Nietzsche has given his readers a thorough account of the deleterious effects for life of the exposure to scientific history. However, history can have these deleterious effects on the young only because contemporary German *Bildung*, to which they are subjected, is based on scientific history. This education is not education proper, it is only "Wissen um die Bildung" (1.327), education about how other peoples have been educated in the past that has no consequence for how they lead their lives.⁶⁵ This education takes no account of what does it mean to really cultivate a human being – its goal is rather to produce productive scholars as quickly as possible, and such scholars need not cultivate their souls, they need only to learn the knowledge and skills necessary to their profession (1.326). Being such a scholar is fully compatible with being a weak, split personality, as well as with being a philistine.

This account of the drawbacks of modern historical education is embedded into an argument about *why* the young are subjected to this education: namely to make "die Wissenschaft im ökonomischen Sinne immer nutzbarer" (1.301). However, the fact that historical education aims at rearing economically productive workers belies its claims to seek the truth for its own sake. It shows us that it actually seeks such 'truths', and educates such seekers of truth, as are conducive

⁶⁵ Cf. *M* 195 for a later statement of this problem with explicit reference to the German "classischen Bildung".

to the great modern goal of securing comfortable life (1.300–1). Science is to yield results that increase wealth and “quality of life” measured in purely economic or material terms. A consequence of this orientation on comfortable life – of barbarism as the driving force behind science – is that real culture becomes superfluous at best. A society (or ‘culture’) like this rather needs weak, docile humans who do not – who *cannot* – ask for more than the comfortable life it offers (*HL* 7; 1.319–23). Thus it makes perfect sense that although the declared goal of historical education is the production of scholars, its actual product is “der historisch-aesthetische Bildungsphilister” (1.326) and, consequently, the entire widespread system of philistine ‘culture’ that was the subject of *DS* 1–3. Nietzsche stresses that this education, together with its effects, are implemented with precisely the purpose of breaking “die stärksten Instincte der Jugend” and thereby “die Jugend um ihr schönstes Vorrecht zu betrügen, um ihre Kraft, sich in übervoller Gläubigkeit einen grossen Gedanken einzupflanzen und zu einem noch grösseren aus sich heraus wachsen zu lassen” (1.323). His final verdict is that the true purpose of historical education is rearing weaklings who will easily become a part of the barbaric capitalist-bourgeois system oriented on the comfortable life and nothing beyond it.

Nietzsche hereby enacts what he says is the solution to the problem of scientific history: “die Historie *muss* das Problem der Historie selbst auflösen, das Wissen *muss* seinen Stachel gegen sich selbst kehren” (1.306). By showing what kind of man is produced by scientific history and for whose benefit, he aims to break the illusions that sustain its power over the minds of the young – the illusions that it is the peak of modern truthfulness and that it makes its practitioners wiser and more just than anyone in the past. Instead, they learn that this kind of education is not necessary at all, and that it is “widernatürlich” (1.326), i.e. working contrary to the natural tendency of life to grow and expand. The critical-historical account of scientific history (and of present-day society

in general) that is given in *HL* 4–9 enables the young to recognize, condemn, and free themselves from its pernicious influence – i.e. to be honest with themselves and to realize the “Nothwahrheit” (1.328) that they have no culture yet and that they are sick with history. The purpose of this realization is, as is the case with critical history in general, “eine zweite Natur [einzupflanzen]” (1.270): to enable them to acquire a new ruling passion, which will be the basis for beginning to recover from historical sickness and for seeking true culture. In Nietzsche’s words, this critique frees the young so that they may “sich selbst erziehen und zwar sich selbst gegen sich selbst, zu einer neuen Gewohnheit und Natur” (1.328).

However, it should be emphasized that the target of Nietzsche’s critique is not so much academic historical science, but rather the proliferation of scientific history as the sole valid mode of relating to the past and the external. The tools of scientific history are a great contribution to the toolkit of the professional historian, of one who knows why they need to study a particular people or historical period. The problem of scientific history arises only when scientific history doesn’t remain “esoterisch” in Goethe’s sense (*Werke*, VIII.471; cf. Neymeyr 2020, 1.522): i.e. when it doesn’t contribute to the given culture’s way of life by suggesting particular improvements to it, or an “*erhöhte Praxis*” (1.301), but when it instead challenges that way of life by presenting appealing alternatives to it.⁶⁶ Thus, the real problem of scientific history is that it’s being taught to every boy and girl these days, rather than being a preserve of qualified experts. We find an indication as to how Nietzsche would imagine the non-scientific-historical education of youth in *Nachlass* from 1871–2 (note 14 [25], 7.385): “Das *Lehren der Kinder* ist *Eltern-* und *Gemeindepflicht*: *Erhaltung der Tradition* ist *Hauptaufgabe*”. In other words, it would be education

⁶⁶ Insofar as scientific history strives to be “value-free”, i.e. refuses to take the side of its culture’s way of life, it challenges that way of life by presenting other ways of life as equally valid alternatives thereof.

along the lines of antiquarian history. Elementary education would foster the children's attachment to "their own", and reinforce the acculturation they have already received from their parents. In contrast, the methods and results of scientific history would be available only to those who will actively show an interest in them, and only for the purposes of their research, the results of which would be known only to other experts.⁶⁷

Positive Countermeasures

Now that the readers know what they are suffering from, how do they heal their damaged souls and develop a "new nature" for themselves? This question must be answered *ab initio*. We already know that the central conflict within the modern soul is between life and knowledge. Nietzsche now poses the question: which of these two powers, "life" and "knowledge" is "die höhere und entscheidende" (1.330)? In other words, which of the two basic functions of the human soul recognized ever since the Antiquity, the animating and the cognitive, is the higher and more important one? And he sides without a doubt with "life", with the animating function: he calls it "die höhere, die herrschende Gewalt" (ibid.) on the basis of its more fundamental character. *Cogito, ergo sum* is replaced with *vivo, ergo cogito* (1.329). The more fundamental is at the same time the higher.

On the basis of this reflection, Nietzsche suggests that his readers establish "eine *Gesundheitslehre des Lebens*" (1.331) in order to counteract the consequences of excessive

⁶⁷ Thus, contrary to Church's (2019, 97) opinion, modern culture does *not* have "a bottomless stomach for knowledge", and Nietzsche wants to regulate and limit its presence in culture. Cf. the note 19 [11], 7.419, where Nietzsche compares an indiscriminate drive to knowledge to an indiscriminate sexual drive: "Der Erkenntnißtrieb *ohne Auswahl* steht gleich dem wahllosen Geschlechtstrieb – Zeichen *der Gemeinheit!*" Just as a person who would pursue sexual relations with anyone is enslaved by this passion, one who strives to know indiscriminately is in effect promoting (what should be) a means into an end, at the expense of the life to which knowledge as means ought to serve.

exposure to history. The two main antidotes against history are the unhistorical (as the capacity to forget and to be at least temporarily satisfied within a closed horizon) and the suprahistorical.⁶⁸ The suprahistorical is characterized here as comprising art and religion, understood as powers that “den Blick von dem Werden ablenken, hin zu dem, was dem Dasein den Charakter des Ewigen und Gleichbedeutenden giebt” (1.330). Nietzsche thus suggests that one should, insofar one can, dwell within illusions that provide a stable horizon of meaning within one’s world. This is of course a tricky proposition, for illusions can provide meaning only when one actually believes in them, i.e. as long as one does not take them to be illusions. However, we have seen that illusions are necessary for the psychic health and growth of most humans, and in this respect Nietzsche is consistent with his previous words. After the healing progresses, one may study history again, but now in the three useful ways, i.e. as a means to support one’s psychic growth. What exactly these rather formal pieces of advice would mean in practice depends on the particular needs and wounds of each individual trying to cure themselves – Nietzsche provides just general guidelines, which everyone interested has to “in eine persönlich gemeinte Lehre sich übersetzen” (1.332).

However, the proper task of the young is learning to live (1.325), i.e. finding or developing a way of life suitable for them and their ruling passion – as one does not live by bread alone, and human life is much more than simply providing the conditions for one’s continued survival. This

⁶⁸ The accounts of the suprahistorical in *HL* 1 (1.254–6) and *HL* 10 (1.330) look quite different from each other at the first sight, which led Jensen (2016, 17) to declare them “inconsistent” with each other, and to “suggest that [the concept of] überhistorical may have been offered at least partly out of a mind for symmetry rather than out of a clear and precise philosophical motivation.” A few pages later (*ibid.*, 24) he speculates that this (alleged) inconsistency could be explained by the fact that *HL* 10 was written hastily and, unlike the rest of *HL*, wasn’t edited by von Gersdorff. However, I don’t think we need to go so far as to accuse Nietzsche of sloppy writing in order to resolve this interpretive problem. Already Zuckert (1976, 57n4) offers the idea that in both *HL* 1 and *HL* 10 Nietzsche “is referring to the desire (fulfilled or frustrated) to give human life a meaning which extends beyond the temporal and other limitations of the individual.” On this reading, the suprahistorical men of *HL* 1 would be a subset of the religious (and thus a subset of the suprahistorical humans rather than the sole suprahistorical humans), and while Nietzsche would hardly condone their doctrines, at least there is still passion behind them. In that sense they are less dangerous to life than the passion-destroying historical sickness.

task requires more than just healing the damage caused by historical education – it requires also self-knowledge. Nietzsche explains this by means of a “Gleichniss” (1.332) that compares the present situation of the German youth to the situation faced by the Greeks once upon a time, effectively using the Greeks as a monumental example for his readers (as Most 2002, 34 notes), and demonstrating how his own historical education can contribute to solving the problem of historical education (cf. 1.247). The Greeks also used to suffer “an der Ueberschwemmung durch das Fremde und Vergangne, and der ‘Historie’” (1.333),⁶⁹ and consequently their souls were disorganized and chaotic, i.e. barbaric, in ways similar to those of the contemporary Germans. The Greeks managed to order this inner chaos by following Apollo’s exhortation to “know thyself”, which Nietzsche understands as the knowledge of one’s “ächte Bedürfnisse” (1.333). On the basis of this knowledge of their needs they could cultivate their nature in the sense of ordering the chaos which is the ‘natural’ (or basic) state of the human soul: they became able to satisfy their “true” needs at the expense of the “false” ones, and to subordinate the lower needs to the higher ones.⁷⁰ Such an ordering of one’s inner chaos into an organized whole is culture both in the sense of unity of style (as defined in *DS*), and in the Greek sense of “neue und verbesserte Physis” (1.334) – as a new ordering of the needs or desires that constitute the driving forces of the soul, which allows one to grow and expand much higher than the previous chaotic state. Thus, *HL* gives us a fuller account of what culture is than *DS*, but one that is consistent with *DS* and with its central opposition of genuine culture to barbarism. Nietzsche expresses the hope that by using the same methods as the Greeks, the “Erstlinge und Vorbilder aller kommenden Culturvölker” (1.333), the German

⁶⁹ Note that here *Historie* means not just the past, but explicitly *both* the past and the external.

⁷⁰ Thus it is not true that Nietzsche’s readers are to reject all external influences (save for the Greeks), as Most (2002, 35) believes. The issue is rather one of giving an order to the external influences: as Siemens (2001, 93) points out, the exemplarity of the Greeks’ “unhistorische Bildung” lies in their “capacity to deal with the historicity of human existence” and to incorporate what they learn for the benefit of their life.

youth may eventually attain a similar level of self-cultivation, and perhaps even agonistically overcome them (Siemens 2001, 104–6). From this position – that of epigones of classical Antiquity rather than of the decaying Hellenistic antiquity (1.307) – they themselves may then become the founders of a new, genuine culture (1.311, 333). This is possible in part because Nietzsche thinks that a relatively small group – some hundred men – is sufficient to initiate such a cultural renewal (1.260, 295, 325; cf. the letter to Rohde after 21 December 1871, KGB II.1, 256–7). However, in a similar manner as with the account of justice, this account of self-knowledge and its benefits is highly abstract, and Nietzsche does not elaborate here *how* to find out what one’s “true needs” are. Thus the entire project of cultural renewal is, at this stage, a sketch at best. We will see how this sketch will unfold in the following two *UB*.

* * *

HL turned out to be about much more than just its overt topic, the dangers of scientific history. One of its core subjects, the importance of which has been stressed especially by phenomenologists such as Heidegger (*SuZ*, 396–7) and Fink (1992, 37), is human historicity and the ways in which it shapes our existence. However, the account of human historicity is, on my reading, embedded into a wider account of the overall structure of the human soul. The soul is understood as essentially erotic, as containing various desires and passions that vie for dominance over each other, and which may be ordered into a more or less stable hierarchy with a ruling passion on top – or remain chaotic. Desiring (“the unhistorical”) is together with memory (“the historical”) one of the two basic faculties of the human soul, the combination of which shapes the specifically human way of being. It is the combination of desiring and memory (or, in other words,

the way in which our desiring is transformed by memory) that gives rise to the worlds in which we live, meaningful worlds bounded by erotically-determined horizons of significance.

This account of the human soul sets the terms for the overt subject of *HL*, which is a diagnosis of the various ways in which an excess of ‘history’ (or any other kind of knowledge) can damage the structures of a healthy soul. These kinds of psychic damage are widespread in contemporary society, and that is not an accident – it is fostered by the modern, bourgeois, liberal-capitalist society in the effort to raise docile subjects whose desires do not extend beyond the desire for comfortable life. Nietzsche then outlines his efforts to counteract the historical sickness and to promote growth and self-cultivation of the souls of the young, and sketches a couple of methods for this. These efforts in turn flow from his ambition to effect a cultural reform, and ultimately from his conception of philosophy as entailing justice and legislation in the highest sense as its practical task. At the same time, the issue of the ‘historical sickness’ brought to light the fundamental tension between truth and life, which will play a major role also in the remaining two *UB*.

But *HL* leaves a lot of its central themes without satisfactory elaboration. This is most visible in its account of philosophy and justice, which is so abstract as to say almost nothing about how it could be carried out. The methods of self-cultivation sketched in *HL* 10 are indeed only sketched, and many pointed questions can be asked about them, as Heidegger (2003, 213–4) does. With regard to Nietzsche’s demand that one recognize one’s “ächte Bedürfnisse” (1.333), Heidegger asks “wonach bestimmt sich das Echte der Bedürfnisse, und was ist darin unecht?” Answering on Nietzsche’s behalf that ‘genuine’ needs are those that heighten life, he asks “worin besteht die *Höhe* des ‘Lebens’? [...] *Wer* setzt das Hohe fest?” In this relation he also asks “wer entscheidet darüber, welcher Genius der Maßsetzende sein soll?” (Heidegger 2003, 213). And I

believe he is right that *HL* by itself does not offer satisfactory answers to these questions.⁷¹ Finally, while we did learn a few things about the young, *HL* still doesn't tell us enough to know who precisely they are and why do precisely *they* matter to Nietzsche so much. Perhaps this is why *SE* will open with another and much more precise address to the youth.

⁷¹ This is likely intentional. Nietzsche wrote to Erwin Rohde on 15 February 1874 (KGB II.3, 202) the following: "eine gewisse Allgemeinheit war übrigens geboten, weil ich Rücksichten auf speciellere Ausführungen in späteren Unzeitgemässheiten zu nehmen hatte."

III. Schopenhauer als Erzieher: The Good Life According to the Young Nietzsche

*“Niemand weiß, was er tut, wenn er recht handelt; aber des Unrechten sind wir uns immer
bewußt.”¹*

¹ Goethe (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* VII.9, *Werke* VII.496).

III.1 SE 1: Erotic-Historic Self-Knowledge

SE begins in the same way *HL* ended – with a direct address to the young souls. Nietzsche tells them that each of us is unique and unlike anyone else, that “jeder Mensch ein einmaliges Wunder ist” (1.337–8). He admits that this may not be apparent at first sight, as most humans – especially in the present day – “erscheinen [...] als Fabrikwaare” (1.338).² But this appearance is not due to them actually being copies of each other. It is due to their laziness, that most common human quality,³ as the Odyssean figure of the traveler⁴ tells us: most humans prefer the easy imitation of established habits and modes of life, the following of public opinions, which are really “die privaten Faulheiten” (1.338),⁵ and the focus on securing a comfortable life for themselves, over the long and difficult effort of cultivating one’s unique self (soon we will see just *how* difficult it in fact is). But even if most humans make no effort to cultivate their uniqueness, they are nevertheless unique; what is more, they *know* they are unique – for their conscience tells them so. The call of conscience is heard especially strongly by “jeder jungen Seele”, but even those who are too lazy to listen to it are aware of it at some level – and hide this call “wie ein böses Gewissen” (1.337).

According to Nietzsche, our conscience tells us: “sei du selbst! Das bist du alles nicht, was du jetzt thust, meinst, begehrt” (1.338). This imperative is, taken by itself, rather puzzling: where

² Already here Nietzsche obliquely criticizes Schopenhauer. For Nietzsche, the regular person only *appears* as a factory product, whereas Schopenhauer makes no such qualifications: “der gewöhnliche Mensch, diese Fabrikware der Natur, wie sie solche täglich zu Tausenden hervorbringt” (*WWV I*, § 36, *Werke* I.268; cf. Neymeyr 2020, 1.180–1 for further references).

³ Neymeyr (2020, 2.55–6) remarks that the two possible causes of human mediocrity discussed in this paragraph – *Faulheit* and *Furchtsamkeit* – are quite similar to *Faulheit* and *Feigheit*, the causes of human *Unmündigkeit* in Kant’s essay *Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?* However, while Kant puts more emphasis on fearfulness (e.g. in the famous motto *sapere aude!*), Nietzsche presents laziness as the more important factor.

⁴ As pointed out by Lampert (2017, 75). Cf. *Za I* Von tausend und Einem Ziele, and Meier 2017, 37n41. The figure of the traveler or foreigner has also appeared in *DS* (1.162) and in *HL* (1.276). Large (2012, 104n8) points out that this position may well apply also to Nietzsche himself.

⁵ Nietzsche repeated this dictum in *MA* 482: “Und nochmals gesagt. – Oeffentliche Meinungen – private Faulheiten.”

does it come from? And how are we to “be ourselves” if all we are is apparently *not* ourselves? We can begin to make sense of these questions by noticing the aspirational character of the voice of conscience. The conscience tells us not just that we are unique, but also that this uniqueness of ours is something yet to be attained; that our *current* deeds, opinions and even desires are not yet truly ours; that what we truly are needs to be liberated from “Ketten der Meinungen und der Furcht” (1.338). Our conscience demands that we get to know our uniqueness – that we get to know *ourselves* – and that we consequently live according to what we truly are, “nach eigenem Maass und Gesetz” (1.339). It tells us that we have to lead our life as *our* life, be responsible for it, develop it, and cultivate it – cultivate, that is, the uniqueness that we are. In Kaufmann’s (1978, 161) pointed phrase, Nietzsche takes our individuality, worth, and dignity to be not *gegeben*, but rather *aufgegeben* to us.

The call of conscience obtains its motivating force from the awareness of our mortality,⁶ from the fact “dass wir nichts als ein spannenlanges Heute besitzen” (1.339) in order to live our unique life – and thus, if we do listen to our conscience, we have no time to waste in lazy conformism. And to add to the power of this call, Nietzsche also claims that the imperative *sei du selbst* is of decisive importance for our lives: he promises the rewards of true happiness and true freedom to those striving to fulfill it, while shirking this supreme responsibility amounts to leading an inhuman, animal, and utterly forgettable life. The conscience is, then, oriented much more on the future than on the past or the present – just as a healthy soul is ordered around a ruling passion and its project, a goal that is to be attained. On the basis of this correspondence between the

⁶ This is one of several points on which Nietzsche’s discussion of *sei du selbst* strikingly prefigures Heidegger’s conception of *Eigentlichkeit* in *SuZ*; cf. § 53. Also cf. § 58 on the role of *Gewissen*, which is likewise analogous to the *UB*; and there is also the more general parallel of characterizing human existence in terms of future-oriented projecting. However, a thorough examination of the influence of the *UB* on *SuZ* is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

conscience and the ruling desire of the soul we can understand conscience formally as a memory-based structure that is oriented on the future – more specifically, as structure that compares what one aims at, what one wants to be (and is not yet), with what one is now. It is in this sense (i.e. as compared with what we aim to be) that our very deeds and desires – the deeds and desires of our *present* selves – are not truly our own.⁷

This conscience clearly doesn't issue from any transcendent source, from any 'beyond'; it is rather a function of our psychological make-up. We need to highlight here another characteristic feature of conscience: namely that it is a peculiarly *negative* capacity. Conscience is much more likely to protest against the wrong deeds (i.e. such as do not lead to, or hinder the attaining of, the goal of our ruling passion) we are about to do than to actively guide us toward the right deeds. The same is true of conscience in the form of the imperative *sei du selbst*, which only tells us what our self is *not*. But how do we find out what we truly are, if our present self is a completely inadequate guide in this respect? If even something as fundamental to us as our desires, which structure the very world we live in (as we have seen in Chapter II.1), does not belong to what we truly are? It would seem that if what we currently desire is not what we are, then whatever we think we know of ourselves is simply a projection of what our current ruling desire would like to make of us. The question of self-knowledge – of *how* to understand ourselves, and of *whether* we can understand ourselves at all as more than whatever our current ruling desire tells us we are in the first place – is posed with great sharpness. Are we more than our ruling desire? Can we transcend that which seems to govern the very structures of our meaningfulness?

⁷ Conscience is understood in an analogous manner also in *FW* 270 and *JGB* 158.

Self-knowledge is the subject of the fourth paragraph of *SE* 1, where Nietzsche discusses two methods for getting to know ourselves.⁸ The first method consists in examining one’s present self, one’s inclinations, attributes, talents, and capacities, as one already possesses them. But this method doesn’t lead to the desired goal: in the course of such self-examination, one learns that he is “eine dunkle und verhüllte Sache” (1.340), and that beneath each layer of our soul we painstakingly explore there lies yet another one, and another one, and so on, without any clear endpoint to this process. Rather than leading us to its purported goal, this method of self-knowledge is a kind of *Irren* (cf. Heidegger 1976, 196–8; and *SuZ* § 9, p. 42). Furthermore, this method of self-examination carries the risk of damaging oneself so that no doctor can heal us, of permanently crippling our soul. I believe that such damage may easily issue from an excessive focus on various wild, dark passions⁹ that are naturally found in every human soul, but which would have very troubling implications if taken as a key testimony to who oneself as an individual is (cf. *Republic* 571c–d). This psychic damage may take either the form of despair over who one is and consequent distrust in and forceful curtailing of one’s passions (i.e. some form of asceticism to contain the hell one found within oneself), or conversely of defining oneself in terms of these wild desires and ordering one’s life around them, around the strongest and loudest but also basest, most animal forces within our soul. In the first case, one can no longer use the force of one’s passions for further growth; in the latter case, one loses the very sight of one’s self as something yet to be attained. In any case it means limiting our self-understanding only to the capacities we

⁸ With the exceptions of Tracy Strong (2000, 78) and Jeffrey Church (2015, 148), no previous commentator that I know of had pointed out that Nietzsche discusses *two* separate methods of self-knowledge here. Cf. Schacht (1995, 158), Breazeale (1998, 15), Lemm (2007b, 18), Franco (2018, 55), and Pearson (2018, 13).

⁹ “Dark” in the sense of being obscure, of lacking clarity. Cf. Patočka’s (1996, 98–101) description of “the dimension of the demonic and of passion” in which “we are *enraptured*” (ibid., 99), i.e. carried by a force stronger than ourselves over which we have little control or understanding. Patočka’s two main examples of such experiences are the sacred and the sexual.

already manifestly possess, thereby foreclosing the possibilities of growth which we may possess without yet being aware of them.

Nietzsche sees that this first method does not lead to a genuine, productive self-knowledge, and hence he goes back to the idea that everything we do, the way in which we act in things small and great, the way in which we order our lives, is a much better testimony and expression of who we are than whatever we can find by digging in the depths of our soul.¹⁰ But not everything we do is of equal importance, and hence the young souls are advised to look toward the most important things they have been doing so far, to ask themselves “was hast du bis jetzt wahrhaft geliebt, was hat deine Seele hinangezogen, was hat sie beherrscht und zugleich beglückt?” (1.340). After thinking back to what were their highest desiderata, the objects of their ruling passion(s), in their life so far, they are to order these in their temporal sequence (1.340–1):

Stelle dir die Reihe dieser verehrten Gegenstände vor dir auf, und vielleicht ergeben sie dir, durch ihr Wesen und ihre Folge, ein Gesetz, das Grundgesetz deines eigentlichen Selbst. Vergleiche diese Gegenstände, sieh, wie einer den andern ergänzt, erweitert, überbietet, verklärt, wie sie eine Stufenleiter bilden, auf welcher du bis jetzt zu dir selbst hingeklettert bist; denn dein wahres Wesen liegt nicht tief verborgen in dir, sondern unermesslich hoch über dir oder wenigstens über dem, was du gewöhnlich als dein Ich nimmst.

This meditation expressly engages our capacity to compare our goals with those of others (and with our own previous goals), and hence our true humanity, our character as the not-yet-determined animal. The self-knowledge which we get from it unites the two basic faculties of our soul, our desiring and our memory – it is an erotic-historic self-knowledge – and thereby it understands our true self as a dynamic, growing being, as a living being that partakes in the basic character of all life (cf. 1.269). It strives to give us clarity about ourselves – at least partial or

¹⁰ This idea was referred to already in *DS* (1.163) and *HL* (1.264). I take this view to be an early version of the famous dictum from *GM* I.13: “das Thun ist Alles”, and I believe – together with Church (2019, 141) – that Pippin’s (2010, ch. 4) interpretation of it as the doer being expressed in the deed can be applied also here. A theoretical basis for this view can be found in the note 19 [209] (7.483): “das Erste ist die *Handlung*, diese verknüpfen wir mit einer Eigenschaft”. This *verknüpfen* is the error of those who try to find themselves in the qualities deep within their souls.

provisional clarity, which is nevertheless a better guide than any other form of self-knowledge – by considering our ruling passions so far not in isolation, but in their relation to each other: by seeing how our later highest goals expand upon and supersede the earlier ones, we come to realize there is a certain directionality in their sequence, one that is likely to continue in the future.¹¹ It is a self-knowledge of a character that matches the nature of the soul that is its subject: it takes the soul on the terms of its own being, on terms of desiring and temporality, unlike the first way of self-knowledge that forces the soul into static, atemporal categories that are alien to it.

This method of self-knowledge that is adequate to the nature of the self in question also acts as a guidance for ordering our passions and guiding our growth: it gives us a certain critical distance from our present highest goal, an awareness that in the course of our life and growth it will likely be superseded by another, greater goal, just as the previous highest goals were. This however doesn't make our strivings meaningless: unlike the perspective of scientific history, which sees the history of human value systems as a sequence of so many errors, our past goals are seen here as integral parts of who we are, as stages of growth that were necessary (and whose overcoming was necessary) to arrive at who we are today and who we may become in the future. Thus, what we do, think, and desire today is not who we truly are, but these things are nevertheless crucial signposts to our true self that is immeasurably high above us. This true self is conceived as our genius, as "eine productive Einzigkeit" which is the "Kern unseres Wesens" (1.359), but which is usually tied down by the chains of conventions and fear, and is unknown to us to begin with.

¹¹ Church (2019, 142) misses this temporal dimension of our *Grundgesetz*. Conant (2001, 203) expresses this well: Nietzsche "pictures each of us as a series of such [higher] selves, each in flight from, and yet each also representing a stepping stone toward, its own unique, exemplary successor." He also points out that it is the future, higher self "for whom [Nietzsche] is writing", but of necessity it is our present self "to whom [Nietzsche] writes" (ibid.). There is no notion of "essential self" in *SE*, contrary to Franco's (2018, 55) view: the only thing essential to a true self is that it is a genius, and the only thing essential to a genius is, as we will see below, some form of redeeming insight.

The effect of following the imperative *sei du selbst*, of getting to know ourselves and following the path that the knowledge of ourselves and our highest desires so far indicates to us, is the ever-greater liberation (and hence expression) of our productive uniqueness, of the genius that lies dormant within us (e.g. 1.358).¹² Where exactly this process of liberation and self-cultivation¹³ will lead us is initially unknown to us – which is why our conscience can give us negative signs so much easier than positive ones – we do not yet know who we truly are, what our genius will turn out to be; we only know what to do to get there, what path to follow: namely the path of *sei du selbst*. On any other path “würdest [du] dich verpfänden und verlieren”; and on the contrary, “ein Mann erhebt sich niemals höher, als wenn er nicht weiss, wohin sein Weg ihn noch führen kann” (1.340).¹⁴

How is it possible to gain such a critical distance from one’s current highest goal, from that in the light of which the rest of our world is seen? It is because if one is willing to use this method of self-knowledge, one had already accepted (or at least entertained) Nietzsche’s claim that following the imperative *sei du selbst* is the path to the highest good, to the greatest humanly possible satisfaction. The striving to become oneself has become one’s new highest goal, and it effected an expansion of one’s world in which the previous highest good remains valid, but only provisionally so – only insofar it can still lead us further on the path to our true self. Becoming

¹² Cf. Goethe, *Betrachtungen im Sinne der Wanderer* 30 (*Werke* VIII.287): “denn nicht allein das, was mit uns geboren ist, sondern auch das, was wir erwerben können, gehört uns an, und wir sind es.” Also cf. William Arrowsmith’s footnote on the connection between Nietzsche’s usage of *Genius* with the Greek *daimon* in the sense of individual destiny or fate (Nietzsche 1990, 163n1). Unlike Pearson (2018, 15), I find no vacillation in the conception of the true self in the *UB*.

¹³ Contrary to Church’s (2019, 139–40) view, this is not a neo-Kantian act of self-determining freedom that is opposed to nature as the realm of necessity. It is rather a process of self-cultivation: the relation of nature and culture is understood here on the ancient model, in which culture means a cultivation of our natural capacities and thus is continuous with nature rather than diametrically opposed to it. The nature in question here is our ruling desire in its temporal development, and the main means of its cultivation that Nietzsche recognizes in the *UB* are, as we have seen, the three useful kinds of history.

¹⁴ This picture of becoming-oneself is in its basic principles in agreement with that presented in Richardson (2015).

what we are thus requires a suspension of judgment as regard to the goodness of any concrete goal, similar to Socrates' recommendation in the *Alcibiades II* (141c–3a). Such a doctrine – one that demands that one follow the imperative *sei du selbst* above everything else – requires a particular kind of audience. It requires people who have grown skeptical of the claims about the good life that are held up by their tradition or society (be it service to the state, a life of scholarship, or philistine 'culture') – for whom the good life has already become a *question*. However, unlike the “cynics” and “ironical existences” of *HL*, these people had not become desperate yet, and they still possess the passion to search and strive for the good life. They are thus still capable of ordering and unifying of the manifold forces within our souls.

The “young souls” are precisely this kind of people. Their “youth” doesn't mean they are strictly identical to young people; it means more than just that their nature hasn't yet been fully denatured by the philistine culture, as Church (2019, 127) thinks. On one hand, not every young person is necessarily a young soul; and on the other hand, some souls, such as Wagner's, become young only later in their life (1.436).¹⁵ Cavell (1990, 52) expresses this by saying that for Emerson¹⁶ and Nietzsche, “youth is not alone a phase of individual development but – like childhood for the earlier romantics – a dimension of human existence as such.” The fundamental mark of the young souls is that they are particularly attuned to the voice of their conscience that stresses their responsibility for leading their own life – “jede junge Seele hört diesen Zuruf [i.e. sei du selbst! ...] bei Tag und bei Nacht und erzittert dabei” (1.338) – unlike the lazy many, who avoid

¹⁵ In the letter to Wagner from 20 May 1874 (KGB II.3, 230), congratulating to his 61st birthday, Nietzsche wishes him that he may preserve his “Siegesmuth und Unerschütterlichkeit und *Jugend*”.

¹⁶ Cf. Conant (2001, 233–6, and endnotes 111–3) on the silent presence of Emerson – as another of Nietzsche's educators – throughout *SE*. Lampert (2017, 84–90) expands on this account: he argues that it was Emerson (and certainly not Schopenhauer) who educated Nietzsche on life-affirmation and on the overwhelming importance of philosophy for human life. He also discusses Nietzsche's later dissatisfaction with other aspects of Emerson's thought. Also cf. Parkes 1994, 35–42.

this voice by distracting themselves with various *divertissements*. This mysterious connection between youth and conscience, the extraordinary power of conscience over the young soul, has a direct bearing on two more visible characteristics of the young souls – first, their skepticism of or even contempt for the established forms of ‘good life’, about what is presented to them by their elders and authorities as the good life; and second, that they nevertheless harbor powerful hopes to lead a genuinely good and satisfying life one day – *hope*, a capacity that was stressed as proper to the young souls throughout *HL* (cf. 1.255, 277, 295–6, 304, 307, 312, 332). In the not-yet-published words of my friend Garrett Allen, “everything depends on the future with such men – and thus they are young.”¹⁷ This combination of passion for the best way of life and dismissal of what is publicly presented as the best way of life, of hope and contempt, makes them akin to Glaucon and Adeimantus, the thymotic interlocutors of Socrates in the *Republic*, who despite being skeptical of the traditional accounts of why it is good to be just nevertheless believe there is more to living well than amassing wealth, enjoying bodily pleasures, and prevailing over one’s enemies. That is why they demand of Socrates to explain them “of what profit is justice in itself to the man who possesses it, and what harm does injustice do” (*Republic* 367d), to explain why being just is a genuine good, disregarding the good reputation which normally accompanies it and which seems to be the only reward of justice in the conventional accounts. Just like Plato’s thymotic characters, the young souls desire the truly good life even without knowing what precisely it is. That is what their conscience leads them to: to reject the bad without knowing the good, to reject the conventional alleged goods for the sake of searching for the genuine but yet-unknown good.

¹⁷ Cf. Large 1994 on the general orientation of Nietzsche’s thought on the future and how this makes it ‘untimely’.

The young souls are Nietzsche's intended audience, they are those to whom above all others the *UB* are addressed. Knowing this, we are now in position to see how the rhetoric of the *UB* is designed to appeal to them. The main purpose of the *UB* is to attract and motivate the young souls to the tasks of self-cultivation and of promoting genuine external culture, which alone, Nietzsche tells them, can make their lives truly meaningful and give them what they seek and cannot find elsewhere. In *DS*, Nietzsche ruthlessly criticized the philistine pseudo-culture through the person of D.F. Strauss, its most prominent representative, and in *HL* he provided an incisive analysis of the forces that gave rise to and foster this 'culture' oriented on nothing beyond the comfortable life. In doing so, he was speaking to the anger and contempt of the young souls who are dissatisfied with what this 'culture' offers them and holds up as exemplary for them, even though they may not be able to articulate their dissatisfaction. His ruthless and (especially in *DS*) scathing criticisms of this 'culture' in effect tell the young souls: you are right to be angry and dissatisfied, you are right to be contemptuous of Strauss, *and here is why*. Nietzsche presents himself as the ally of the young souls, as one who accepts and understands their anger, and by thus validating this anger he strives to channel the energy that fuels it.¹⁸ This energy is nothing else but the young souls' passionate concern for living a truly – and not just conventionally¹⁹ – good life, which turned into anger because it is not listened to with the same seriousness with which they voice it.

¹⁸ I take this to be Nietzsche's main intention in writing *DS*, rather than attempting to "destroy" the said culture, as Church (2019, 60) thinks. There is only so much a polemical book review can accomplish in the latter regard.

¹⁹ Since the young souls reject the tradition they have been raised in, antiquarian appeals are of no interest to them – which is why Nietzsche systematically dismisses them in *SE* 1. The person who tells us that laziness is the most common human quality is a traveler, a man who knows many countries and peoples and so stands above their particularisms (1.337); and two pages later Nietzsche tells us in his own voice that "es ist so kleinstädtisch [i.e. petit-bourgeois], sich zu Ansichten verpflichten, welche ein paar hundert Meilen weiter schon nicht mehr verpflichten" (1.339).

Nietzsche believes that by listening to and validating the deepest concern of the young souls, by showing himself as their ally, they will give him a hearing in return. This explains the marked shift in tone between the two halves of the *UB* (noted by Gray 1995, 410; Brooks 2018, 12–3; and Church 2019, 1–2), between *DS* and *HL* on one hand, and *SE* and *WB* on the other. While in the first half he was getting the attention and friendship of the young souls, in the second half he will speak directly to the concern that underlies their anger and contempt. He will appeal to their (self-)love and to their desire for the truly high, for that which is truly worth living for. He will showcase two men who can serve as objects of the young souls' admiration and aspiration, who can serve as educating exemplars for them, two men who have attained their respective highest – Schopenhauer and Wagner, the philosopher and the artist. And he will lay out his own project of establishing a genuine cultural institution that is to be the core of transforming the German culture at large – a project in which he hopes to enlist the young souls. To summarize: the movement of the rhetoric of the *UB* is first to take up the anger of the young souls and channel it against the sources of their misery – against the unworthy pretenders for their devotion that populate modern 'culture'; and then to direct their passion in a productive manner, productive of both a good life for them (as Nietzsche understands it at this point) and of a genuine culture in general. And it is to the young souls in particular that the imperative *sei du selbst*, as the path to the best possible life, is addressed. Nietzsche himself tells us this about the rhetoric of the *UB* in the note 37 [5] from 1885 (11.579):

Abhandlungen schreibe ich nicht: die sind für Esel und Zeitschriften-Leser. Ebensowenig Reden. Meine „unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen“ richtete ich als junger Mensch an junge Menschen, welchen ich von meinen Erlebnissen und Gelöbnissen sprach, um sie in meine Labyrinth zu locken, — an deutsche Jünglinge: aber man überredet mich zu glauben, daß die deutschen Jünglinge ausgestorben seien. Wohlan: so habe ich keinen Grund mehr, in jener früheren Manier „beredt“ zu sein; heute — könnte ich es vielleicht nicht mehr.

III.2 The *Erzieher*

The fourth paragraph of *SE 1* transitions seamlessly from the erotic-historic method of self-knowledge to the importance of the figure of the *Erzieher* to the process of becoming what we are. It thus appears that when Nietzsche exhorts the young souls to look upon what they have loved the most so far, the principal kind of desideratum he seems to have in mind is people that we want to be like – that our principal desire is for some particular way of life. The *Erzieher* is such a desideratum, he is a person whom we love and admire; and Nietzsche will later describe a devotee of an *Erzieher* as a person who “sein Herz an irgend einen grossen Menschen gehängt hat” (1.385). The *Erzieher* thus is not a living person (at least not in the first place), but rather a mental image one forms of the person. Our desire is not for the possession of the *Erzieher* (for how could one possess a mental image?), but rather to *be like him*. The *Erzieher* is an aspirational example, a person who manifests our goals: he is an embodiment of who we want to become ourselves. Or, in other words, in loving and admiring our *Erzieher* we see who *we* want to become as if reflected in him; he is a mirror of our highest desideratum. Nietzsche himself says in the note 34 [13] (7.795) that he doesn’t believe to have understood Schopenhauer, “sondern nur mich selber habe ich durch Schopenhauer ein wenig besser verstehen gelernt; das ist es, weshalb ich ihm die grösste Dankbarkeit schuldig bin.”²⁰ Implicit in this understanding of the role of the *Erzieher* is the idea that what we can accomplish is inextricably bound up with who we are: only a Caesar can accomplish the deeds of Caesar, and only a Plato can compose the works of Plato.²¹ Thus, by

²⁰ As Conant (2001, 231–2) writes, “you ‘become who you are’ by learning to cultivate a trust in your (higher) self as it appears reflected in what you admire”. This idea can be traced back to the *Phaedrus* (255d–e), where the beloved sees himself reflected in his lover; here the process is reversed, we as lovers see our higher self reflected in what we love, in our “beloved”. In this regard it should be pointed out that this kind of erotic reflection is a mutual process for both Plato and Nietzsche.

²¹ The *Erzieher* can thus be considered a kind of a monumental example to oneself, and the way he affects the ordering of our souls explains the importance of such examples to would-be monumental men. This is true even if the *Erzieher*

loving and admiring the person who is our *Erzieher* we are learning what we have to become to accomplish what our ruling passion asks of us: how should we lead our life, and how should we order and orient our souls. By being an aspirational example, he serves as a point of orientation for our growth and for the ordering of our soul according to our task, according to the needs of our ruling passion.

The role of the *Erzieher* in the process of *sei du selbst* is, at the first sight, somewhat contradictory. The sentence that introduces this figure into the text tells us first that “deine wahren Erzieher und Bildner verrathen dir, was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist”, but it ends by a more modest claim: “deine Erzieher vermögen nichts zu sein als deine Befreier” (1.341). The *Erzieher* should tell us who we truly are despite being capable only of liberating us from the chains of fear and conventions; they should have insight into our true being that not even we ourselves know despite being concerned only with things external to our true self. However, this difficulty disappears when we keep in mind the status of the *Erzieher* as an aspirational example. In manifesting what kind of person we want to become and what kind of life we want to lead, he helps us to recognize and develop our “Wurzelkraft” (1.342), and to align the peripheral forces of our soul in harmony with the root force so that they may contribute to (and not disturb) the strivings of our ruling passion. In Nietzsche’s image, the example provided to us by our *Erzieher* serves “[um] den ganzen Menschen zu einem lebendig bewegten Sonnen- und Planetensysteme umzubilden und das Gesetz seiner höheren Mechanik zu erkennen” (1.343).²² The *Erzieher* reveals to us “was der wahre Ursinn und Grundstoff deines Wesens ist” by embodying what we have to become in order to accomplish our deepest desire (while keeping in

in question is not an actual, living person, but just a mental image or a fictional character; in this sense, Achilles was the *Erzieher* of Alexander the Great (cf. Machiavelli 1998, 60).

²² Cf. Neymeyr (2020, 2.66–70) on Schiller and Goethe as forerunners and influences of this idea.

mind, in accordance with the logic of *sei du selbst*, that it is our deepest desire only for the time being). He accomplishes his other task, being our “Befreier”, by helping us understand what is essential to our project and what is accidental to it – what is just conventional ballast that we need to get rid of if we are to reach what is immeasurably high above us. This is why Nietzsche uses the term *Erzieher*: his purpose in our self-cultivation is *er-ziehen* (translating the Latin *e-ducare*), i.e. “drawing out” what is already present in some way, by the means of being an example for us to admire and to aspire to – and not *Lehrer*, i.e. a teacher of some doctrine (cf. Schacht 1990, 153).²³ But since the *Erzieher* is in the end just a mental image, the work of education is fundamentally self-education, and self-cultivation means not just the cultivation of our self, but also a cultivation that we have to do by and for ourselves and that cannot be delegated to anyone else.²⁴ The *Erzieher* can provide invaluable help in this effort, but only help. *We* are responsible for the leading of our own life, and no one else can either take this responsibility away from us or relieve us of this burden (provided one refuses the philistine option of *divertissement*).

Nietzsche describes Schopenhauer as his own *Erzieher*. Further underscoring the character of the *Erzieher* as primarily a mental image, Nietzsche admits he never actually met Schopenhauer – he only read his books (1.350). Schopenhauer died when Nietzsche was fifteen years old: he

²³ Conant (2001, 220 and endnotes 83 and 86) traces this conception of the *Erzieher* first to 18th-century German Classicism (Winckelmann, Wieland, Goethe, Schiller, Schlegel), and then further to Hellenistic thinkers like Epictetus or Plotinus. Strong (2000, esp. 76–7) traces this conception even further into the past, namely to the paiderastic educative relationships of Classical Antiquity, and particularly to the concerns about the relation of *eros* and knowledge that are articulated in Plato’s *Protagoras*. Cf. the note 8 [73] (7.250), entitled *φιλία und παιδεία*, where Nietzsche remarks “Sappho Ausgangspunkt: die Erotik in Verbindung mit Erziehung”.

²⁴ Brooks (2018, ch. 4) has no understanding of this central point. He takes the issue of self-knowledge to mean simply the knowledge whether we are a ‘superior’ or an ‘inferior’ self, these selves existing in a rigid hierarchical structure. He can thus say sentences like “when ordinary people live under the influence of a superior self like Schopenhauer” (ibid., 144); or think that self-knowledge is ultimately, for most people, a knowledge of their flaws and deficiencies, i.e. of the being an ‘inferior’ self (ibid., 153–4); or even misread the third paragraph of *SE* 5 to the effect that “ordinary human beings are like animals compared to the genius” (ibid., 177n93). The entire dimension of self-cultivation through the mental image of the *Erzieher* whom we love and admire, and the notion of the higher self as *our own* higher self that lies immeasurably high above us, which are central to my reading of *SE* and which in my opinion make this essay supremely beautiful and fascinating, is absent from Brooks’ interpretation. Cf. fn. 49 below.

never heard of Nietzsche and never said anything about him or to him. Nietzsche reports he discovered his books in a situation of loneliness and helplessness vis-à-vis an age that couldn't satisfy or even recognize his deepest need (1.346) – the same situation in which he expects the young souls to be when they discover the *UB*.²⁵ Schopenhauer is presented as answering to precisely this need,²⁶ and that's why Nietzsche is so devoted to him: he claims that “mein Vertrauen zu ihm war sofort da und ist jetzt noch dasselbe wie vor neun Jahren” and, even more implausibly, that “ich nie in ihm eine Paradoxie gefunden habe” (1.346).²⁷ Nietzsche tells us that “ich mache mir aus einem Philosophen gerade so viel als er im Stande ist ein Beispiel zu geben”,

²⁵ Nietzsche's commentaries on his own rhetoric in *HL* – that in it he takes revenge on the suffering caused by his historical education by describing it (1.246), and his criticism of the “Unmässigkeit ihrer Kritik” and its “Charakter der schwachen Persönlichkeit” (1.324) – can be read not just as honest self-criticisms, but also as ways of highlighting his kinship with the young souls. These passages show Nietzsche as someone who was in the same position as the young souls are now, but who found a way out of it – and thus he can lead the young souls by both example and instruction. Unlike Gray (1995, 404), I find nothing “bitterly ironic” about this self-critique: it is a mark of a good writer that he's aware of his weaknesses and is willing to learn and improve. Neymeyr (2020, 1.295) reports that in the period of the *UB*, Nietzsche was purposefully studying and teaching rhetoricians, both ancient and modern, in order to improve his own writing style. For a full list of Nietzsche's teaching activities in this respect, cf. Most & Fries (1994, 17n1). For the text of the extant lectures, cf. KGW II.4, 363 ff.

²⁶ The Goethe quotation Nietzsche uses to express his excitement upon discovering Schopenhauer at 1.349 – “Was ist doch ein Lebendiges für ein herrliches köstliches Ding! wie abgemessen zu seinem Zustande, wie wahr, wie seiend!” – is rather cryptic. Goethe wrote these words in the context of observing *Patellen* and *Taschenkrebse* on a beach in Venice during the ebb (*Italienische Reise, Werke XI.92–4*). The crabs were attempting to hunt the *Patellen*, but these always managed to hide in their shells. Goethe concludes that although he observed the animals “stundenlang”, he didn't see a single crab succeed in the hunt. Is Schopenhauer compared here to an incompetent crab, or to a careful *Patelle*?

²⁷ These and similar claims are clearly rhetorical. Nietzsche had been profoundly critical of central aspects of Schopenhauer's thought already in 1868 (Janaway 2003, 162–3), and certainly even more so six years later, by the time of writing *SE*. Indeed, in *MA II Vorrede 1* (2.370), Nietzsche relates that at the time of writing *SE* he was “schon mitten in der moralistischen Skepsis und Auflösung drin [...] und glaubte bereits ‘an gar nichts mehr’, wie das Volk sagt, auch an Schopenhauer nicht”. And in the note 10 [B31] (9.418–9), he says that in *SE* he temporarily forgot “daß bereits seit langem keines seiner Dogmen meinem Mißtrauen Stand gehalten hatte” in order to fully express his gratitude to Schopenhauer. The purpose of the claims made about Schopenhauer in *SE* is to present him as an exemplary philosopher, a position to which Nietzsche, at the time a twenty-nine-year-old professor of philology, cannot at this point publicly pretend. The emphasis in *SE* is clearly on Schopenhauer the man rather than the thinker, on his exemplary character and courage to live in his own way. This favorable view of his character persists throughout Nietzsche's career: as late as in *GM III.5*, Schopenhauer the man is described as “ein wirklicher Philosoph [...], ein wirklich auf sich gestellter Geist [...], ein Mann und Ritter mit erzenem Blick, der den Muth zu sich selber hat, der allein zu stehn weiss und nicht erst auf Vordermänner und höhere Winke wartet”. Also cf. the note 28 [11] (11.303).

which example “muss durch das sichtbare Leben [...] gegeben werden” (1.350; cf. 1.417).²⁸ That is why Nietzsche sought to learn from Schopenhauer not so much his doctrines, but above all how to live, i.e. how to order one’s life according to one’s thought – how to establish a philosophic way of life, the kind that ancient philosophers had led. Kant, having lived the conformist and conventional life of a university professor offers no such example despite the profundity of his thought (1.351, 414); in this regard he is a case of the modern ‘split personality’, for which the ‘content’ of one’s soul has no effect on the outwardly lived life. In contrast, Nietzsche learned from Schopenhauer “*einfach und ehrlich, im Denken und Leben, also unzeitgemäss zu sein*” (1.346). The simplicity means here living according to a single law of one’s own; the honesty means, as the continuation of the quoted sentence shows, a kind of transparency to oneself that is impossible for the chaotic, uncultivated modern souls; and insofar this widespread lack of spiritual culture is a phenomenon peculiar to the present age, as Nietzsche’s account tells us, it is *unzeitgemäss* to pursue and attain even a certain degree of such culture. Schopenhauer is for Nietzsche an aspirational example of the philosophic genius, of the attained *sei du selbst* of a philosopher. Herein lies his greatness, which means simply “frei und ganz er selbst zu sein” (1.362).

Of particular interest to Nietzsche are Schopenhauer’s three virtues, which enabled him to overcome the dangers inherent to being a philosopher. The first of these dangers is *Vereinsamung*, the solitude that is imposed on the philosopher (and on all “*ungewöhnliche Menschen*” in general – 1.352) by the modern pseudo-culture that feels threatened by everyone and everything that challenges its sense of self-satisfied superiority. Schopenhauer suffered by being ignored and

²⁸ Neymeyr (2020, 2.90, 2.272) shows that this is a completely un-Schopenhauerian attitude. *M* 195 takes up this motive: “Fehlte nicht überhaupt das ganze Nachdenken über Moral in unserer Erziehung, um wieviel mehr gar die einzig mögliche Kritik desselben, jene strengen und muthigen Versuche, in dieser oder jener Moral zu *leben*?”

shunned by his contemporaries, by having the first edition of *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* pulped, and – worst of all, according to Nietzsche – by being mistaken for somebody he was not (1.354). He resisted all these sufferings thanks to his virtue of *Beständigkeit*, thanks to his ability to persevere in his work, which derived from his awareness of the importance of what he had to teach. His second danger was *Verzweiflung an der Wahrheit*, the post-Kantian doubt of whether we can get to know the truth at all. Schopenhauer was able to overcome this danger – by arguing that we do in fact have an access to the thing-in-itself, and that it is the Will (cf. *WWV I*, § 21; *Werke I*.170) – and thus he was able to see and interpret the image of life as a whole. This interpretation of the whole of being allowed him to see it as meaningful, and to see one’s own life as a particular instance of the meaningful process of life; in Nietzsche’s words, his philosophy tells us “dies ist das Bild alles Lebens, und daraus lerne den Sinn deines Lebens. Und umgekehrt” (1.357).²⁹ Had Schopenhauer not conquered this danger, he would have become a “pure scientist” without any concern for the meaning of human life and how it should be lived (1.360); but because he had “das Schwerste durch Denken besiegt” (1.350), he attained his second virtue, *Heiterkeit*, the cheerfulness of one who knows himself to be living in accordance with the essence of life as such. From this root stems also Schopenhauer’s own ambition to be an educator, to spread the knowledge of being as a whole and of life in accordance with it that he had attained; his aim in this respect was (1.357)

Macht zu gewinnen, um durch sie der Physis nachzuhelfen und ein wenig Corrector ihrer Thorheiten und Ungeschickheiten zu sein. Zunächst zwar auch nur für sich selbst; durch sich aber endlich für Alle.

²⁹ Indeed, for Schopenhauer, the Will, which is the thing-in-itself and the essence of the world, is at the same time “jenes jedem unmittelbar Bekannte [Ding]” (*WWV I*, § 18; *Werke I*.157). Thus the understanding of the essence of things goes hand in hand with the understanding of the meaning of one’s own life.

Schopenhauer educates others out of his philanthropy, out of his love for humans and especially for the most promising humans, whom he wants to help live the life of genius they are most capable of. Thus he, like other philosophers, is one of those who “weil sie das Tiefste gedacht, gerade das Lebendigste lieben müssen”, as Nietzsche tells us in paraphrasing Hölderlin’s poem *Sokrates und Alcibiades* (1.349). Schopenhauer’s third danger was “Verhärtung, im Sittlichen oder im Intellektuellen” (1.360) – the danger of recognizing the limitations of one’s self (in Schopenhauer’s case, that he wasn’t able to become a saint) and of subsequently becoming desperate and “im Sinne der Cultur schwächlich oder unnütz” (1.360), no longer striving to produce the various forms of genius within and without oneself. Schopenhauer overcame this danger thanks to his virtue of *Ehrlichkeit*: he was able to see his limitations clearly and to accept himself as he was, including his limits. In sum, Schopenhauer’s three virtues mark him as a knower of the whole, as a knower of himself, and as a practical man who strives to spread his knowledge and enrich others with it.

Besides the services that an *Erzieher* can provide to an individual, he can also play a more general role within the culture at large. The present age lacks “sittliche Vorbilder” and anyone who could serve as “der sichtbare Inbegriff aller schöpferischen Moral” (1.344). This role is especially needed now due to the weakness of present-day culture, in which there are no longer institutions that would provide a young soul with a basis for self-cultivation such as education in speaking and writing (1.343), and with a like-minded community of peers. The contemporary *Gymnasia* and private teachers fall short of this task in Nietzsche’s view, as does the scientific education at the universities, whose deleterious consequences for the health of one’s soul were discussed at length in *HL*. In the absence of such exemplary men and of genuine cultural institutions, the contemporary Germans turn to other forces that pretend to tell them how to lead their life, such as the “neuerdings von allen Dächern gepredigte Lehre, dass der Staat das höchste Ziel der Menschheit sei” (1.365).

The sciences are “ohne jedes Maass und im blindesten *laissez faire* betrieben”, and the ever more influential “Geldwirthschaft” seeks to gain money by catering to every human desire, no matter how low or base (1.366). The root cause of this cultural crisis is the death of God. Christianity has made the ancient ethical teachings inadequate “durch die Höhe seines Ideals” (1.345), the ideal of a virtue so great that man can attain it only by God’s grace. But the Christian hold on culture has gradually weakened and it has survived the Reformation only by declaring many fields of human activity to be *adiaphora*, i.e. “Gebiete, die nicht von dem religiösen Gedanken bestimmt werden sollten” (1.367).³⁰ Christianity has ultimately weakened to the point of no longer being believable, but its critique of ancient ethics made it impossible to return to the latter; this crisis is, as evident from the phrase used to characterize it – “als man das Bessere und Höhere zwar noch erkannte, aber nicht mehr vermochte, konnte man zum Guten und Hohen, nämlich zu jener antiken Tugend nicht zurück” – an instance of the problem inherent to critical history (1.345; cf. 1.270). The two greatest cultural systems of the past have vacated the field and there is nothing to replace them, apart from idols such as the state or science. These, however, not only cannot provide genuine culture, but they also cannot contain “wilde, ursprüngliche und ganz und gar unbarmherzige” forces within the human soul – at best they can give them direction occasionally, say, into a war – and thus, Nietzsche says, “seit einem Jahrhundert sind wir auf lauter fundamentale Erschütterungen vorbereitet” (1.367). The most likely of these fundamental convulsions is what Nietzsche calls “atomistische Revolution” (1.368) here: the victory of the moneymakers and of the market over all other social structures, the pursuit of ever greater profit by feeding any and every

³⁰ Nietzsche thinks that already the victory of Christianity “gegen das viel religiösere Alterthum” (1.368) was won only at the price of declaring some fields of human activity *adiaphora*; he seems to have in mind a conception of ancient religiosity similar to that of Fustel de Coulanges (1980).

human desire and selling some satisfaction to it, and the consequent dissolution of society into individuals (or, in keeping with Nietzsche's metaphor, nuclear families at best).

Nietzsche isn't the first to notice these tendencies of cultural decay, nor is he the first who attempts to counteract them. He discusses three previous attempts to provide a new model for human self-cultivation, a new "*Bild des Menschen*" (1.368): Rousseau's, Goethe's, and Schopenhauer's. Rousseau's man is a passionate rebel against the modern society with its inequality and corruption, and as such he is the inspiring force behind socialist revolutions.³¹ He strives for a 'return to nature', which he cannot attain – but hereby "verachtet er sich und sehnt sich über sich selbst hinaus" (1.369), and so contributes to the growth and expansion of man. Nietzsche says that Goethe's "Faust war das höchste und kühnste Abbild vom Menschen Rousseau's" (1.370);³² but this image of man fails properly to promote culture because of its denial of any limits to human malleability, which gave rise to the culture-hostile socialism (Zuckert 1970, 118).³³ The image of man provided by Goethe's own life is much calmer: he is "der beschauliche Mensch im hohen Stile" (1.370) who finds his joy in examining the greatest achievements of humanity so far, be it in art, science, or political action. However, in striving to avoid the excesses of Rousseau's revolutionary man, he ended up being ineffectual: if he attempts something practical, "so kann man sicher sein, dass nichts Rechtes dabei herauskommt" (1.371), as Nietzsche

³¹ His kinship with revolutions shows that he doesn't correspond most closely to monumental history, as Zuckert (1976, 75) and Church (2019, 160) believe, but rather to critical history. Goethe's man then (roughly) corresponds to antiquarian history, and Schopenhauer's man to monumental history. But in a deeper sense, all these images of man are 'monumental' exemplars – not for action, but rather for self-cultivation.

³² Zuckert (1976, 74–5) and Brooks (2018, 149) misread the text as saying that Faust is Goethe's image of man. While this can be in a limited sense said of Faust from *Faust II*, Goethe himself is a better embodiment of this image.

³³ Culture is the cultivation of nature, while socialism wishes to radically transform man as we know him for the sake of an alleged future state of full human perfection and happiness. Human nature as we know it now is of no interest to this project: it is conceived of as either irrelevant to the human spirit or as corrupted by the oppressive conditions under which present-day humans live.

illustrates on Goethe's engagement with the theatre.³⁴ As such he also failed to overturn the modern pseudo-culture, and so he didn't become the founder of a new culture either. Quite the opposite: the philistines are the degenerate form of Goethe's man, a form in which his major weakness is magnified even further. Thus, both Rousseau and Goethe have ultimately failed in the task to establish a new ground for culture in the modern times. Rousseau failed because his revolutionary zeal went so far as to fight not just against the corruption of modern culture, but against modern culture as such, and thus also against all in it that is conducive to a genuine culture; and Goethe failed because his zeal wasn't sufficient to remove anything at all. If the third – Schopenhauer's – image of man is to succeed where Rousseau and Goethe failed, it will have both to take up human passion, and to direct it so that it will be conducive to genuine culture and hostile only to pseudo-culture. And besides this practical task, the Schopenhauerian image of the man will also show us what Schopenhauer's understanding of life as a whole is, and of the human life that is in accordance with it.

III.3 The 'Schopenhauerian' Affirmation

In *SE* 3, Nietzsche reiterates the idea introduced in *HL* 6 that justice in the sense of legislating the value of all things is one of the chief tasks of the philosopher: “denn das ist die eigenthümliche Arbeit aller grossen Denker gewesen, Gesetzgeber für Maass, Münze und Gewicht der Dinge zu sein” (1.360). This task ultimately demands that the thinker determine not just the worth of all individual things, but of being as a whole. On Nietzsche's account, Schopenhauer

³⁴ For Goethe's own account of his failure as a theatre director, see the conversation from 27 March 1825 (Eckermann 2011, 553): “Ich hatte wirklich einmal den Wahn, als sei es möglich, ein deutsches Theater zu bilden. Ja ich hatte den Wahn, als könne ich selber dazu beitragen und als könne ich zu einem solchen Bau einige Grundsteine legen. Ich schrieb meine Iphigenie und meinen Tasso und dachte in kindischer Hoffnung, so würde es gehen. Allein es regte sich nicht und rührte sich nicht und blieb Alles wie zuvor.”

succeeded in this task: he set up before him the picture of life as a whole, and answered the question it posed to him (1.363):

Bejahst denn *du* im tiefsten Herzen dieses Dasein? Genügt es dir? Willst du sein Fürsprecher, sein Erlöser sein? Denn nur ein einziges wahrhaftiges Ja! aus deinem Munde – und das so schwer verklagte Leben soll frei sein.

The peak of the legislative task of the philosopher is deciding whether life is worth living at all, and the proper measure for making this decision is not any given miserable human life, but the highest kind of life, the life of the philosopher himself. It is only the highest human life that can redeem the misery of existence that Schopenhauer saw with such clarity, as will be shown in *SE* 5. And his answer to this question was “die Antwort des Empedokles” (1.363), i.e. an *affirmative* answer: insofar as life allows for the existence of the philosopher, it is worth living, and this highest possibility redeems all human (and animal) misery.³⁵ In fact, Nietzsche tells us, this is not just the answer of ‘Schopenhauer’ and Empedocles, but of all the great pre-Platonic thinkers, regardless of all the other differences in their thought (1.361). The question now is: how did ‘Schopenhauer’ arrive at the position from which he was able to affirm and thereby redeem life? What kind of life possesses the ability and the will to make so serious a judgment?

³⁵ It is remarkable, as Lampert (2017, 83) emphasizes, that this is the answer of *Empedocles* and not that of the actual Schopenhauer, who famously preached “die Nichtigkeit des Lebens” (cf. *Werke* I.422–47; II.733–754; V.334–60) and thought that “unser Zustand ist ein so elender, daß gänzlich Nichtsein ihm entschieden vorzuziehen wäre”, as he puts it in his approving comment on Hamlet’s “To be, or not to be” soliloquy (*Werke* I.445). The “answer of Empedocles”, as Nietzsche understood it, can be found in his lectures on the pre-Platonic philosophers (KGW II.4, 314–28). Although Empedocles was very sensitive to the many sufferings of existence (which are the consequence of *veikos*, the principle of strife), his fundamental idea was “daß *alles Lebende eins sei*” (ibid., 317) thanks to the opposing principle of love or Aphrodite (ibid., 323). Furthermore, he saw it “als die Aufgabe seines Daseins” to preach this knowledge and the way of life that follows from it, and thereby “das wieder gut zu machen, was das *veikos* schlimm gemacht habe” (ibid., 317–8) – to redeem the entirety of existence. This misdirection from Schopenhauer to Empedocles on Nietzsche’s part is an example of the tension between his use of Schopenhauer as the exemplary philosopher and his rejection of the core of Schopenhauer’s actual thought. Schopenhauer is connected with Empedocles also in *WB* (1.446). Consequently it is not true that the Schopenhauerian man *prima facie* denies the value of existence and therefore needs to be supplemented by Goethe’s and Rousseau’s men, as Church (2019, 168) thinks; I rather take the Schopenhauerian image of man as *the* image of the good life in the *UB*.

One part of the answer is Schopenhauer's *Unzeitgemässheit*, his ability to overcome the "Zeitgefahren" stemming from the "Unwerthe der gegenwärtigen Zeit" (1.360–1). In order to give a just verdict about the worth of existence as such, Schopenhauer's view must not have been clouded by the lowliness of philistine 'culture' that surrounded him. More importantly, he struggled against everything within himself that was actually a product of his time and thereby hindered him from attaining his proper greatness, i.e. being "frei und ganz er selbst" (1.362). It is because being truly oneself requires liberation from the opinions and conventions of one's time – which form, as it were, the dross under which one's true self is smothered and unable to develop itself – that a great thinker is a "Stiefkind" (1.362) of their time rather than its child, as the vulgar Hegelians would have it.³⁶ At this point we can reconstruct the full meaning of the term *unzeitgemäss*. In *DS* it meant "die Wahrheit zu sagen" (1.242), which means not just speaking the truth, but in the first place also wanting the truth rather than comforting *divertissements*. In *HL* (1.246–7) it took the form of the critique of the *zeitgemäss*, especially of the historical education that was the pride of contemporary Germany. The purpose of this critique was to work "gegen die Zeit und dadurch auf die Zeit und hoffentlich zu Gunsten einer kommenden Zeit", i.e. toward the overcoming of the *zeitgemäss*. In *SE* it means the cultivation of one's soul (1.346) and the removal of the *zeitgemäss* conventions and opinions (1.362) that are a major obstacle to be overcome in the process of *sei du selbst*. Being *unzeitgemäss* is thus a byword for Nietzsche's overall aspirations in the *UB*: it refers primarily to *wanting* the truth, i.e. to truthfulness and the self-cultivation that goes hand in hand with it (and that is necessary to bear the truth); and secondarily to *speaking* the

³⁶ "Die größten Menschen hängen immer mit ihrem Jahrhundert durch eine Schwachheit zusammen" (Goethe, *Maximen und Reflexionen* 97, *Werke* XII.378). Similarly in *Wa* Vorwort: "Was verlangt ein Philosoph am ersten und letzten von sich? Seine Zeit in sich zu überwinden, ‚zeitlos‘ zu werden. Womit also hat er seinen härtesten Strauss zu bestehn? Mit dem, worin gerade er das Kind seiner Zeit ist."

truth, i.e. to the critique of the contemporary pseudo-culture and to the public project of cultural renewal that Nietzsche hopes to initiate here.

In *SE*, the emphasis is on the aspect of liberation from *zeitgemäss* conventions as the path to one's true self – for “sobald [Schopenhauer] die Zeit in sich besiegt hatte, musste er auch, mit erstauntem Auge, den Genius in sich erblicken” (KSA 1.363; cf. 1.338). This leads us to the question of the philosophic genius himself, and how does he fulfill his task. This question is to be answered by the depiction of the Schopenhauerian man, which is meant to be an account of how the philosophic genius arrives at the position from which the whole can be judged, affirmed and redeemed. The basic formula by which Nietzsche summarizes his activity is that the Schopenhauerian man “*nimmt das freiwillige Leiden der Wahrhaftigkeit an sich*” (1.371), and uses this suffering as a means to mortify his will to life. This denial of the will in turn allows him to attain a higher kind of existence, for which the affirmation of life will be possible. The lengthy quotation from Schopenhauer at 1.373 characterizes this as a heroic – or tragic – life, which ends in something akin to the Buddhist *nirvana*. The beginning of his activity is adopting the imperative *sei du selbst* as his highest goal and deciding to pursue it regardless of anything else: he promises to himself “*ich will mein bleiben!*” (1.374). Carrying out this decision in one's life has several significant consequences. First, it leads to the intensification of one's passion, and thus also of one's suffering (since all desiring involves suffering from the lack of the desired object, which is not just Schopenhauer's doctrine – cf. *WWV* I, § 56; *Werke* I.425 – but is known already since Plato, at least as far as bodily pleasures are concerned: cf. *Republic* 584e–5b). Second, it leads to the rejection of all *divertissements* by which ordinary humans keep themselves ignorant both of the voice of their conscience, and of the sufferings that are inherent in their existence; and giving up these protective devices further intensifies the Schopenhauerian man's suffering. However, he

doesn't desire suffering for its own sake – or at all – he desires only to become who he is. Thus he is led to meditate on the two main subjects of his attention, on his individuality and on his suffering, and on their mutual relation: “wie bin ich so geworden wie ich bin und weshalb leide ich denn an diesem So-sein?” (1.374).

In his meditation he will understand the manifold kinds of suffering to which he is subjected. Besides those mentions above, he suffers also because his striving alienates his fellow men from him, even those dear to him: he appears unjust to them, a malicious destroyer of what they love and value (1.372–3). But his greatest sufferings arise directly from his striving for the truth, from his voluntary shedding of the life-supporting illusions and exposure to the deadly truth. The Schopenhauerian man believes that “wahrhaftig sein heisst an ein Dasein glauben, welches überhaupt nicht verneint werden könnte” (1.372), which means that he seeks to find a permanent, eternal being that would give a stable ground to his existence, and conversely he denies in thought every non-permanent, transitory thing. But insofar as he fails to find a truly permanent, *unvergängliches* being, he finds himself ever more without any support for his striving. His own striving to *sei du selbst* and to know the truth begins to appear senseless to him, however noble he may have considered it at the beginning. The more he strives to be himself, the more meaningless his life appears. Thus he comes to understand the futility of all desiring: desiring as such is essentially unsatisfiable striving, and therefore senseless suffering. And since desiring is the basic characteristic of all life, life as such bears the essential character of senseless suffering (cf. *WWV* I, § 56; *Werke* I.426). This is most evident in the case of animals, especially beasts of prey, who are constantly on the move, looking to kill in order to satisfy their hunger, only to prolong their life and experience the hunger again and again, until they eventually die. The life of the animal is a bad infinity, a perpetual vicious circle of suffering from hunger that can be temporarily satiated

only at the cost of exposing one to another bout of hunger, and so on and on and on, until death (1.378):

So blind und toll am Leben zu hängen, um keinen höhern Preis, ferne davon zu wissen, dass und warum man so gestraft wird, sondern gerade nach dieser Strafe wie nach einem Glücke mit der Dummheit einer entsetzlichen Begierde zu lechzen — das heisst Thier sein[.]

Only man has the capacity to understand that *this* is the essence of life, to break free from this vicious circle, and thereby to effect the “Erlösung [der Natur] vom Fluche des Thierlebens” (1.378). However, the vast majority of humans come nowhere near this redemptive understanding. They rather spend their lives in the thrall of their various desires and goals, such as service to the state, military victories, scholarship, or revenge against their enemies; to these goals they assign a value they absolutely do not deserve, being transitory and offering no real satisfaction, only perpetuating the vicious circle of suffering. Moreover, they don’t just fail to realize that this is the case, but in a sense actively avoid this realization with the help of the omnipresent *divertissements*: because “die weitläufigsten Anstalten unseres Lebens nur gemacht werden, um vor unserer eigentlichen Aufgabe zu fliehen” (1.379). The lives of most humans thus run in the same vicious circle as the life of an animal. Seen from this perspective, man only “mit mehr Bewusstsein will, was das Thier im blinden Drange sucht” (1.378). And thus, Nietzsche concludes, “wir selbst sind die Thiere, die sinnlos zu leiden scheinen” (1.378).³⁷

However, human life does contain the possibility to liberate oneself from this vicious circle, and this possibility arises precisely from the meditation on the suffering of existence undertaken by the Schopenhauerian man. His meditation on the nature of his existence leads him to the

³⁷ Cf. *Republic* 586a–b. This account is said by Socrates to apply only to those ruled by their *epithymia*, but insofar as we all are embodied beings with bodily *epithymiai*, we all partake in this kind of suffering. In the note 3 [64] (8.32–3) Nietzsche expands on how such an ordinary existence – what we call today “being a productive member of society” – partakes in the character of the bad infinity: such existences “haben *alle keinen Zweck in sich, zu existiren; und dies ‘für einander existiren’* ist die komischste Komödie”.

realization that life is essentially unsatisfiable striving and hence meaningless suffering. This is the tragic moment,³⁸ the catastrophe, in the spiritual drama of the Schopenhauerian man. All his passionate striving and all his suffering led to nothing – to something worse than nothing: to the realization of how futile his striving and all the sacrifices he had undergone for its sake had been all along. The only thing left for him to do is resignation: to deny his will and give up all attempts to attain happiness. But at this point, at the point of tragic defeat and resignation of all willing, a momentous transformation occurs: he becomes aware that his insight into the essential nature of life is precisely the kind of permanent, unchanging truth that encompasses the whole of being he had been looking for all along³⁹ – the truth that reality is essentially the blindly striving Will that can never attain any genuine satisfaction.⁴⁰ This insight carries with itself a happiness unlike anything that satisfaction of a desire can provide: while the satisfaction of a desire is always temporary and only spurs one to go further along the vicious circle of desiring, this insight lifts us above the stream of the otherwise sovereign becoming and liberates us from the slavery to the blindly desiring Will. This insight into the whole of life tells us the meaning of our own life (cf. 1.357): by comprehending the nature of the whole, we realize that the only genuine happiness and understanding that there is lies in denial of the will, in refusing to follow the vicious circle of desiring any longer. This insight is (1.380)

³⁸ In contrast, the ordinary humans are thoroughly untragic: a person who rejected the imperative *sei du selbst* and thereby “seinem Genius ausgewichen ist”, is “ein verbrämtes Gespenst, das nicht einmal Furcht und gewiss auch kein Mitleiden erregen kann” (1.338; cf. Aristotle, *On Poetics*, 1452b33–4)

³⁹ Thus I disagree with Church’s (2019, 167) view that “Nietzsche humanizes being”, i.e. that “by ‘being’ Nietzsche means ‘being what [one] is’, being my own unique ideal self”. This view effectively turns our ‘true self’ – an entity that *zunächst und zumeist* exists only as a projection of our present self – into an eternal and unchanging Platonic Idea. I likewise disagree that for Nietzsche of the *UB*, “we do not discover being, but create eternal forms that liberate us” (ibid., 227), if only for the absurdity of *creating* something *eternal*.

⁴⁰ It has to be emphasized that this redeeming insight is not merely discursive; it is transformative of how we understand and conduct ourselves in our life. It has this quality precisely because it was won from the meditation on one’s ownmost selfhood and suffering; without this it would be just a metaphysical doctrine among many others.

die grosse *Aufklärung* über das Dasein; und der höchste Wunsch, den Sterbliche wünschen können, ist, andauernd und offenen Ohr's an dieser Aufklärung theilzunehmen.

The person who has attained this “great enlightenment as to the character of existence” completes and redeems the entirety of nature, which “sich zum Menschen hindrängt” for precisely this purpose (1.378). In this “great enlightenment”, nature “fühlt sich zum ersten Male am Ziele, dort nämlich, wo sie begreift, dass sie verlernen müsse, Ziele zu haben” (1.380): she understands that the only way out of the vicious circle of willing and desiring is to resign at it altogether, to deny the Will and to enjoy the peace resulting from this denial. In this manner the genius, i.e. the person who had attained the “great enlightenment”, redeems not just himself from the sufferings that are inherent to his life and to the striving to *sei du selbst* (which, it has to be stressed, is a necessary prerequisite to attaining this insight),⁴¹ but redeems the entirety of nature from the suffering that is inherent to life as such: in him as the peak of all life and nature a genuine understanding and happiness is attained, and life as a whole thereby ceases to be merely unsatisfiable striving and thus senseless suffering. The existence of the genius thus gives meaning to – *justifies* – the existence of everything else: the whole is made meaningful by the redeeming insight of the genius.

Nietzsche describes the geniuses as “jene wahrhaften *Menschen, jene Nicht-mehr-Thiere, die Philosophen, Künstler, und Heiligen*” (1.380): through denial of their will and the subsequent “great enlightenment” they have transcended mere animality and attained real or full humanity. They exemplify different forms of the highest possible human life. In accordance with Schopenhauer's doctrine,⁴² Nietzsche distinguishes three kinds of such genius here: the

⁴¹ Nietzsche says this explicitly in the note 32 [67], 7.778: “derselbe Muth, der dazu gehört sich selbst zu kennen, lehrt auch das Dasein ohne Flausen anzusehn: und umgekehrt.” Also cf. the note 3 [63], 8.32: “Nur bei drei Existenzformen bleibt der Mensch Individuum: als Philosoph, Heiliger und Künstler”.

⁴² Cf. *WWV I*, § 53 (*Werke I*.379): “Die echte philosophische Betrachtungsweise der Welt, d.h. diejenige, welche uns ihr inneres Wesen erkennen lehrt und so über die Erscheinung hinausführt, ist gerade die, welche nicht nach dem Woher und Wohin und Warum, sondern immer und überall nur nach dem *Was* der Welt fragt, d.h. welche die Dinge nicht nach irgendeiner Relation, nicht als werdend und vergehend, kurz, nicht nach einer der vier Gestalten des Satzes

philosopher, the artist, and the saint. Nature needs each of them for a particular purpose. The purpose of the philosopher and of the artist appears to be the same: “denn wie die Natur des Philosophen bedarf, so bedarf sie des Künstlers, nämlich zu ihrer eignen Aufklärung über sich selbst” (1.382). The difference between the philosopher and the artist lies in their way of understanding and communicating the insight underlying the “great enlightenment”: while the philosopher *understands* this insight discursively, the artist perceives it as an image, and then *depicts* this image in his works.⁴³ Both the philosopher and the artist thus serve the purpose of nature’s self-knowledge, but each of them in a particular way. The artist creates his works “damit [der Natur] endlich einmal als reines und fertiges Gebilde entgegengestellt werde, was sie in der Unruhe ihres Werdens nie deutlich zu sehen bekommt” (1.382) – i.e. as depictions of life as a whole, of the nature of life. Finally, the saint *feels* this insight, that his “leidendes Leben nicht oder fast nicht mehr individuell empfunden wird, sondern als tiefstes Gleich- Mit- und Eins-Gefühl in allem Lebendigen” (1.382). He is, as it were, an embodiment of the “answer of Empedocles”: he feels the suffering of all life, and affirms all this suffering as necessary.

The artist stands in a ministerial relationship to the philosopher. This can be seen not only from *HL*, where art and religion are called “wahre Helferinnen” of philosophy (1.281), but also from the *Nachlass*, e.g. from the note 19 [23] (7.423): “Der Philosoph soll *erkennen*, was *Noth thut*, und der Künstler soll es *schaffen*.” The philosopher’s knowledge is clearly meant to rule and

vom Grunde betrachtet; sondern umgekehrt gerade Das, was nach Aussonderung dieser ganzen jenem Satz nachgehenden Betrachtungsart noch übrigbleibt, das in allen Relationen erscheinende, selbst aber ihnen nicht unterworfenene, immer sich gleiche Wesen der Welt, die Ideen derselben, zum Gegenstand hat. Von solcher Erkenntnis geht wie die Kunst, so auch die Philosophie aus, ja, wie wir in diesem Buche finden werden, auch diejenige Stimmung des Gemütes, welche allein zur wahren Heiligkeit und zur Erlösung der Welt führt.”

⁴³ Strong’s (2000, 93) contention that “the philosopher makes becoming available to us; [and] the artist makes a ‘clear and distinct image’ of what is never seen ‘in the flux of becoming’” goes directly against Nietzsche’s clear statement that the Schopenhauerian man’s – the philosopher’s – main achievement is precisely rising above the flux of becoming. Indeed, far from needing him to make becoming available to us, we need him to make something *other* than becoming available to us.

guide the artist's work. In the note 19 [170] (7.471) we read that "Die Philosophen sind die vornehmste Klasse der Großen des Geistes", and in the note 19 [195] (7.479) the philosopher is called "der höchste Typus des Großen".⁴⁴ What precisely is the artist to make will be one of the central subjects of *WB*. It is less clear in the case of the saint, who is called "jene endliche und höchste Menschenwerdung" in *SE* 5 (1.382). However, the saint doesn't hold this kind of importance in any other work of Nietzsche, and even the *UB* as a whole focus much more on the philosopher and the artist, devoting one *UB* to either of them (*SE* and *WB*, respectively). Furthermore, in *SE* 1 only the thinker and the artist are mentioned in introducing the imperative of *sei du selbst*. It is much more likely that this declaration of the saint as the highest human type is a piece of rhetoric meant to make *SE* appear more 'Schopenhauerian' than it actually is, rather than a serious assertion.⁴⁵ The saint's actual role in the project of the *UB* is ministerial, on par with that of the artist. We can see this from notes such as 9 [102] (7.311), where Nietzsche writes that "*Kunst und Religion* [sind] im griechischen Sinne identisch", or 29 [192] (7.708),⁴⁶ where he specifies the educative purpose of these forces: "zum Organisiren des Chaotischen eignet sich Kunst und Religion: letztere giebt Liebe zu den Menschen, erstere Liebe zum Dasein".⁴⁷

⁴⁴ Zuckert's (1970, 146–7) view that since Schopenhauer failed in establishing a culture while Wagner has been more successful in this respect, "Wagner represents a higher [degree of freedom], and thus in this respect appears 'more philosophic' than Schopenhauer" – or in other words, that the artist stands higher than the philosopher in the *UB* – thus rests on a misunderstanding of the respective roles of the philosopher and the artist in the project of the *UB*.

⁴⁵ Breazeale (1998, 9) also notes that the three types of genius, especially in their educational modality, are much less Schopenhauerian than they may appear: "despite this Schopenhauerian window-dressing, the actual *function* assigned by Nietzsche to 'geniuses' in general and to philosophers in particular has an explicitly *cultural* and *social* dimension that is utterly lacking in Schopenhauer".

⁴⁶ The rest of the note makes clear that it comments on *HL* 10, but I don't think there is any substantial difference between Nietzsche's views on art and religion in *HL* and in *SE*.

⁴⁷ Thus it is not true that "the highest functions of art and philosophy are essentially the same" (Taylor 1997, 87). The suggestion that "in einer rechten Höhe kommt alles zusammen und über eins – die Gedanken des Philosophen, die Werke des Künstlers und die guten Thaten" (note 19 [1], 7.417) should be read as positing the possibility of a single human being who would embody all three types of the genius, rather than as assigning equal value to the three types. In the note 16 [11] from 1883 (10.501), Nietzsche writes: "Künstler (Schaffender), Heiliger (Liebender) und Philosoph (Erkennender) in *Einer Person* zu werden: – *mein praktisches Ziel!*". However, it should be noted that the conception of these three types is quite different in this later note, which begins by recounting that "es that Noth, mich von dem

The genius, and in particular the philosophic genius, is of supreme importance in the *UB*: it is only his existence that makes life meaningful and worth living, that redeems life from the vicious circle of desiring to which it is otherwise subject. We are now in position to answer Heidegger's (2003, 213) questions about the principles of the philosopher's original justice: "worin besteht die *Höhe* des 'Lebens'? [...] *Wer* setzt das Hohe fest?" The answer is that the height of life consists in the knowledge of the whole, and that the philosopher's legislation of values is derived from his care for the perpetuation and spreading of the life that can attain this highest of heights. It is not an arbitrary legislation, but one that derives from his knowledge of life as a whole and of the particular character of human life. And in regard to his question "wer entscheidet darüber, welcher Genius der Maßsetzende sein soll?" (ibid.) we can answer that this 'decision' is the result of the philosopher's insight into the whole of life and being.

This view also has important implications for what is to be considered the best way of life, for the rank order of human 'values'. From the perspective of the genius, the only desire, the only ruling passion that is worth cultivating is the desire to *sei du selbst*, since it is only through the cultivation of one's self that one may attain the "great enlightenment" and thereby the only genuine happiness there is. Thus, for the genius, as well as for those who believe in his insight although they do not fully comprehend it themselves, the tasks of culture and education are the only meaningful practical pursuits. Culture understood from the perspective of the genius as its peak means "*die Erzeugung des Philosophen, des Künstlers und des Heiligen in uns und ausser uns zu fördern und dadurch an der Vollendung der Natur zu arbeiten*" (1.382):⁴⁸ the cultivation of the

Wahne zu erlösen, daß die Natur *verlernen* müsse, **Ziele zu haben**" (ibid.; quoting 1.380) – i.e. that the conception of the redeeming man from *SE* is a *Wahn*, is fundamentally wrong.

⁴⁸ This "Grundgedanke der *Kultur*" is consistent with that of *Ueber das Pathos der Wahrheit* (1.756), where it is attributed to "sittlichen Menschen".

souls of individual humans, and the perpetuation and spreading of the “great enlightenment” that is the peak of self-cultivation. Nietzsche claims that everybody is in principle a genius, although only a few will fully liberate the genius within them and thus attain their true self that is immeasurably high above them.⁴⁹ However, even though not everybody will become a genius, everybody can partake in the tasks of culture in a way that will be beneficial both for them and for the culture at large: while the genius can benefit from various auxiliary services provided to him by the non-geniuses, the latter can benefit from the *er-ziehend* effect of the genius – as the image of the Schopenhauerian man “uns erzieht, während es uns aufwärts zieht” (1.376). This holds *a fortiori* for the genius in person – especially given their proximity to him in the kind of cultural setting imagined here by Nietzsche. What precisely this cultural setting will be and what kinds of dangers will it have to overcome in the present-day ‘culture’ will be the subject of *SE* 6–8.

III.4 The Life of Culture

The ideal of the Schopenhauerian man, of the genius, is *erziehend* also by providing us with a “Kreis von Pflichten” (1.376, 381) that the young souls can fulfill by regular activity and thereby contribute both to their own self-cultivation and to the genuine culture at large. The image of the Schopenhauerian man tells the young souls, striving to *sei du selbst* and asking themselves “wie erhält dein, des Einzelnen Leben den höchsten Werth, die tiefste Bedeutung?” (1.384), that a

⁴⁹ Cf. 1.337, and the note 34 [8] (7.795): “Jeder ist im Grunde Genius, insofern er *einmal* da ist und einen ganz neuen Blick auf die Dinge wirft. Er *vermehrt* die Natur, er zeugt mit diesem neuen Blick.” Moreover, nobody is exempt from hearing the voice of conscience, even though most people strive hard to ignore it. However, the process of *sei du selbst* is exceedingly difficult and painful, as we have seen, and it requires one’s full dedication and effort. Hence, only very few individuals come to its end and become a genius in the full sense of the word, a redeeming man – even under the best imaginable external conditions (cf. *MA* 263, even though Nietzsche speaks of a lesser kind of *Begabung* there). Many are called, but few are chosen; and this choice is essentially a choice one has to make for oneself and then ceaselessly persevere in it. Cf. Conant 2001, 198. This also answers Heidegger’s (2003, 214) objection that Nietzsche’s affirmation of life means “das Ja zum Raubtier”.

truly meaningful life can be attained only by unconditional devotion to the cause of genuine culture. The first step in this participation, “*die erste Weihe der Kultur*” (1.385), is adopting an *Erzieher* in recognition of one’s current limitedness with regard to who they *themselves* desire to be. In the *Erzieher* they find an image of a person they would like to become, and the love they feel toward their *Erzieher* (and the concomitant contempt for themselves as they are now)⁵⁰ provides them with a mighty impetus for self-cultivation in their chosen direction. The second consecration of culture amounts to “*Beurtheilung des äusserlichen Geschehens*” (1.386) as to whether these external conditions contribute to or hinder genuine culture, i.e. the production or cultivation of the genius. Finally, they are to work practically with other like-minded young souls to further the cause of true culture, i.e. to cultivate the soil from which new geniuses may grow (cf. Parkes 1994, 182). The young souls have already achieved the self-dissatisfaction characteristic of the first consecration, and *SE* now explains them how – and in which direction – to continue this process.

Such an assessment of conditions for true culture shows “*wie ausserordentlich gering und selten das Wissen um jenes Ziel ist*” (1.386) despite all the ostensible support culture is getting from all sides nowadays. This is a problem for Nietzsche, not only because a conscious effort to produce genius would have more of an effect than leaving his production up to chance, but also and especially because many of the forces that foster culture do this only at the price of perverting it from its proper end to their own ends, which are invariably hostile to the genius. Nietzsche identifies four such culture-perverting forces: the selfishness of the moneymakers, of the state, of those who have an ugly or boring content (i.e. the philistines), and of the sciences. The

⁵⁰ As well as for others around them, who from this perspective “*einem Trümmerfelde der kostbarsten bildnerischen Entwürfe gleichen*” (1.386). Cf. *Za II Von der Erlösung*: “[*mein Auge*] findet immer das Gleiche: Bruchstücke und Gliedmaassen und grause Zufälle – aber keine Menschen!”

moneymakers promote culture only insofar as greater education implants more desires to be satisfied, and thereby provides more opportunities to make profit. Since their goal is profit, the products of the moneymakers seek to address as many people as possible, and in aiming at the lowest common denominator they are “durch und durch zeitgemäss” (1.387). This ‘culture industry’ does nothing at all for the production of genius; moreover, it operates with a notion that there is a natural connection between one’s wealth and level of culture, a notion that elevates the captains of industry to the peak of humanity, and thereby hinders the awareness of the importance of the genius as the redeeming man.

The state supports culture insofar as it helps to produce loyal citizens and competent bureaucrats – but only insofar. The state is aware that fully cultured human beings consider themselves above the state and thus become dangerous to it, and it tries to manage this danger by supporting only a certain lower level of culture while undermining higher culture, which according to Nietzsche is one of the reasons for the present-day decay of Christianity (which used to be a powerful cultural force – 1.389). The third perversion of culture is that effected by the philistines, who completely divorce culture from any effort at self-cultivation, and consume it solely as a means of entertainment or *divertissement* – both their own and that of their fellow philistines.⁵¹ They are “die geplagten Sklaven der drei M, des Moments, der Meinungen und der Moden” (1.392) who use culture to hide this fact, to hide their own misery from both themselves and others.

The last of these perversions is the selfishness of the sciences, which supports culture insofar as it is necessary for the education of good scholars. The problems of science and of

⁵¹ By a strange twist of history, Nietzsche’s comparison of the philistine to the Indian “welcher sich einen Ring durch die Nase wünscht und darnach schreit, tätowirt zu werden” (1.390) is nowadays quite literal rather than the exaggerated metaphor it was in his day.

education based on it were dealt with at length in *HL* 4–9, and Nietzsche only restates them here: first, the sciences strive for partial truths that are useful for the securing of ever more comfortable life, not for *the* meaningful truth about the whole; and second, the education of the scholars damages their souls in ways that make them incapable of self-cultivation and/ or unwilling to engage in it at all. Nietzsche then turns to analyzing the all-too-human motivations of the scholar in his research in order to show how different they are from the motivation of the Schopenhauerian man. The three main motivations are a strong curiosity and love of the search itself, the desire to prevail over other scholars, and the desire to validate the ruling opinions and ruling powers, who after all are the hand that feeds them. To these Nietzsche adds twelve⁵² other, less frequent motivations, which in one way or another illuminate the smallness of the scholar’s spirit, his willingness to limit himself to a very small and particular field, and/ or his willingness to obey and work for the benefit of conventional (political, religious, or scholarly) authorities. These motivations, “eine Menge kleiner sehr menschlicher Triebe und Triebchen” (1.399), are then mixed together, and the result is the celebrated modern scholar.⁵³ This dissection of the scholar’s motivations shows why he cannot attain the heights of the redeeming genius. And thus, insofar as the sciences promote culture in order to educate new scholars, they too pervert the true meaning of culture. All four perversions of culture represent a giving up of the genuine goal of culture for the sake of lesser goods, chiefly of comfortable life – and so they fail to accomplish what only true culture can accomplish: to give meaning to human life and suffering. Thus, the forces that pretend to support culture in the contemporary times are in fact perverting it, and so worsening the

⁵² The tentative thirteenth motivation, the “Trieb nach Gerechtigkeit” (1.399), is added only as a pious wish, for reasons given in the third paragraph of *HL* 6 (1.288–9).

⁵³ Nietzsche is drawing here on the distinction between the “Brotgelehrte” and the “philosophische Kopf” Schiller had made in his lecture *Was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte?* (Neymeyr 2020, 1.182).

conditions for the production of genius (1.401). Nietzsche summarizes here his critiques from *DS* and *HL* after presenting the motivation behind those critiques, the end to which they serve in the overall project of the *UB*: they are critiques of the forces working against genuine culture and its peak, the redeeming genius.

The practical consequence of this assessment of the conditions for culture is that new educational institutions are necessary for the true purpose of culture, for the production of genius.⁵⁴ Alternatively, the existing institutions – the universities – could be reformed in accordance with this new “Grundgedanke” (1.402); however, their original *Grundgedanke*, which is the education of the medieval scholar (a point confirmed and expanded upon by Hadot 2002, 258), is still active in them, and Nietzsche believes that the forces of institutional inertia would make such a reform of universities a much more difficult endeavor than the founding of a new institution. Such an institution would exist in the first place for the sake of the geniuses-in-becoming, who would live there together and strive “die Geburt des Genius und das Reifwerden seines Werks in sich und um sich vorzubereiten” (1.403), strive to attain their true self in a like-minded community.⁵⁵ This institution would provide them with the “Schutzwehr einer festen Organisation” (1.402) against the external world which, as we have seen, is hostile to the genius and to the degree of self-cultivation necessary to bring the genius about. And it would also provide them with various useful services so that they may focus on their task; in this manner also many “aus der Reihe der zweiten und dritten Begabungen” could participate in the work of true culture and thereby come to the “Gefühl, einer Pflicht zu leben und mit Ziel und Bedeutung zu leben” (1.403) – to the feeling that

⁵⁴ This is the one crucial exception to Lemm’s (2007b, 5) otherwise correct view that “Nietzsche’s conception of culture in *SE* is inherently anti-institutional”. Cf. the remarkable discussions in Drochon (2016, 66, 69n47).

⁵⁵ Cf. Church (2019, 178). It is their true self that is the main object of their striving, and not other, external works of art, as Taylor (1997, 133) believes (as a consequence of mechanically applying Schopenhauer’s doctrine from *WWV* I, § 36 to *SE*) – these are byproducts of their becoming-onself, as it were.

they participate in the redemption of, and giving meaning to, life, as much as is in their powers.⁵⁶ In order for this to happen, however, especially those with lesser capacities must be able to resist the siren call of the sciences that promise to make them great and famous scholars even though they aren't geniuses, whereas in Nietzsche's new institution they would be allegedly "nur Diener, Gehülfen, Werkzeuge, von höheren Naturen überstrahlt" (1.403); and the degree to which they will be able to resist this temptation correlates with the degree to which they suffer from existence and feel the need to redeem this suffering (and are aware that only the genius can accomplish this redemption).⁵⁷

In the seventh chapter of *SE*, Nietzsche turns specifically to the philosopher-in-becoming and asks what conditions are necessary for him to attain his genius, and what conditions would increase the effect of his example on his fellow men. With regard to the latter question, Nietzsche notes the mismatch between the spiritual greatness of the philosopher (and the artist) and the weak effect their work has on the general public – the relation being "wie ein grobes Geschütz und eine Anzahl Sperlinge" (1.405). It is as if these highest outgrowths of nature, these redeeming men, existed only accidentally, and as if their redeeming work had its proper effects only on very few humans – while for the majority it is only "eine Art metaphysischen Pfeffers" (1.406), a welcome

⁵⁶ The crucial point is that although not everybody can be a genius of the highest kind, everybody can *partake* in the genius and in his work. As Conant (2001, 196) puts it, "the person who believes in culture excludes no one else who believes in culture from his concern"; cf. Church (2019, 176). This taking part in culture entails not just service to the genius, but also attaining a "higher self" – higher than their *present* self – by communion with the genius (and by making the necessary effort themselves); i.e. it is taking part in genuine culture not just externally, but also *internally* (cf. Taylor 1997, 156). And it is both of these factors that make a life devoted to the fostering of genuine culture truly meaningful for the non-geniuses. Thus, even though they work for the genius in ministerial positions, they are *not* asked to abandon their self-cultivation and only to "place [them]selves at the beck and call of these 'geniuses'", as Breazeale (1998, 16) claims. Conant (2001, esp. 209–16) stresses this point repeatedly in his beautiful reading of *SE*. Pearson (2018, 17) makes a similar point, but he also claims (*ibid.*, 19) that this demands "the sacrifice of our egoistic goals for the sake of elite geniuses", which can be true only if he means the petty egoistic goals of the comfortable life. He is right that, contra Rawls, this is "not conceived as an oppressive social arrangement", but a voluntary one (*ibid.*).

⁵⁷ The passage in question is a condensed version of a passage from *ZB* (cf. 1.402, line 7 – 1.403, line 28 with 1.728, line 10 – 1.730, line 4). "Einordnung in Reih und Glied" is characteristic of the scholar also in *JGB* 206.

distraction from the boredom of their everyday life. It seems as if nature was wise in its ends, but unable to find suitable means toward them, and the consequence is that “das Grössere und Edlere [i.e. the genius and his works] ist zum Mittel für die Entstehung des Geringen und Unedlen [i.e. the philistines and their *divertissements*] verwendet” (1.405). Nature thus needs human aid to accomplish its aims: the effects of the genius, hitherto haphazard and accidental, must be consciously supported so that they reach and transform a much larger number of humans than it was the case so far, and so fulfill their proper purpose. Art must complement nature, and by this cultivation nature is to be transformed into a “neue und verbesserte Physis” (cf. 1.334). In short, the rule of chance in history must be replaced by conscious purposiveness;⁵⁸ human life has to be reordered so as to foster both the production of the genius and the redeeming effects of his work.

The way to begin with such a reordering of human life is simply the fostering of true culture. The greatest obstacle to the becoming of a philosopher in the present day is “die Verschrobenheit der jetzigen Menschennatur” and the “modern ideas”⁵⁹ that accompany and justify it (1.407) – and this is likewise the greatest obstacle to a more appropriate effect of his work. Thus the fostering of true culture helps both to produce the genius and to spread the effects of his works. Schopenhauer is exemplary here once again, because he was fortunate enough to enjoy in his life precisely those conditions which are necessary for a philosopher to attain his genius. First among these conditions is a certain strength of character, or “unbeugsame und rauhe Männlichkeit” (1.408), which he learned from the example of his father.⁶⁰ They also include a manifold freedom of spirit: freedom from parochialisms and local prejudices, which he acquired

⁵⁸ This was first pointed out by Zuckert (1970, 141); cf. *Za II Von der Erlösung* on Zarathustra’s ambition to be “der Erlöser des Zufalls”.

⁵⁹ This *terminus technicus* is not used here, but it was used in a similar context already in *DS* (1.175, 190).

⁶⁰ Cf. Neymeyr (2020, 2.249–51) on Schopenhauer’s parents and his relationship with them.

thanks to traveling with his father as a youth; freedom from the kind of subordination that one learns in training to be a scholar or a bureaucrat; freedom from the need to engage in politics; and freedom from having to make a living for oneself, i.e. leisure. And finally, he was fortunate enough to make a personal acquaintance with a genius, in his case with Goethe.

However, Schopenhauer lived under these favorable conditions – which can be summarized as “Freiheit und immer wieder Freiheit” (1.411) – only thanks to an accident, the accident of his birth. The task of the new institutions will be to provide such conditions to as many worthy contenders as possible, and thereby to promote the production of genius; they will exist, as Zuckert (1976, 77) puts it, “as means to the production of the true individual”. But they will also promote the effects of the genius’ work at various levels: those who work in these institutions in ministerial positions will have the opportunity to be acquainted with the genius and even to adopt him as their *Erzieher*, and thereby attain higher levels of self-cultivation; and the very existence and working of these institutions will spread the awareness of true culture in Germany. The institutional framework will allow for the conscious fostering of culture on these three levels (the genius, those who aid him, and the population at large), and thus genuine culture will be able to spread wider and grow higher than was hitherto possible. Moreover, the institution doesn’t need to be particularly large to begin with: a group of some hundred men, to use the number Nietzsche repeatedly mentioned in *HL* (1.260, 295, 325), would be sufficient to run it, and so initiate what would hopefully be a large-scale cultural transformation. This is why founding new institutions of genuine culture is so important to Nietzsche here: it is the first concrete step to promote both the production and the effects of the genius, and so to lead toward a transformation of German culture at large.

The last chapter of *SE* deals with the public position of philosophy in contemporary times. One of the most interesting developments of modern culture is that the state, traditionally the enemy and censor of philosophy, has now become a major supporter of philosophy by funding chairs of philosophy and promoting the teaching of philosophy at the universities it runs. At first sight this seems to be the fulfillment of Plato's dream of a state in which "die Entstehung des Philosophen nicht von der Unvernunft der Väter abhängig [wäre]" (1.412), unreason and anger of the fathers being famously what got Socrates killed. However, just like other purported 'Platonic' states and institutions in the past, the modern state's support of philosophy is a sham, because it falsifies the meaning of philosophy. The support of philosophy that Plato wanted to see in a state was to be understood "*platonisch*", i.e. "so ernst und aufrichtig, als ob es seine höchste Absicht dabei wäre, neue Platone zu erzeugen" (1.413).⁶¹ In other words, what Plato wanted was a state of genuine culture whose supreme goal was the education of the philosophic genius, a state in which philosophy would be sovereign not just because it would be ruled by philosophers, but because it understood the self-cultivation of the human soul and philosophy as its highest peak to be *the good life*, the perfection of human existence.⁶² However, the modern state – Bismarck's *Kulturstaat*, as Brooks (2018, 1–12) explains – has very different ambitions: it wants to present *itself* as the highest authority on all human things, and it is afraid of philosophy (1.414), which is more than capable of debunking such pretensions. The state's strategy for dealing with philosophy is to ostensibly support it, but in fact to subjugate it precisely by this support. The most important method of this

⁶¹ Lampert (2017, 85) argues – correctly, in my opinion – that this "Platonic goal can be said to be Nietzsche's most basic political motive from the beginning to the end of his career".

⁶² Cf. the note 10 [1] (7.348–9) from 1871 (i.e. from the period of *GT*), in which Nietzsche praises Plato for grasping "das eigentliche Ziel des Staates", which is "die olympische Existenz und immer erneute Zeugung des Genius, dem gegenüber alle Andern nur vorbereitende Mittel sind". His only criticism is that Plato "nicht den Genius in seinem allgemeinsten Begriff an die Spitze stellte, sondern nur den Genius der Weisheit", i.e. unduly privileged the philosophic genius over his brethren, the artist and the saint. According to Drochon (2016, 52), this note is an early version of *Der griechische Staat*, originally meant to be included as a chapter in *GT*.

subjugation is changing philosophy into an office [*Amt*]. The state hereby assumes authority over philosophy: it becomes the arbiter of philosophic merit (the ‘good’ philosophers being those who are offered an academic chair), and it even gets to say how many philosophers are necessary. The philosophers, on the other hand, have to compromise their freedom by teaching regularly at assigned times, and moreover they are forced to teach anyone who signs up for their classes. Especially the latter point means a major compromising of the philosopher’s freedom: as Nietzsche asks, “muss [ein solcher Philosoph] nicht über Dinge vor einer unbekanntem Zuhörerschaft reden, über welche er nur mit den nächsten Freunden ohne Gefahr reden dürfte?” (1.416). The philosopher can no longer speak freely, because at least as long as he is paid by the state (1.415),

muss er über der Wahrheit noch etwas Höheres anerkennen, den Staat. Und nicht bloss den Staat, sondern alles zugleich, was der Staat zu seinem Wohle heischt: zum Beispiel eine bestimmte Form der Religion, der gesellschaftlichen Ordnung, der Heeresverfassung – allen solchen Dingen steht ein *noli me tangere* angeschrieben.

The philosopher in the employ of the state is forced to become a sycophant of the state and of the powers that be, rather than an independent thinker and critic of the existing conditions. There is a way out of this predicament: transforming ‘philosophy’ into the scholarship of history of philosophy. This however transforms the philosopher into a mere scholar, suffering from all the maladies that befall scholars in other fields; and moreover, philosophical scholarship is, unlike, say, chemistry, utterly impractical. Nietzsche says that the professors of philosophy he had encountered as a student “fanden immer Gründe, weshalb es philosophischer sei nichts zu wissen als etwas zu lernen” (1.419), and he adds that “ohne Zweifel ist man jetzt auf der Seite der einzelnen Wissenschaften logischer, behutsamer, bescheidner, erfindungsreicher, kurz es geht dort philosophischer zu als bei den sogenannten Philosophen” (1.420). Thus, the end result of the state’s ‘support’ of philosophy is that “die Universitätsphilosophie einer allgemeinen Missachtung und Anzweiflung verfallen [ist]” (1.418): it is held in contempt by the students, by the scholars from

other fields, as well as by the public. The other sciences have no longer any use for philosophy. Being transformed into an academic discipline, philosophy had ceased to be the queen of sciences, and it has become an object of ridicule instead.⁶³

Nietzsche proposes a solution to this problem: “der Philosophie jede staatliche und akademische Anerkennung zu entziehen” (1.421). And, in the most extreme case, even the persecution of philosophy by the state is preferable to this kind of ‘support’ (1.423). He believes that if philosophy ceased to be a way of making an easy and comfortable living, all the pseudo-philosophers currently occupying academic chairs will move on to other, more profitable and less dangerous pursuits (such as becoming a parson, a newspaper editor, or an author of “Lehrbücher für höhere Töchterschulen” – 1.422), while those who have a passionate personal investment in philosophy would find a way to continue living in devotion to the truth. The state itself could easily do without philosophy, for it is not concerned with the truth itself, it only wants what is useful to it, such as “seine eigne Gültig- und Heiligsprechung” (1.422) – and there are always enough sycophants, even educated and authoritative ones, to do that. Neither is education in philosophy necessary to produce loyal citizens (quite the opposite); and it would also be beneficial for the other sciences to be freed from the union with such a “Halb- und Viertelwissenschaft” (1.424) as academic philosophy. Nietzsche finds it strange that the other scholars do not demand this already, and sees in this one of the signs of the decay of universities in general – the others being the lack of “strenger Erziehung in Schrift und Rede”, the continuing disregard of ancient Indian thought, and the demotion of Classical Antiquity “zu einem beliebigen Alterthum” (1.424) which is no

⁶³ *SE 8* is heavily dependent on Schopenhauer’s essay *Über die Universitäts-Philosophie* (*Werke* IV.171–242). Schopenhauer made there not just the diagnoses of the character of academic philosophers and of the damage they cause to philosophy itself, but also proposed the solution of separating philosophy from the state as much as possible, and especially ending the state’s support of philosophy in the universities (*ibid.*, 222, 240). Neymeyr (2020, 2.20–9) provides a thorough comparison of these two essays.

longer held to be exemplary – of the fact that “der Universitätsgeist anfängt, sich mit dem Zeitgeiste zu verwechseln” (1.425). It is precisely because universities are becoming ever more *zeitgemäss* that it is important that philosophy be separated from universities and cured of the damage wrought by the state’s ‘support’ of it. Such a liberated philosophy could function as “ein höheres Tribunal [...] in Hinsicht auf die Bildung” (1.425), as a supporter of genuine culture and a condemner of whatever hinders and opposes it.⁶⁴

However, philosophy itself is more important than the state, universities, and culture at large – and Nietzsche believes that its current subjection to the state puts its very existence at stake. By becoming ridiculous, philosophy had lost its dignity, and so it is no longer attractive to those who would otherwise be naturally attracted to its uncompromising questioning: to thymotic natures such as the young souls, but also to great men of action (1.426). In short, philosophy in the proper sense of the word is dignified and terrible, it is a relentless questioning of everything, a *Weltgericht*, as Nietzsche’s quotation from Emerson conveys. It should disturb [*betrüben*], and the most damning conviction of current academic philosophy, the most telling indication of its nature, is that “sie hat Niemanden betrübt” (1.427). Thus the task of all true friends of philosophy is to “beweisen [...] durch die That, dass die Liebe zur Wahrheit etwas Furchtbares und Gewaltiges ist” (1.427). Schopenhauer himself did this – and the fact that thanks to him philosophy still retains something of its original and proper dignity is the final reason why he is exemplary, and why he is Nietzsche’s own *Erzieher*.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Again reinforcing the superiority of philosophy over art.

⁶⁵ To summarize the other reasons: first, he provided Nietzsche with an aspirational image of the philosopher to guide his own process of becoming-himself. Second, his life showed Nietzsche (some of) the dangers that lie on the path to becoming a philosopher, and the virtues thanks to which he overcame those dangers. Third, his radical, unapologetic *unzeitgemässheit*. Fourth, his image of man that can be “der sichtbare Inbegriff aller schöpferischen Moral” (1.344) for the culture at large. And fifth, the favorable conditions of his life that should be consciously replicated in the institutions of genuine culture. Hence it is not true that “the sole direct influence that Schopenhauer’s personal example

* * *

In *SE*, the overall project of the *UB* begins to assume a more concrete form. First, *SE* shows us what Nietzsche's "heaven" is: namely the life of the genius, of the man who alone is able to affirm and thereby redeem the entirety of existence from the meaningless suffering it otherwise is. This affirmation is attained through the striving to *sei du selbst*, and in it 'theoretical' and 'practical' knowledge are united: the understanding of one's own life leads to the understanding of life as a whole, and vice versa. The philosopher is the highest and most important kind of the genius for Nietzsche, tasked with establishing original justice, with determining the value of all things and of the whole anew; the artist and the saint are to help him in this endeavor. A lesser form of this 'heaven' is the life of devotion to culture, i.e. to the production of genius within and without oneself: in this manner, anyone willing can partake in the work of the genius and thereby make their life truly meaningful.

The tension between truth and life manifests in *SE* in two distinct but related forms. The first concerns the affirmation of life and being presented in *SE* 5 which, although purportedly an affirmation, entails a denial of the will – which seems suspiciously Schopenhauerian and life-denying. The second concerns how much the 'heaven' of the *UB* consists in becoming one's true self, a genius, and how much it demands devotion to the cause of genuine culture; put differently, we may well wonder whether these two facets are as seamlessly harmonious as Nietzsche makes them out to be. Is the moralistic devotion to cultural renewal really also the way to one's true self? This holds *a fortiori* for the peak figure, the philosophic genius: is his freedom, his being who he

seems to have exercised upon Nietzsche was to confirm him in his belief that a genuine philosopher must live a life that is independent to the point of *solitude*, a belief that is already fully developed in his studies of the ancient pre-Platonic philosophers" (Breazeale 1998, 11).

truly is, compatible with an unconditional devotion to a predetermined task? Nietzsche presents these two commitments as if they were unproblematically aligned with each other, but this is not necessarily the case; and when conflict between them comes up, Nietzsche leaves us without a criterion by which to choose the more important of them.

Moreover, the idea of *sei du selbst* as it is presented in *SE* forces us to raise some serious doubts about its viability. The first of these concerns the primacy of desire or instinct for our self-knowledge and for the way in which we should consequently strive to further cultivate ourselves: it is the sequence our greatest desiderata that gives the reader the “Grundgesetz deines eigentlichen Selbst” (1.340). These desiderata are not to be examined or questioned, but only recognized as such. This means that the role of reason, of thinking, in the process of becoming ourselves is strictly ministerial; it is to be a “slave of passions”, in David Hume’s phrase (2007, 266). The dubious character of this reliance on instinct were soon to become an urgent issue of Nietzsche: his hopes for Wagner were definitively buried at the inaugural Bayreuth festival, and he entered into a profound crisis, which he later characterized as “eine Gesamt-Abirrung meines Instinkts” (*EH* MA 3). One of the significant outcomes of this crisis was precisely the subordination of instinct to questioning thinking.

The second major doubt to voice here is the peculiar idea that ‘becoming ourselves’ is itself a task, rather than a *result* of accomplishing tasks in which we exert our powers to the fullest, grow, and come into our own. Notably, it is the latter model that Nietzsche employs in *EH* (*EH* Klug 9; Meier 2019, 102), which suggests a significant change in Nietzsche’s understanding of the process of becoming-oneself – and given the importance of this subject to his self-understanding, also a change of his conception of what the philosopher is. These two doubts, and the way in which the later Nietzsche grappled with them, will be addressed in more detail in Chapter V.4. To

summarize for now, it is precisely at its peak where the project of the *UB* and its image of the genuinely good life appears to be most questionable.

We also see now *how* Nietzsche writes the *UB*: its rhetoric is crafted to attract to this “heaven” the young souls, the thymotic characters who have a powerful conscience, a powerful desire for the yet-unknown genuinely good life, and powerful hopes for the future. Nietzsche strives to channel this power within them both for their own self-cultivation and for the sake of the project of cultural renewal that can make self-cultivation ‘easier’ and more widespread. Regarding the individuals, *SE* contains magnificent explications of the imperative *sei du selbst* and of the role of the *Erzieher* in one’s self-cultivation, which build directly on the articulation of the human soul that was developed in *HL*. Here lies one of the main purposes of the *UB*: “*Erzieher erziehn! Aber die ersten müssen sich selbst erziehn! Und für diese schreibe ich*”, as Nietzsche wrote in 1875 (note 5 [25], 8.47).

Regarding the cultural renewal, Nietzsche explains at length the importance of a new institution devoted to genuine culture in contemporary society in *SE* 6–8. *WB* will take up this argument by making a concrete proposal for an institution of genuine culture, and thus complete the project of the *UB*. This institution, based on Wagner’s art,⁶⁶ was to appear very soon: in fact, its cornerstone had been laid on 22 May 1872 in Bayreuth, with Nietzsche among those attending this ceremony (1.432), and *WB* itself was rushed into print so that it could be sold at the inaugural Bayreuth Festival (Schaberg 1995, 48–9). By proposing how Bayreuth may be an institution of genuine culture in the contemporary world, *WB* will answer the last question from *DS* 4, the question about Nietzsche’s “courage”, or his means to facilitate the attaining of the “heaven”,

⁶⁶ Drochon (2016, 43) points out that Wagner’s Bayreuth project was likely a model also for the very idea of effecting cultural reform by the founding of a new institution.

which is an enormously difficult process, as we have seen. *WB* will also thematize the artist in this context – what kind of person he is, and what his works can accomplish.

IV. *Richard Wagner in Bayreuth: Wagner, Tragedy, and Free Men of the Future*

*But I've often wondered, how did it all start?
Who found out that nothing can capture the heart
Like a melody can?¹*

¹ ABBA, *Thank You for the Music* (B. Andersson/ B. Ulvaeus).

Richard Wagner in Bayreuth, the final completed *UB*, is a complex text. Its complexity is in a large part due to Nietzsche's ambiguous feelings regarding Wagner, which he however felt compelled to hide. To get a better grasp on this central issue of *WB*, it is necessary to discuss the history of this text. After the publication of *SE* in October 1874, Nietzsche began to work on the next *UB*, which was to be *Wir Philologen* (15.60). However, the work didn't progress as Nietzsche had hoped – Janz (1978, 1.610) reports that despite having made extensive notes for it (which can be found in 8.11–96), by late May 1875 he hadn't written a single line of the actual text – and he abandoned it. Around August 1875 Nietzsche started writing *WB* instead (15.64), but this work didn't go as planned either, and eventually it too was abandoned. A major reason for the difficulties Nietzsche had in writing *WB* were his private misgivings about Wagner and his project, which, as Prange (2013, ch. 1) documents, started as early as February 1870.

Nietzsche developed his honest assessment of Wagner at some length in his notebooks in early 1874 (7.756–75; he also reports about it in the letter to Erwin Rohde from 15 February 1874 – cf. KGB II.3, 202). One point that keeps recurring in these notes is Nietzsche's explanation of Wagner's artistic peculiarities and shortcomings through his having a nature of "eines versetzten Schauspielers" (note 32 [8], 7.756; cf. 7.759, 761, 762, 766, 770, 773). This judgment appears once also in *WB* (1.467), but is stated there simply as a matter of fact, not as a criticism. In the note 32 [10] (7.756), Wagner's art is seen in a sober and unflattering light: considering the individual components of Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, Nietzsche judges "die Musik ist nicht viel werth, die Poesie auch (nicht), das Drama auch nicht, die Schauspielkunst ist oft nur Rhetorik – aber alles ist im Grossen Eins und auf einer Höhe".² Even more damningly, Nietzsche finishes this note by

² However, a slightly later note, 33 [5] (7.789), applies this judgment only to Wagner's "frühesten Werken".

saying that “Wagner als Denker ist gleich so hoch als Wagner als Musiker und Dichter” (7.757), i.e. not particularly high. Consistently with this assessment, in the note 32 [41] (7.766) Nietzsche comments that “als Schriftsteller ist [Wagner] Rhetor, ohne die Kraft zu überzeugen” – that Wagner’s theoretical writings are useless for their intended purpose of winning over new supporters to his artistic project (1.478). Nietzsche’s critique doesn’t spare even the greatest of Wagner’s works: the note 32 [43] (7.767) finds “Excesse in dem Tristan der bedenklichsten Art” – in Wagner’s *Tristan und Isolde*, which Nietzsche went on to call “das eigentliche opus metaphysicum aller Kunst” (1.479) in public.

A second critical strand in these notes considers Wagner’s lack of success so far, and his own contributions to his failure. First of all, Wagner *is* unsuccessful so far in his chief goal, in reforming the theatre (cf. 1.448): “denn bis jetzt ist Alles beim Alten geblieben” (note 32 [28], 7.763). Nietzsche goes on to consider two causes of Wagner’s failure. First, “es liegt etwas Komisches darin: Wagner kann die Deutschen nicht überreden, das Theater ernst zu nehmen”, because “in Deutschland nimmt jeder seine Sache ernst, da lacht man über den, der für sich allein das Ernstnehmen praetendirt” (ibid.). In other words, Wagner doesn’t really understand the Germans, and that is why he wasn’t able to devise a rhetoric that would persuade them. He would first have to understand that his project “passt nicht in unsre gesellschaftlichen und arbeitenden Verhältnisse” (ibid.) – and then work (rhetorically and otherwise) to provide access to his project to those whom it strikes as bizarre for these overarching external reasons. The second cause of Wagner’s failure is his lack of prudence in political matters. This is detailed in the note 32 [39] (7.766), which examines Wagner’s dealings with the powers that be. The first of these is Ludwig

II of Bavaria, who “[Wagners Werk] durch vorläufige Aufführungen halb preisgab”³ and who, thanks to his more than generous financial support of Wagner, gave the latter “einen höchst unpopulären Ruf”: Wagner came to be seen as the cause of Ludwig’s excesses.⁴ Second was his engagement with the revolution in 1848, which lost him the support of rich patrons and gained him nothing in return from the socialists. And third, he alienated the Jews, “die jetzt in Deutschland das meiste Geld und die Presse besitzen”, by his unprovoked outbursts of anti-Semitism (“als er es that, hatte er keinen Beruf dazu: später war es Rache”).⁵ In short, Wagner’s lack of prudence in his abortive political engagements had cost him the support of almost all potential allies and powerful factions, and made him dependent on Ludwig II, which dependence made him even less popular.

A final strand of interest in these notes is concerned with the general outlines of Wagner’s project, to which Nietzsche is broadly sympathetic. Wagner’s art is “ein ungeheurer Versuch, sich zu behaupten und zu dominieren – in einer kunstwidrigen Zeit” (note 32 [56], 7.774). To this end, he “sammelt alle *wirksamen* Elemente” in his works, all the artistic means that still have the power to affect modern men (note 32 [57], 7.774). And the goal for which he seeks to attain this power is a highly laudable one: namely “die Erneuerung der Kunst von der einzigen noch vorhandenen Basis aus, vom Theater aus” (note 32 [61], 7.775), a renewal of the true significance of art for

³ Referring to the performances of the first two parts of the *Ring* cycle before its completion that Ludwig II demanded from – and was granted by – Wagner (Gutman 1968, 304, 308).

⁴ Large (1978, 164) reports that “Wagner’s scandalous affair with Cosima von Bülow, his luxurious living at public expense, and his repeated interference in local politics soon alienated the people of Munich”, and adds that Wagner’s stay at Tribschen was also financed “at Ludwig’s personal expense” (ibid.).

⁵ The most infamous, but by far not the only, instance of Wagner’s antisemitism is the pamphlet *Das Judentum in der Musik*, first published anonymously in 1850, then reissued in an expanded version under his own name in 1869. Rose (1992, 1 *et passim*) argues at length that “Wagner did not suddenly change from being a revolutionary to being a racist – for him, the German idea of revolution contained always a racial and antisemitic core.”

human life.⁶ But even here, at the very core of Wagner's striving, Nietzsche has a reason to seriously doubt whether Wagner understands what the true significance of art for life is. In the note 32 [44] (7.767–8), he finds in Wagner's art "etwas wie Flucht aus dieser Welt, sie negiert dieselbe, sie verklärt diese Welt nicht" – a tendency which is the very opposite of what tragedy should do according to Nietzsche. Lampert (2017, 106) judges this note to be "an early installment in Nietzsche's condemnation of romantic pessimism" (cf. *FW* 370). He goes on to say that "Wagnerism, to the degree that it had a core, harbored an antilife, romantic tendency, part of the reason it so naturally tended toward Christianity" (ibid., 107) – and Nietzsche was aware of this fundamental problem of Wagnerism to a large degree already in 1874.

Thus, because of his grave doubts about Wagner's artistry, the means he uses, and even his ends – all of which stand in a sharp contrast to the text of *WB* – Nietzsche considered the manuscript of *WB* unpublishable. However, he allowed his admirer Peter Gast to read it, and his enthusiastic reaction to it persuaded him to finish the work. *WB* was thus completed at Gast's insistence and rushed into print so that it could be sold at the inaugural Bayreuth festival in June 1876 (Schaberg 1995, 48–9; Lampert 2017, 104–5). Naturally, this meant that Nietzsche's misgivings about Wagner weren't resolved, and some of them are expressed in a veiled manner in the text. One class of the shortcomings Nietzsche perceived in Wagner were presented as "elements of his character that he had overcome on his way to becoming a great artist and human being" (Parkes 1994, 108): the "groteske Würdelosigkeit" of entire periods of his life (1.441), his pandering to the modern audiences in the first period of his career (1.474), the utter failure of the project of his second period (1.477; cf. Chapter IV.1), or the clumsiness of his writings (1.501–2).

⁶ In the same note, Nietzsche comments that "es ist wohl kein Zweifel, dass Wagner als Italiäner sein Ziel erreicht haben würde" – but, to reiterate, as a German he wasn't able to find the right means to address his fellow Germans.

Other of his shortcomings are only briefly touched upon in *WB*, and assume a much larger significance only in Nietzsche's later thinking about Wagner. Here belong his subservience to the powers that be (1.504; cf. *GM* III.5; also cf. Drochon 2016, 134), and especially the diagnosis of Wagner's "schauspielerische Urbegabung" (1.467), discussed at length in the notes cited above, which later became Nietzsche's central critique of Wagner (*EH* UB 3, *Wa* 8–12).

What this rhetorical strategy amounts to is that 'Wagner' as he is presented in *WB* is far removed from Wagner as Nietzsche actually understood him at this point. The general thrust of the rhetoric of *WB* is to present 'Wagner' as the exemplary artist and as an exemplary man, as one who had managed to complete his life's task, who has become what he is. *WB* doesn't speak about Wagner as he actually was, but about what he *could* and *should* have been, and what he *could* and *should* have accomplished for the cause of genuine culture: the Wagner of *WB* is a "monumental ideal" (Lampert 2017, 124).⁷ As Nietzsche wrote later, "das ganze Bild des *dithyrambischen* Künstlers ist das Bild des *präexistenten* Dichters des Zarathustra, mit abgründlicher Tiefe hingezeichnet und ohne einen Augenblick die Wagnersche Realität auch nur zu berühren" (*EH* GT 4).⁸ Insofar as Nietzsche still had any hopes for the fruitfulness of Wagner's project at this point, I agree with Montinari (1982, 46) that *WB* should be read as "eine Herausforderung an Wagner, dem Nietzsche eine bestimmte Interpretation seines Lebens und Werkes vorschlägt. [...] wird

⁷ I submit the preceding as a fairer assessment of the rhetorical style of *WB* than its usual condemnation. Gray (1995, 405) characterizes it as "uninhibited idolatry" and says that, as a consequence, *WB* "is often merely read as a curiosity" (*ibid.*, 408); Large (2012, 100) writes that "the text strikes us now as positively cringeworthy on account of the depth of its hero-worship"; and Brooks (2018, 188; cf. 212) speaks of its "cringingly reverential tone".

⁸ Drochon (2016, 134) sees this disconnect between the 'Wagner' of *WB* and the actual Wagner, but thinks this occurred unconsciously rather than being a deliberate strategy on Nietzsche's part.

Wagner sich selbst treu bleiben?“⁹ It was one last attempt to guide Wagner toward the genuine heights that his project could potentially attain, were it oriented in the right direction.

Because of the huge difference Nietzsche perceived between the actual Wagner and the ‘Wagner’ of *WB*, in the remainder of this chapter the name “Wagner” will refer to the monumental fiction of Wagner rather than to the actual Wagner (unless specified otherwise).

The rhetorical intention of monumentalizing Wagner is clearly present in the opening chapter of *WB*, which tells us that the founding of Bayreuth is a genuinely great event in which “die Kunst selber entdeckt wurde” (1.433) – an event in which art in its highest form and in its utility for internal and external culture (re)appeared in the world. But a great event requires also that it be understood by its audience, otherwise its effect will be only temporary, a momentary flash (1.431). This in turn means that a great event must be a necessary event, and Nietzsche intends to explain the necessity behind Bayreuth to his readers.¹⁰ He will make the necessity of Bayreuth evident to us. *WB* thus aims in the first place to prepare the audiences of the Bayreuth festival to understand what they are about to experience, so that this event may have its proper effect on them, and thus accomplish its “*grosse Zukunft*” (1.434). *WB* is an “exhortation” to the audience of Bayreuth to make it the great event it promises to be (Lampert 2017, 108).

The final paragraph of *WB* 1 tells us about a peculiar look Wagner had after the laying of the cornerstone at Bayreuth: “er schwieg und sah dabei mit einem Blick lange in sich hinein, der mit einem Worte nicht zu bezeichnen wäre” (1.434). Not one word, not even a few words suffice to explain this look or moment [*Augenblick*, as it is called a few lines later]: in fact, the remainder

⁹ A similar evaluation can be found also in Janz (1978, 1.706). Wagner himself wrote to Nietzsche on 21 September 1873: “[ich] schwöre Ihnen zu Gott zu, dass ich Sie für den Einzigen halte, der weiss, was ich will!” (KGB II.4, 295).

¹⁰ Zuckert (1970, 150) wonders if it is a genuine necessity given that it needs to be explained; but I don’t think a necessity has to be obvious in order to be a necessity.

of *WB* is an interpretation of this singular moment.¹¹ In this *Augenblick*, the whole of his life in its unity – his past, present, and future, or “wie er wurde, was er ist, was er sein wird” (1.434) – became manifest to Wagner.¹² That this *Augenblick* of Wagner is not just a throwaway rhetorical device for Nietzsche, but a crucial phenomenon, is made clear by Nietzsche’s comment on this passage in *EH* GT 4: “der *Blick*, von dem auf der siebenten Seite [i.e. at 1.434] die Rede ist, ist der eigentliche Zarathustra-Blick; Wagner, Bayreuth, die ganze kleine deutsche Erbärmlichkeit ist eine Wolke, in der eine unendliche fata morgana der Zukunft sich spiegelt”. And insofar *WB* is an interpretation of a single, particular *Augenblick*, Nietzsche goes beyond Heidegger’s account of this phenomenon by not just indicating its formal structure, but by showing us also the content which fleshed it out in this unique instance. To summarize, this *Augenblick*, this insight into the unity and direction of one’s life, is something that can be experienced only by a genuinely great human being, by one who has become what he is. And it is not just Wagner’s life that becomes comprehensible from this *Augenblick*, but “erst von diesem Wagnerischen Blick aus werden wir seine grosse That selber verstehen können” (1.434). Nietzsche tells us that Wagner’s art must be understood from the artist himself (cf. Heidegger 1996, 66–74).

IV.1 Becoming Richard Wagner

The next two chapters of *WB* turn to Wagner’s past, to the path he had to go in order to become who he is today. Nietzsche first tells us about Wagner’s pre-dramatic period, his merely biographical youth. In this period, his soul appears chaotic, his various passions and talents

¹¹ We can see this structure of *WB* clearly also in the note 11 [47], 8.239–40.

¹² This *Augenblick* is very similar to that described by Heidegger in *SuZ* (§ 68a, p. 338; § 68c, p. 347). This parallel leads one to suspect that Heidegger was inspired by the *UB* in more than just the three useful kinds of history from *HL*, which he discusses in § 76 – on which occasion he remarks that Nietzsche “mehr verstand, als er kundgab” (p. 396). On this subject also cf. Chapter III, fn. 6.

manifest themselves more or less accidentally and struggle against each other. His passions weren't ordered by any kind of strict education, and it seemed as if "er sei zum Dilettantisiren geboren" (1.436). Then Wagner's "herrschende Leidenschaft" (1.435) manifested itself: namely the passion for theatre, which, as he understood, can be the most effective of all arts; that "vom Theater aus [...] die grösste Wirkung aller Kunst ausgeübt werden könne" (1.472). Here, with the appearance of Wagner's ruling passion (1.435) or ruling thought (1.472),¹³ commences his *spiritual* youth and the drama of his life. The conflict of this drama revolves around the question of what kind of effect should he strive for in his musical-theatrical productions.

In attempting to answer this question, the chaos of passions in his soul "erscheint in furchtbarer Weise vereinfacht" (1.437): his passions order themselves into two powerful conglomerations. The first of these is characterized by Nietzsche as a strong and tyrannical will that yearns for the manifold pleasures and satisfactions that the world can offer to a popular composer – things like wealth, fame, prestige, or honors (1.439–40). This tyrannical will demanded of Wagner that his art pander to the audiences in order to achieve the greatest possible effect of *this* kind, that he should provide the modern masses with the most entertaining *divertissements* he possibly can, and reap the bountiful rewards that await such a provider. The other major force in Wagner's soul is "eine ganz reine und freie Kraft" (1.437), which can best be characterized as his love of art itself and of the joy his artistic creating gives him.¹⁴ This force told Wagner that he should strive for the greatest genuinely artistic effect, that his works ought to be "*Gesamthaten seines vielstimmigen Wesens*" (1.445–6), and that his creative activity ought to pay

¹³ The second of these phrasings – ruling thought – seems more accurate in the light of the argument that follows, according to which Wagner's spiritual drama revolves around the struggle of his two principal passions to interpret the "ruling thought" and use it for their respective ends.

¹⁴ The note 11 [42] (8.235) glosses on the subject as follows: "*Treue gegen den Geist der Musik* wurde seine Religion."

no heed to the demands of petty selfishness (the various forms of which have been united as the “tyrannical will”).¹⁵

The further unfolding of Wagner’s spiritual development, or of his spiritual drama, lies in the relation of these two principal forces of his soul to each other. The principle of this development isn’t the suppression of the tyrannical will in favor of the purely artistic force within him, but rather an *integration* of the former into the latter, a process of unifying his soul under the rule of the highest within it (cf. 1.474). The power of his lower passions wasn’t suppressed, but channeled and made useful for the purposes of the higher, ruling force.¹⁶ Wagner understood this process under the slogan of “*Treue, selbstlose Treue*” (1.438): as these two forces keeping faith to each other, the lower (ever more) willing to accept the guidance of the higher, and the higher in turn not abandoning the lower in disgust over its excesses.¹⁷ This is how Wagner fulfilled the imperative of *sei du selbst*: by persuading the two principal forces of his soul to keep faith to each other, and consequently by his soul as a whole keeping faith to his ruling passion for genuine art, practicing it in an ever-higher sense. The more he succeeded at the former, the more he succeeded also at the latter. This is why the motif of *Treue* is so central to all of Wagner’s works (1.438, 1.484): it is an expression of the solution he found to the central internal conflict of his life.

¹⁵ This “tyrannical will” is not analogous to the “plastic force” of *HL*, as Church (2019, 204) thinks: while the former is a set of particular desires, the latter is a general structure at work within every soul. Cf. Chapter II.1.

¹⁶ Parkes (1994, 114) explains one of the utilities of the tyrannical will for the overall unification of Wagner’s soul by pointing out that “there is a strong suggestion that the chaos can be ordered only by a will that derives its *initial* strength from intensely tyrannical desire” (emphasis added) – that the tyrannical will did the essential preparatory work of reining in the many lesser desires under its auspices.

¹⁷ Nietzsche also stresses *love* as characteristic of Wagner along with his *Treue* (1.439, 456, 464, 471, 500). I understand this love as continuous with his philanthropy – whether it works within his soul or on others, it is a selfless and self-sacrificing love of the higher for the lower, for the sake of raising the lower up. We can consider it as Wagner’s way of practicing his *tragische Gesinnung* (cf. below).

However, the preceding account makes this drama look much simpler and easier to resolve than it actually was. During the long period in which this drama played itself out, Wagner could never be sure that this great necessity of his life, this *Treue*, will actually be kept; it was “das Einzige, was er nicht in der Gewalt hatte” (1.439). This uncertainty was a major source of his suffering, which is an instance of the more general class of “Leiden des Werdenden” (1.439): such sufferings await all who strive to become their higher self. The suffering of uncertainty was moreover compounded by the temptations the world offered to his lower part, to the ‘world within him’ (1.440, 1.472), and from the disgust of his higher part over this ‘world’ and its desire to abandon it altogether. “In der Versuchung hiezuh [to the ‘world’] und ebenso in der Abweisung dieser Versuchung liegen seine Gefahren” (1.440); the principal dangers for Wagner’s becoming lay in each of the two parts refusing to keep *Treue* to the other, respectively. The danger was that either the tyrannical will may refuse to obey the artistic force any longer, or that the artistic force would abandon Wagner¹⁸ and leave him only with the tyrannical will and its desiderata.

This internal struggle and the uncertainty of its outcome left Wagner in a peculiar state of mind: at this point “verzweifelte er zwar nicht, ohne doch zu glauben” (1.441). This state of *hopelessness* – neither hoping nor despairing – that was characteristic of Wagner for a long time is, it seems to me, a specifically modern affliction. At this point, Wagner has an inkling of what he wants to be and do, but he cannot accomplish it yet, and neither can he be sure he will ever get to that point. This hopelessness that Wagner felt is a feeling of the pointlessness of life, a feeling that one lacks the direction toward doing anything meaningful, that a way toward living meaningfully is out of sight, out of reach; and given the uncertainty of one’s spiritual development

¹⁸ By ‘abandoning’ I mean here that the force would cease to strive for its original goal. The result would be a Wagner making popular art with a defeatist attitude such as “it is not good art at all, but in *this* world it is impossible to make good art”. It would be a state of *Verzweiflung* in the sense of the following paragraph.

at this point, there is a distinct possibility that it will never get better than this. The symptoms of this hopelessness are described at length at 1.441: the grasping at momentary delights as if there were nothing more to life – for there may not be anything more to it; the incapacity to attain any genuine satisfaction by accomplishing what one strives for; the sense that one’s work has only ephemeral significance and that one need not bother oneself with it too much. It is in this context that Nietzsche speaks of “einer grotesken Würdelosigkeit ganzer Lebensstrecken [Wagners]”, and says that for one in such a state of mind, death or even suicide may appear as desirable, as a sweet release from an endless chain of sufferings. In short, what Wagner experienced – and overcame – at this stage was the misery of the precarious modern, post-death-of-God existence, in which there is no pre-given meaning and no guarantee of success for our projects (or, indeed, of the meaningfulness of our projects at all).¹⁹ This suffering too belongs to the becoming-oneself of the Schopenhauerian man, and Wagner is exemplary in overcoming it.

Wagner also overcame the dangers of the present age oversaturated with learning, which Nietzsche analyzed in *HL* 4–9. He possessed a great plastic power (cf. 1.251), stemming from the combination of the great force of his desires and of his clear plan for life, which is to say of his well-ordered soul. (The latter is most prominent in the last stage of his life, but already in the previous stages Wagner possessed a psychic order sufficient to guide his learning for the purposes of his artistic production.) In this way, Wagner was capable of directing his studies of all the arts, of history (which he used as an artist rather than as a modern ‘objective’ historian – 1.443, cf. 1.290),²⁰ and of philosophy always so that new knowledge would be incorporated into the existing

¹⁹ Goethe has a similar account of the attractiveness of suicide in the modern times – and admits to have struggled with it himself – in Book 13 of *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (*Werke* IX.583–5).

²⁰ This claim may be referring to Aristotle’s thesis that poetry is more philosophic than history (*On Poetics*, 1451b6–7).

order of his soul and used for its overarching goals: “und je grösser und schwerer der Bau, um so straffer spannt sich der Bogen des ordnenden und beherrschenden Denkens” (1.442). His new knowledge would expand his world and capacity to act without breaking apart the structures of meaningfulness that order his world. Consequently, he used knowledge as a stimulant for action rather than as an opiate to satisfy him even with inaction or incapacity for action, as is so often the case with modern men (cf. Chapter II.3). In Wagner’s case, knowledge serves life rather than vice versa. It is in this rather peculiar respect – in his capacity for acting, in his philanthropic striving to reform modern society and the souls of modern men, and *not* in the power of his thinking – that Wagner is “am meisten Philosoph” (1.445).

Corresponding to this spiritual drama runs the drama of Wagner’s outward activity: his spiritual drama is reflected not just in his works and in the prominence of the motif of *Treue* in them (1.438), but also “in der gesammten Gestaltung seines Lebens” (1.435). This drama unfolded itself in three distinct stages, which Nietzsche recounts in *WB* 8. The first was that of the “grand opera”, in which he strived simply to become a popular and successful composer in the style of Giacomo Meyerbeer, the period up to and including *Rienzi*. This stage led to his understanding, and disgusted rejection, of the “ganzen modernen Kunst-Lügenwesen” (1.474). It is now, after the rejection of the modern art-as-*divertissement*, that “er [Musiker und Künstler] jetzt erst geworden [ist]” (1.474).

In the second stage his concerns diametrically changed. He recognized “*das dichtende Volk*” as “den einzigen bisherigen Künstler” (1.475), and he realized that the modern culture industry – including his own previous works – is derivative of the *Volk*’s creativity, and perverts the fruits of this original creativity “zur Befriedigung von *Scheinbedürfnissen*” (1.475). Wagner thus became a social revolutionary, and strived to liberate and re-create the German *Volk* through

his art. He wanted to accomplish this by gathering a multitude that would feel the same basic need as him, the need for “selbstlose Treue”. And insofar as Wagner created his works to satisfy his innermost need, to produce mythical and musical expressions of such *Treue*, his works would provide the same kind of satisfaction to this multitude, which would find “das gleiche Glück [wie Wagner] in dieser Befriedigung” (1.476). The principle of this re-creation of the *Volk*, namely uniting them around the satisfaction of the same supreme needs he himself has, is the same as in *HL 4* (1.278).²¹ Thus Wagner’s works of his second period, most prominently *Tannhäuser* and *Lohengrin*, in effect ask their audience “Wo seid ihr, welche ihr gleich leidet und bedürft wie ich?” (1.477), and invite them to become members of a re-created genuine *Volk*. However, this ambitious enterprise failed miserably: “Niemand gab eine Antwort, Niemand hatte die Frage verstanden” (1.477), and insofar as his works were discussed, they were utterly misunderstood. This failure rested on his insufficient understanding of what his supreme need is – for his supreme need was not the need to establish a national *Treue*; indeed, *Treue* itself was just a symbol of his true need – creating art that expresses the full capacities of his unified soul. He had to improve his understanding of himself and of human life as such before he would be able to succeed.²²

Thus Wagner’s career entered into its third stage, from *Das Rheingold* onward. Here he lost all hope at worldly success – but this moment of resignation is, as with the Schopenhauerian man, actually the moment of his great triumph. His lower will, having lost all prospects of satisfaction, now fully integrated itself into his artistic will, his soul attained full unity, and Wagner became the “dithyrambic dramatist” that he is. He now sees “das Leiden im Wesen der Dinge”

²¹ At the same time this draws on Wagner’s own words: cf. Neymeyr (2020, 2.500).

²² Drochon (2016, 134) ignores the failure of Wagner’s social-revolutionary phase, and imputes the same wish for social revolution also to Nietzsche himself. On my reading, the significance of Wagner’s art for Nietzsche, as well as the focal point of Nietzsche’s project, lie not in the social-political sphere, but rather in the domain of the human soul.

(1.478), and his works become mythical expressions of the world as a whole. He now makes his art as if only for himself, “er spricht durch seine Kunst nur noch mit sich” (1.478), and makes no concessions to any prospective viewers. The exemplary result of this approach is *Tristan und Isolde*, “das eigentliche opus metaphysicum aller Kunst” (1.479). And now also genuine friends appear, people who understand his art and want to help him in its creation and preservation for posterity. Finally, the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 showed him the virtues which Germans still possess and which his art can cultivate in them, their *Tapferkeit* and *Besonnenheit* (1.481; cf. 1.161).

The preservation of his work in its original form, *unentstellt*, now becomes Wagner’s chief concern. He wants to publicly show and teach how his works are to be performed and thus to found a “*Styl-Ueberlieferung*” that “in Wirkungen auf menschliche Seelen eingeschrieben ist” (1.481). It is in this context and for this purpose that he came up with the “*Gedanke von Bayreuth*” (1.483): Bayreuth is meant to be an institution where his art would be preserved, where its proper performance would be carried on, and through which it could have a lasting influence. So he began to seek allies for the project of Bayreuth, founding Wagner societies, and his friends – including Nietzsche²³ – contributed whatever they could. This is Wagner’s final act of *Treue* to his art, and the expression of his friends’ *Treue* to him.

²³ Nietzsche became an official patron of the festival, for which title he had to contribute 900 *Reichsmark*, a huge sum of money. The sale of these expensive *Patronatsscheine* was one of Wagner’s main means of amassing funds for the completion of the *Bayreuther Festspielhaus* (Large 1978, 167). Nietzsche in fact received his *Patronatsschein* from his sister, which delighted Wagner so much that he sent her another one for free (Janz 1978, 1.531).

IV.2 Wagner's Tragic Art

After this outline of Wagner's past we turn to his present with the question of what his art is and what kind of influence it could and should exert. Nietzsche ascribes no small significance to Wagner and his art: he is to be a "Gegen-Alexander" (1.447), a re-Hellenizator of the world. That he can assume this world-historical task at all depends in part on the opportune historical moment in which we find ourselves. Nietzsche tells us that throughout its history, Western culture has oscillated between two poles: the Hellenic and the Oriental. And now, after the death of God – Christianity being "ein Stück orientalischen Alterthums" (1.446) – that stands in the background of Nietzsche's thought already in the *UB* (cf. Chapter I.3), the pendulum of history begins to swing back toward the Hellenic pole, "die Erde [...] sehnt sich wieder nach der Hellenisirung" (1.447). Given the current exhaustion of the Oriental, the only other option available is lack of any culture proper, i.e. descent into barbarism. Wagner thus finds himself in a time of great danger and great opportunity; the question is how he will make use of the situation he finds himself in.

Wagner's means toward this reform of culture as a whole is a reform of the theatre. Nietzsche's model of cultural reform stands on the questionable premise that the various domains of modern life are interconnected with such necessity and reciprocity that a genuine change in one domain will lead to change in all others. Thus, theatre is not a privileged site for such a reform – "auch von jeder anderen wirklichen Reform wäre dasselbe zu erwarten" (1.448) – but it is one of many possible starting points, and the one Wagner has chosen. This reform is to consist in changing "die Stellung unserer Künste zum Leben" (1.448): whereas nowadays they are a *divertissement* from the genuine tasks of our life and an opiate, they are to play an essential role in our self-understanding and to become a stimulant for action. That is to say, theatre and the other arts are to

become for us what they were for the Greeks.²⁴ In thus restoring the proper relation of art to life, Wagner will re-Hellenize our culture – and thereby he bears resemblance to Aeschylus, the inaugurator of the greatest period of Attic tragedy (1.446, 1.467, 1.490), and perhaps even surpasses him (note 11 [25], 8.212).²⁵ If this Wagnerian reform of the theatre succeeds, if tragedy is indeed reborn in modern Germany, the reform will spread to other domains of life, where a discerning eye can detect a lot of hidden rot underneath the pompous facades. In a word, “die grössten Reiche stehen offen” (1.450), are ripe for taking, and Nietzsche voices high hopes for the domain of *Erziehung* in particular, and for the downfall of the entire philistine system of pseudo-culture in general.

The Tragic Sensibility

The means to this reform of theatre and consequently of the entire culture is Wagner’s art, his *tragedy* in the form of musical drama (or *Gesamtkunstwerk*). These tragedies present to us mythic images of the world – for myth, as Wagner and Nietzsche understand it, is not a primitive, obsolete way of explaining natural phenomena, but “[der Mythos] selbst ist ein Denken; er theilt eine Vorstellung von der Welt mit, [nicht in Begriffen], aber in der Abfolge von Vorgängen, Handlungen, und Leiden” (1.485). This is “a truly depth-psychological conception of myth” (Parkes 1994, 83): myth thus understood conveys to us universal features of the world and of the human condition through the depiction of the struggles of individual characters. Being tragedies, Wagner’s works always depict “den Kampf der Einzelnen mit Allem” (1.451), the struggle of the heroes against the ‘world’ and its alleged ‘necessities’ that conspire against their strivings – and

²⁴ Nietzsche follows here Wagner’s own ideas from *Die Kunst und die Revolution* (cf. Neymeyr 2020, 2.421–3).

²⁵ Besides Aeschylus, Wagner is prominently analogized also to Alexander the Great (1.434, 447).

their eventual defeat. Wagner shows us individuals attempting great deeds against overwhelming odds, and their perseverance in their endeavor at any cost, including at the cost of their own life.

And this is genuinely noble (*καλόν*), Nietzsche tells us (1.451; cf. 1.319):

Die Einzelnen können gar nicht schöner leben, als wenn sie sich im Kampfe um Gerechtigkeit und Liebe zum Tode reif machen und opfern.

In presenting such images of heroic struggle against the ‘world’ to us, Wagner gives us “den *Schein* einer einfacheren Welt” (1.452, cf. 1.447): they show in an oversimplified form what is right and wrong, what is noble and base, what kind of life is worth living.²⁶ They provide us with a way of ordering our desires and giving us a compass for the complex world of actual experience, teaching us that a life on unconditional devotion to our highest values – a moral life – is to be preferred to everything else. These mythic images are, however, *not* history, not even in Nietzsche’s expansive sense of the word: “die Kunst ist freilich keine Lehrerin und Erzieherin für das unmittelbare Handeln”, and the desiderata of the tragic heroes are “nicht ohne Weiteres die erstrebenswerthen Dinge an sich” (1.452; contrast with 1.258, where Nietzsche paraphrases Polybius on history as “die rechte Vorbereitung zur Regierung eines Staates und die vorzüglichste Lehrmeisterin”, i.e. a teacher for immediate action; and 1.262, where monumental history ceases to be history when its monumentalization goes so far as to create a “mythic fiction” instead of a history).²⁷ But if Wagner’s mythic images of the world are useless for practice, as Nietzsche expressly admits here, the question opens up as to what are they good for at all.

²⁶ This, and more broadly the entire account of the tragic sensibility, is the “didactic role” of art that Church (2019, 213) doesn’t see.

²⁷ Thus I disagree with Brooks’ (2018, 204) claim that the Wagner of *WB* is “the monumental historiographer described in *HL*”: he is a *mythopoet* rather than a historian of any sort. Church (2019, 209) also takes Wagner to be a historian, namely the “true historian” of *HL* 6. Contrary to Zuckert (1970, 165), it is *facts* rather than values that are distorted in art; although the desiderata of the tragic hero are not desiderata *an sich*, art nevertheless accurately depicts the tragic sensibility [*tragische Gesinnung*], and in this central sense, art doesn’t distort “values”.

Art has no *practical* use, Nietzsche tells us, because it is “die Thätigkeit des Ausruhenden” (1.452). It is a means of relaxing ourselves in between the episodes of our own struggles with the ‘world’, it is a safe haven in the midst of a stormy and perilous world (1.449; cf. 1.324), and thereby it strengthens us “zu weiterem und höherem Wollen” (1.449): it is a stimulant for further action. And even more than that: art, and in particular Wagner’s art, provides us with solace [*Tröstung*] in the face of “der grössten Leiden des Einzelnen, die es giebt” (1.451–2):

die Nichtgemeinschaft des Wissens bei allen Menschen, die Unsicherheit der letzten Einsichten und die Ungleichheit des Könnens [...] Man kann nicht glücklich sein, so lange um uns herum Alles leidet und sich Leiden schafft; man kann nicht sittlich sein, so lange der Gang der menschlichen Dinge durch Gewalt, Trug und Ungerechtigkeit bestimmt wird; man kann nicht einmal weise sein, so lange nicht die ganze Menschheit im Wetteifer um Weisheit gerungen hat und den Einzelnen auf die weiseste Art in’s Leben und Wissen hineinführt.

These are, as Lampert (2017, 112) notes, *spiritual* sufferings – and this attitude is the more remarkable, the more one knows of the extent of Nietzsche’s physical sufferings (ibid., n12).²⁸ To understand what exactly these sufferings are, it is useful to consider what they are privations of. What we lack is the commonality of knowledge to all men, the certainty of knowledge, and the equal capacities to act on the part of all humans. The reason why these insights into the essential limitedness and inequality of human capacities constitute the greatest human suffering is that they create a tremendous tension within the soul of the knower, namely “die Spannung zwischen der allgemeinen Erkenntniss der Dinge und dem geistig-sittlichen Vermögen des Einzelnen” (1.453). In other words, they produce a tension between, on the one hand, the Schopenhauerian man’s love

²⁸ “No philosopher ever suffered as Nietzsche suffered” (Huenemann 2013, 67). His sickness consisted of three sets of symptoms: an eye affliction that made “reading and writing extremely difficult and painful” (ibid.); severe migraines that would render him incapacitated for days; and various kinds of digestive issues, such as “stundenlanges Erbrechen, ohne etwas gegessen zu haben” (letter to Carl von Gersdorff, around 26 June 1875; KGB II.5, 64). Nietzsche’s sickness manifested itself as early as 1871 (15.27) and continued to plague him throughout his active life. It was apparently at its worst in 1879, at the end of which year he reported to his sister that “im letzten Jahre hatte ich 118 *schwere* Anfallstage” (15.112), but it was severe already in the period of the *UB* (Janz 1978, 1.609 informs us that since the middle of 1875 the condition had become serious and permanent), and it was the main outward cause for Nietzsche’s early retirement from his professorship in Basel.

of mankind, his *philanthropy*, which desires – demands, even – that the redeeming insight into the being of life, of the world as a whole, and its concomitant happiness become universal, that every human being be given the means to be as happy as is humanly possible in this world; and on the other hand, the *knowledge* that the gap between the few and the many is unbridgeable, that most human beings will never attain the genuine human good of having become who they are, that the goal of the philanthrope in us is unattainable. *This* tension between philanthropy and knowledge is, for Nietzsche of the *UB*, the greatest suffering one can suffer: to know that however much one may strive to bring about genuine and universal human goods, the majority of human beings are nevertheless condemned to a life that amounts to senseless suffering. This is also the highest level of the insoluble conflict between truth and life.

Wagner's art provides its audience, and especially the highest kind of its audience, those who have attained the insight of the Schopenhauerian man, with a temporary illusion – for a mythic fiction is factually untrue by definition – that allows them to forget this knowledge, this 'deadly truth', and thus to relax the immense tension which they normally have to bear: "*damit der Bogen nicht breche, ist die Kunst da*" (1.453). Wagner's art thereby allows us to keep on working on our tasks, which ultimately means on the task of *sei du selbst* – which is, not accidentally, also the task from which Wagner's own sufferings arose and which he depicts in various guises in his tragedies.

But Wagner's art relaxes this spiritual tension also in a second way. Being art, it is in principle accessible to everyone, unlike philosophy – and so any man as man can draw inner strength from its joyful illusions. Thanks to this it is possible that it becomes the basis of a universal community, a community to which anyone – and so potentially *everyone* – can belong and take part in. It is in this sense that Wagner's art points to a future in which "der Schimpf, welcher bisher dem Worte 'gemein' anklebte, wird [...] von ihm weggenommen sein" (1.504): a future in which

all men, high and low, can equally enjoy Wagner's art, and learn from its mythical images of the world the meaning of their own life. It promises the possibility of a genuine brotherhood of men, even though this brotherhood would rest on the shared enjoyment of illusions. This universal accessibility of Wagner's art is also the reason why it is not merely German, but *überdeutsch* and belongs to all "*Menschen der Zukunft*" (1.505; cf. Chapter IV.4).²⁹

The argument of *WB* 4 culminates in the final paragraph of this chapter, where Nietzsche names the attitude which Wagner's heroes exhibit and which his art instills in its audience: it is "tragische Gesinnung" (1.453). This tragic sensibility is the attitude that "der Einzelne soll zu etwas Ueberpersönlichem geweiht werden" (1.453); that the struggle for noble goals is worthwhile in itself, regardless of the eventual result, may one fight for them against the entire world and its 'necessities'; that striving for our highest goals is worth infinitely more than the comfortable life of petty selfishness; or, to use a Platonic phrase, that "the most important thing is not life, but the good life" (*Crito* 48b). But it is not just individuals who can profit from incorporating this sensibility, by far not: the survival and spreading of the tragic sensibility is the sole *Hoffnung* and *Gewähr* for "die Zukunft des Menschlichen" (1.453). If and only if men adopt the tragic sensibility, can mankind become united by the realization that they share the same supreme need and that

²⁹ By this pronouncement Nietzsche interprets away Wagner's own *völkisch*-nationalist tendencies (cf. e.g. Wagner 1983, 9.106/ 1966, V.123) as irrelevant to the true, universal importance of his art; cf. also the note 11 [4], 8.190. Hereby he, incidentally, provided an invaluable benefaction to Wagner and his legacy: "without Nietzsche, [the reception of Wagner's work] would have been completely dominated by the anti-Semitic nationalist ideology in which Wagner's oeuvre was enveloped at the most official and authoritative source, the Bayreuth of the composer's widow and of Houston Stewart Chamberlain" (Berger 2017, 375). Nietzsche describes Wagner's art as *überdeutsch* also in *JGB* 256.

His idea of the "good European", which appears in the works from *MA* onward (Prange 2013, 170), is prefigured here for the first time. Contrary to Taylor (1997, 10), who thinks that the early Nietzsche is concerned with "the regeneration of German culture and society" in particular and even believes that Nietzsche frequently invokes "the 'German Spirit' as a source of the highest value and significance" (ibid.), I believe Nietzsche's thought always had universalist ambitions, and its concern with German matters is simply a function of Nietzsche (and Wagner) being German: Germany and the Germans were the closest objects of his attention, the environment in which he grew up and with which he was most familiar. Cf. the note 29 [47] (7.645).

Wagner's art provides a satisfaction of their shared need. Mankind could thus become *one* and transcend the barriers set up by conventions of all sorts, and face its future, up to and including its inevitable doom, "als *ein Ganzes*" (1.453).

Only in this way can the rule of chance and conventions over the human affairs, which was hitherto the case, be overcome, not just by a few extremely fortunate individuals as it was until now, but in an important sense by mankind as a whole. The only real alternative to this is, again, descent into barbarism, accelerated if not effected by our newfound awareness of the deadly truths (including the truth of the eventual demise of our entire species, as we've just seen). "In dieser höchsten Aufgabe", in the spreading of the tragic sensibility, "liegt alle Veredelung der Menschen eingeschlossen" (1.453); and herein thereby lies the possibility of the only genuine "Fortgang der Menschheit" (1.453) – of *human progress*. What a word for *Nietzsche* to use in all seriousness! And he confirms his seriousness by emphatically stating "So empfinde ich es!" (1.453) as his next sentence. In a word, *this* is the true promise of Bayreuth, *this* is the mission of Wagner's art in human history: the unification and ennoblement of mankind in the only genuine way, by teaching men to value living well more than merely living. A "welthistorischer Accent" (*EH GT 4*) indeed, if there ever was one: Nietzsche imagines here a global cultural reform on the utmost limits of the humanly possible, and quite likely beyond them.

The Experience of Wagner's Art

Wagner's art is supposed to have these immense effects on its audience thanks to the immense artistic powers Wagner disposes with. It is his incomparable artistry that gives his nature its "dämonische Mittheilbarkeit" (1.485; cf. 1.466), its capacity to convey feelings and states of mind with such power. Nietzsche describes several notable features of Wagner's artistry in *WB 9*.

One of them is his work with the German language, which he “zwang [...] in einen Urzustand zurück” (1.486), into a state resembling that before its modern corruption (which was amply exemplified in *DS* 11–12; Wagner’s analysis of this corruption is related at 1.455–6, and it will be discussed in Chapter IV.3). Another one is Wagner’s chief innovation in music: according to Nietzsche he is the first to develop a musical language “des Pathos, des leidenschaftlichen Wollens” (1.491). In this he went beyond Beethoven, who expressed pathos not directly, but through a sequence of individual states, from which the listener had to “guess” [*errathen*] the entire “Bogen einer Leidenschaft” (1.492). But Wagner went further than expressing just a single passion in his compositions: indeed, “Alles, was durch [seine Musik] redet, Mensch oder Natur, hat eine streng individualisirte Leidenschaft” (1.493). His music thus depicts the world as a dynamic interplay of various passions, each struggling for its own goal and many struggling against each other, but the ultimate effect of this apparent chaos and discord is a harmony of a higher kind, a *ἁρμονίη ἀφανής* (Heraclitus B 54). Thus, Nietzsche tells us, Wagner’s music as a whole is (1.494)

ein Abbild der Welt, sowie diese von dem grossen ephesischen Philosophen verstanden wurde, als eine Harmonie, welche der Streit aus sich zeugt, als die Einheit von Gerechtigkeit und Feindschaft.

The combination of the poetic and musical elements of Wagner’s artistry allowed him to present his heroes to us with a hitherto unprecedented clarity and intensity. In a Wagnerian work, we see the passion of the hero, and indeed every dramatic process, “in einer dreifachen Verdeutlichung, durch Wort, Gebärde und Musik” (1.488). Thanks to this, the passion of a Wagnerian hero is transmitted “unmittelbar auf die Seelen der Zuhörer” (1.488), unlike in a spoken drama, where the audience needs to process the speeches to grasp the underlying passion. And finally, although Wagner is well aware of his manifold artistic mastery, he doesn’t show it off, “er trägt nichts Epideiktisches an sich” (1.495): to the contrary, his sole concern is to effect the greatest possible

absorption into his work on the audience's part, and thus to ensure the greatest possible effect of his work on them. Therefore he composes so that "man fühlt allein das *Nothwendige*" (1.495–6).

On this basis Nietzsche describes the experience of absorption into the Wagnerian tragedy in the fourth paragraph of *WB* 6, and in the rhapsodic single-paragraph *WB* 7, as a descent into a cave in which our notions of life, nature, and reality itself will be shaken. In the former passage, Wagner's art itself is said so speak to its audience as follows (1.464):

Ihr *sollt* durch meine Mysterien hindurch, [...] ihr braucht ihre Reinigungen und Erschütterungen. Wagt es zu eurem Heil und lasst einmal das trüb erleuchtete Stück Natur und Leben, welches ihr allein zu kennen scheint; ich führe euch in ein Reich, das ebenfalls wirklich ist, ihr selber sollt sagen, wenn ihr aus meiner Höhle in euren Tag zurückkehrt, welches Leben wirklicher und wo eigentlich der Tag, wo die Höhle ist. Die Natur ist nach innen zu viel reicher, gewaltiger, seliger, furchtbarer, ihr kennt sie nicht, so wie ihr gewöhnlich lebt: lernt es, selbst wieder Natur zu werden und lasst euch dann mit und in ihr durch meinen Liebes- und Feuerzauber verwandeln.

There is a similar account of the disorienting and alienating character of the Wagnerian experience also at 1.468. Brooks (2018, 213) takes these passages to constitute a reversal of the famous Platonic image of the cave, which culminates in the ascent out of the cave. For Brooks this means that in the *UB*, all knowledge is considered to be a human fabrication ("knowledge of nature exists inside the cave because knowledge of nature is created in the cave" – *ibid.*), and an ascent out of the cave into the light of the sun is impossible: "for the early Nietzsche, there are only caves because life flourishes within the closed horizon of a cave" (*ibid.*, 214).

Such a reading of these passages rests on a misunderstanding of the image of the cave itself. Eugen Fink (1970, 54 ff.) points out that Plato didn't invent the symbol of the cave: he took it over and adapted it from the Eleusinian mysteries. The initiates into these mysteries 'die' and are 'reborn', and in this process they attain "'Einblicke', durch die sie selber von Grund auf verwandelt worden sind" (*ibid.*, 55). These insights have to do with the unity and eternity of all life, which is found "nicht jenseits des Werdens, [sondern] gerade *im* Werden" (*ibid.*): they are insights which,

as far as I can tell, are quite akin to Nietzsche's "answer of Empedocles" (cf. Chapter III.3). And, crucially, the initiation into these mysteries took place "in Erdhöhlen und unterirdischen Klüften beim nächtlichen Fackelschein" (ibid., 56) – in the same conditions into which Plato placed the *prisoners* of his cave. Knowing all this, it becomes clear that Plato's allegory of the cave presents philosophy as "*umgekehrtes Eleusis*" (ibid.), as a new and higher form of life-changing insight that (among other things) replaces the Eleusinian principle of the Earth by the principle of Light.

It also becomes clear that what Nietzsche points to in using the language of the mysteries to describe the effect of Wagner's art is not a rejection of Plato's image of the cave and its concomitant rationalism – it is rather a restoration of Eleusis.³⁰ Just as the initiates of the mysteries, the audience of Wagner's art will descend into the depths of a 'cave', of the *Bayreuther Festspielhaus*, in order to be shaken and purified, and consequently to attain an insight that will transform their entire being. They will encounter "a sudden vision", as the initiates in Eleusis did (Hadot 2002, 70). In this vision, everything visible wants "sich vertiefen und verinnerlichen" into the audible, and conversely, everything audible wants "auch als Erscheinung für das Auge an's Licht hinaus und hinauf"; Wagner thus manages "die sichtbare Bewegtheit in Seele und Urleben zurück zu übersetzen", and vice versa (1.467). In other words, Wagner makes the motions, desirings, and strivings of his heroes into visible and audible representations of the fundamental drama of human life or soul, of the drama of *sei du selbst*. It is this capacity of Wagner to make

³⁰ This conflation of art and religion, particularly of Attic tragedy and Greek mystery religions, can be seen already in *GT* (1.66, 1.68, 1.73), and also in notes such as 3 [77] (7.81); 9 [102] (7.311): "*Kunst und Religion* im griechischen Sinne identisch."; 19 [36] (7.429); or 19 [38] (7.431), which describes religion as a work of art that "einem außerordentlichen Bedürfnisse entspricht" (cf. 1.278). Without delving too deeply into this issue, I would like to point out that the fact that our principal sources on the Greek gods are poets – above all, Homer and Hesiod – was likely salient to Nietzsche's reflections on the close relation between Greek religion and art. Patočka (1996, 142–3) offers an interesting account of the shared roots of myth, religion, and poetry in ecstatic experiences.

the essence of human life manifest that makes him the “dithyrambic dramatist” (1.467, 1.471, 1.472).

Seeing this vision, the audience will be overwhelmed by the power of Wagner’s art, “welche den Widerstand der Vernunft aufhebt” (1.468): which abolishes the resistance not of reason as such, but rather of the ‘common sense’ of the ordinary everyday experience. Here the question will arise: “wozu bist denn *du* eigentlich da?” (1.466) – and the realization may come that they have no good answer to it, that their everyday life is a pointless bad infinity. They will realize that they don’t know what nature is “so wie ihr gewöhnlich lebt” (1.464), when possessed by the petty concerns of the philistine “‘Ernst des Lebens’, soll heissen [der] Beruf, das Geschäft, sammt Weib und Kind” (1.170). It is this realization, this shaking of our self-assured ‘reason’, that Wagner’s art effects by depicting the fundamental drama of the human soul. This shaking can provide the starting point for the effort of “selbst wieder Natur zu werden” (1.464), for the effort of living in accordance with the nature of the erotic-historic soul, to those who weren’t able to come to this perspective by their own unaided striving.³¹ In this sense, Wagner’s *art* is return to *nature* (“diese Musik ist Rückkehr zur Natur, während sie zugleich Reinigung und Umwandlung der Natur ist” – 1.456): it re-naturalizes the *natura denaturata* of modern humans. Thus Wagner creates in order to make his audience equal to himself (in the sense of them all desiring the same good, of having the same ruling passion) – “um endlich Liebe und nicht mehr Anbetung zu finden” (1.471). He wants equals rather than followers, he wants people who share his understanding of human life – that is his philanthropy.

³¹ I.e. to people less ‘heroic’ than the likes of Nietzsche, Goethe, Wagner, or Schopenhauer.

The phrase “ihr selber sollt sagen [...] wo eigentlich der Tag, wo die Höhle ist” (1.464) refers to the above-mentioned shaking of the petty, ordinary ‘common sense’: the light of this ‘common sense’ is in fact much dimmer, much more of an illusion than the illusions on show in Wagner’s ‘cave’. We can thus say that Wagner’s art leads us into the cave not from the bright light of the sun, as Brooks (2018, 213) thinks, but rather from another, even deeper cave of the philistine pseudo-culture. The ascent from the cave of Wagner’s art is a further task that each individual must accomplish for themselves, and for which that art can serve only as a stimulant in hours of relaxation.

But isn’t there nevertheless an implied critique of Plato in this appeal to the liberating power of *art*? After all, Plato had the poets cast out from the city in the *Republic* (398a), as Nietzsche reminds us at 1.468, and relied on philosophy alone.³² Doesn’t this indicate for Nietzsche a shortcoming on Plato’s part, consisting in an undue devaluation of art? There is a comment of this kind in the fragment 10 [1] (7.349), where Nietzsche judges that Plato “in seinem vollkommenen Staat nicht den Genius in seinem allgemeinsten Begriff an die Spitze stellte, sondern nur den Genius der Weisheit”. However, this fragment is from early 1871, and the discussion of Plato in *WB* 7, written some four to five years later, takes a different direction. Nietzsche is here silent on the various kinds of genius, and instead he points out that we need a poet like Wagner precisely because we *don’t* live in a state like a Greek *polis* – let alone in the city of the *Republic* – but rather in a denatured modern society (cf. Lampert 2017, 116). His art can lift us up only from the artificial second cave into the natural first cave: that is the chief purpose and the utility of the illusions his works present to us moderns. From there on, the striving toward our true nature that

³² This is of course leaving aside the artistry of Plato himself: the dramatic form and content of his dialogues, the vivid characters he presents us, his imagery, and the myths he invents. I also take the issue of the musical education of the guardians in the *Republic* (and in the *Laws*) to be separate from this; it will be discussed in Chapter IV.3.

is “unermesslich hoch über [uns]” (1.340–1) is up to us, and the poet can only help us by relaxing the spiritual tension that this striving builds up in us. This relaxing – which is not to be mistaken for *divertissement* – is, on my reading of the *UB*, also what the tragic poets accomplished for the inhabitants of the natural cave of the Greek *polis*.

* * *

This account of tragedy bears strong continuities with that of *GT*. As in *WB*, tragedy in *GT* provides metaphysical *Trost* against the ‘deadly truth’ that kills all action: “die Erkenntniss tödtet das Handeln, zum Handeln gehört das Umschleiertsein durch die Illusion” (1.57). However, the ‘deadly truth’ in *GT* is quite different from its counterparts in the *UB* (cf. 1.319, 1.452): in *GT* it consists of the awareness of the undifferentiated mass of human sufferings that is expressed in the wisdom of Silenus, according to which the best thing for man is “nicht geboren zu sein, nicht zu sein, nichts zu sein. Das Zweitbeste aber ist für dich – bald zu sterben” (1.35). Human existence thus understood is in need of an aesthetic justification, and this is what tragedy provided for the Greeks, and what Wagner’s art can provide for us moderns according to *GT* (1.47, 1.69, 1.152, 1.154). The accounts of the Dionysian experience of the spectators of a tragedy are quite similar as well (compare e.g. 1.109 with 1.465 or 1.468; cf. Parkes 1994, 112), even though Nietzsche doesn’t use the term ‘Dionysian’ in *WB*. But there is a crucial difference in the *purpose* of tragedy. In *GT*, this justification of existence seems to be a goal for itself, unconnected with any other, higher goals: tragedy was *the* way to make life livable before the ascent of Socratic rationalism, and will become this again after the imminent collapse of Socratic rationalism (cf. *GT* 18). On the other hand, in *WB*, the justification of human sufferings effected by tragedy is to serve higher goals: namely the goal of (self-)education of genuine human beings, and that of creating a genuine

community. The conception of *sei du selbst*, of becoming the genius that is dormant within us, which is so central to the project of the *UB*, is entirely absent from *GT*.

Nietzsche's belief is that all this can have an immense effect on the culture and the world as a whole, once the changed audience starts changing their own lives. Wagner's art is exceptional because of the clarity and intensity with which it presents its audience the fundamental drama of the human soul. This makes it powerful enough to effect a change in the audience's lives, to alienate them from their regular comfortable existence and to make them desire to undergo this drama themselves, inasmuch as they are capable of it – and in this sense it re-naturalizes them. It also instills in them the tragic sensibility, the sense that to undergo this drama is good for them regardless of the suffering involved and of the eventual outcome: it gives them the *courage* to live more nobly, and it provides the solace against the greatest human suffering, the suffering from the awareness of fundamental inequality of men. On a larger scale, it can create a *people*, a group of individuals who are united by the same supreme need they feel and by the satisfaction to this need that Wagner's art provides them with (cf. 1.277–8 and Lampert 2017, 120–1).³³ And, at the highest possible level, this universal character of Wagner's music may even effect, or at least contribute to, the unification and ennoblement of mankind as a whole.

Two caveats must be added to this account. First, one must carefully distinguish two groups within Wagner's audience: those who actually strive to attain their higher selves, the would-be Schopenhauerian men; and those who don't. For the former group – for Nietzsche of necessity a

³³ While Church (2019, 149) is correct that philosophers are legislators of values for Nietzsche, this does not make them the founders of a people (*ibid.*) – that is a separate task which belongs to the artist. He is more accurate in saying that Nietzsche thought Wagner to be the best hope for a transformation of culture at large, but this does not make him a “distinctively modern exemplar” (*ibid.*, 227–8), as is shown also by the multiple comparisons of Wagner to Aeschylus (1.446, 1.467, 1.490).

small minority – the main use of Wagner’s art is the solace they can derive from it, the relaxing of their spiritual tension that prevents them from breaking down. For the latter group, Wagner’s art is in effect an illusion which they admire, not a reality which they enact; but insofar as they enjoy this illusion and admire its core teaching – the tragic sensibility – they can take part in (or at least not hinder) the projects of those who carry out this imperative in their own lives. The actual community Wagner’s art can create is hierarchical. The allegedly universal, egalitarian community in which the word ‘common’ [*gemein*] is no longer an insult (cf. 1.504) is based on an illusion, on the noble lie that the highest human good is universally accessible, and that the audience of Wagner’s works is actually accessing it in the act of enjoying these works. Insofar as there is equality in this community, it would be limited to the act of spectating Wagner’s works. Wagner’s art is thus a provider of salutary illusions, a “wahre Helferin” (1.281) of philosophy.

Second, it is highly questionable how far Wagner’s work could change mankind as a whole, even if one admits that it has the capacity to (re)create a people. For there are many peoples and many artists, and it is difficult to imagine that, as powerful as Wagner’s art may be, it will work equally powerfully on everyone regardless of their mother tongue and other differences, and that Wagner would achieve an unquestioned preeminence over all other artists. But perhaps a weaker version of this argument would be defensible: if Wagner would succeed in (re)creating a people – be it the German people, a ‘people’ of Wagnerians of various nations, or anything else – and if the ennobling effects of his art among this ‘people’ would be visible enough, perhaps other artists would follow Wagner’s suit, create works with similar potential, and (re)create other noble(r) peoples. The Earth would then not be united, but it would at least be divided into multiple noble cultures which would compete with each other in human excellence, as the Greek *πόλεις* did in

Nietzsche's view.³⁴ A multitude of noble cultures in an *ἀγών* with each other for *κλέος ἀέναον θνητῶν* would for Nietzsche surely be a great breeding ground for genius of all kinds, and definitely a major improvement over the contemporary situation.

IV.3 Wagnerian Musical Education

Looking forward into Wagner's future, Nietzsche sees another way in which his music would be particularly beneficial for the denatured modern men: it could serve as a basis of a *musical education*. That is to say, it could serve as a means by which one could “den Staat auf Musik [...] gründen”, and thereby follow the example of “älteren Hellenen” (1.458), who demanded this of themselves. To see what precisely is entailed by this proposal, we need carefully to follow the argument of *WB* 5–6.

Wagner understands the crisis of modernity through one of its most visible symptoms – the alienation of language. In the modern world, language is forced “fortwährend auf die letzten Sprossen des [der Sprache] Erreichbaren [zu] steigen” (1.455), so as to provide an adequate conceptual apparatus for the rapidly expanding edifice of science. It thus becomes ever more adapted to the needs of modern science, and its registers become oriented ever more on “Gedanken” rather than on “Gefühl” (1.455). But there is a major unforeseen consequence to this ‘theoreticization’ of language: through this process it also becomes ever less capable of fulfilling its primary task, namely “über die einfachsten Lebensnöthe die Leidenden miteinander zu

³⁴ Cf. *Homer's Wettkampf*, and Nietzsche's account of the Seven Sages in his lectures on the Pre-Platonic philosophers (KGW II.4, 226–30). Here he points out that only four names are always present among the Seven (Thales, Solon, Bias, and Pittacus), whereas the holders of the other three “Ehrenstellen” were *sought*, and cities strove to add their particular wise man to this exclusive group. There were in total 22 men who were (at various times and places) counted among the Seven; Nietzsche describes this situation as “ein großer Wettkampf der σοφία” (ibid., 228).

verständigen” (1.455) – these needs being *felt* and thus requiring language likewise oriented on feeling. Thus, thanks to this alienation of language from its original purpose, modern men have become alienated from their true needs. They are unable to communicate them, and even to express them for themselves. Simply said, they no longer have words for them – this is what Nietzsche means when he says that we moderns have to suffer also “das Leiden der *Convention*” (1.455) in addition to our other, more universal sufferings. And, Nietzsche tells us, this is a major problem, as feeling is more primary for humans than thinking and concepts, and man can hardly be made “zu einem richtig denkenden und schliessenden Wesen” if he isn’t first made “zu einem richtig Empfindenden [Wesen]” (1.456).

Nietzsche’s expression in *WB* for this self-alienation of man is “unrichtige Empfindung” – a term loosely based on an argument from Wagner’s *Oper und Drama* (cf. Wagner 1983, 7.225/1966, II.231). He then proceeds to analyze the influence of the “unrichtige Empfindung” on modern life in terms that are consistent with the critique of the philistine pseudo-culture he made in *DS* 1–3. The two principal instances of “unrichtige Empfindung” in the modern world, discussed at 1.462, are the valuation of moneymaking over higher human pursuits, and the valuation of the timely affairs over “die Sorge für die ewigen Anliegenheiten”. In short, “unrichtige Empfindung” means the instinctive attitudes of the sick modern soul (cf. Chapter II.3) that doesn’t know its genuine good and seeks its good instead in pursuing the satisfaction of various insatiable – in fact, unsatisfiable – desires that are mere extensions of our animality (cf. 1.378). Nietzsche emphasizes the latter feature of “unrichtige Empfindung” with phrases like “da ist kein Hunger und kein Sattwerden” (1.460) or “die Allgegenwart einer schmutzigen unersättlichen Begehrlichkeit” (1.462). In short, the incorrectly feeling moderns “Glück nennen, was ihr Unglück ist” (1.461).

This alienation can go so far as to make them into “willenlose Sklaven der unrichtigen Empfindung” (1.461),³⁵ into automata whose lives are completely governed by external structures such as work, journalism, and public opinion, and whose decisions and plans are mere choices from pre-given options provided by these conventional structures (cf. Chapter I.2); as Hutter (2006, 31) puts it, “in such conditions, human beings do not live, they are being lived”.³⁶ The only power within them that objects to the barbaric life they lead is their conscience, and therefore they strive hard to silence it. Their learning has “jenen *vorbereitend apologetischen* Charakter” (1.463) against the accusations of their conscience, against the voice that tells them – if only ever so quietly – that “das bist du alles nicht, was du jetzt thust, meinst, begehrst” (1.338). And their consumption of art is to provide them with “entweder ein Nichts oder ein böses Etwas” (1.461), with “Stumpfsinn oder Rausch” (1.463): it is *divertissement*, a way of temporarily silencing the incorruptible critic within their souls. This is why under these circumstances “muss uns sogar der *erklärte Kunstfeind* als ein wirklicher und nützlicher Bundesgenosse gelten” (1.460): his hostility against the arts is hostility against their contemporary debased form, against art as *divertissement*. In short, the alienated modern men have no way of facing their conscience squarely and of carrying out what it asks of them (cf. 1.338) – that much is said by the word “unrichtige Empfindung” – and thus they “wollen ja lieber gejagt, verwundet und zerrissen werden, als mit sich selber in der Stille beisammenwohnen zu müssen” (1.461).

Such is Wagner’s diagnosis of the alienation of modern humanity. Moreover, he sees music as a necessary corrective against this alienation. He sees evidence of the *necessity* of this relationship in the fact that it is precisely now, in the modern times, that music achieved an

³⁵ This phrase harks back to the “geplagten Sklaven der drei M, des Moments, der Meinungen und der Moden” from *SE* 6 (1.392).

³⁶ This, too, is a form of slavery in Nietzsche’s eyes: cf. Chapter I, fn. 17.

unheard-of prominence above the other forms of art, and in the emergence of a “Reihe von grossen Künstlern” (1.454), from Bach through Beethoven to Wagner himself, in the recent past. But how can music help us, insofar as we are an “um *bewusste Freiheit* und um *Unabhängigkeit des Gedankens* kämpfendes Dasein” (1.454), to overcome the affliction of “unrichtige Empfindung”? How is music, in Wagner’s – and Nietzsche’s – view, capable of teaching us “*richtige Empfindung*” (1.456)? What is the relation between music and life – genuinely *human* life – that they saw?

I believe the answer has to do with the ‘content’ of Wagner’s music, with what it ‘represents’. If we take our bearing from the argument of Chapter IV.2, “was kommt [in Wagners Musik] eigentlich zu erklingen” (1.456) is a very intense and clear articulation of the need to live nobly rather than comfortably, an articulation that is unique to the medium of music. One need not believe with Schopenhauer that music is “unmittelbar Abbild des Willens selbst” (WWV I, § 52; *Werke* I.366) to know from personal experience that it has an extraordinary power of appealing to our passions, whether by rousing or soothing them, whether by putting them into a tension or by harmonizing them. In a word, music has a unique way of speaking to our feelings. If we keep this in mind, it is no longer that surprising to claim that music may be able to play an important role in the cultivation of our passions or feelings, in the sentimental education of modern man. And it becomes even less surprising when we remember that there is another thinker, central not just to Nietzsche’s thought, but to all of Western philosophy, who stressed the power of music to affect the irrational parts of our soul – our ‘feelings’ in contemporary parlance – and the educative uses of this power of music: namely the divine Plato, who gave a prominent place to musical education both in the *Republic* (376e–403e) and in the *Laws* (Books II and VII).

For Plato, the purpose of education in general is properly to order the irrational passions of the human soul even before reason becomes capable of doing such ordering, so that reason faces less resistance from the irrational parts of the soul when the time comes for it to assert itself as the soul's proper ruling faculty. As the Athenian Stranger explains in the *Laws* (653b),

Pleasure and liking, pain and hatred, become correctly arranged in the souls of those who are not yet able to reason, and then, when the souls do become capable of reasoning, these passions can in consonance [*συμφωνία*] with reason affirm that they have been correctly habituated in the appropriate habits.

Education, then, aims at the young (in the biological sense), at those whose reason is not yet fully developed. Their passions nevertheless need to be ordered in a way that is in accord with the future order in which reason is the rightful ruler of one's soul. However, since reason cannot do this work yet, we need non-rational means for this ordering. And these means are the various musical arts, as the Stranger goes on to explain: he says that (*Laws* 653d)

the gods have ordained the change of holidays as times of rest from labor. They have given as fellow celebrants the Muses, with their leader Apollo, and Dionysus – in order that these divinities may set humans right again.

He then adds that the gods have also given us “the pleasant perception of rhythm and harmony” (*Laws* 654a), perceptions which allow us to enjoy songs and dances, and finally suggests that choruses – a chorus being “the combination of dance and song taken together as a whole” (*Laws* 654b) – divided by age and sex groups, with a content suited for each particular group, would be the best way of habituating the souls of the citizens of Magnesia to virtue.³⁷

Musical education for Plato entails not just dancing, but also gymnastics in a wider sense: gymnastics arises from, and cultivates (*Laws* 673a), the natural human tendency to move and jump

³⁷ Valiquette Moreau (2017) offers a valuable account of why the *musical* part of “musical education” is essential to its efficacy, which served as an inspiration for the argument of this section. She shows that in the *Republic*, Socrates argues that “the soul has a musical structure” and that it “requires tuning in order to achieve harmony” (ibid., 203) – i.e. tuning by the means of suitable music. That is why in the *Republic*, “music is the means by which [the guardians] are to preserve the system of education upon which the harmony of the city depends” (ibid., 201).

around that we exhibit as soon as we can. Music, its counterpart, cultivates our natural tendency to make noises of all sorts: “these motions and cries were the source of music and gymnastic” (*Laws* 672c). Nietzsche was familiar with this Platonic conception, as can be seen from the note 5 [14] (7.95–6), in which he made notes on some of the same passages that are discussed in the two preceding paragraphs. We may, then, safely assume that he was aware also of the basic principle underlying the Platonic musical education: as the Athenian Stranger puts it (*Laws* 659d),

education is the drawing and pulling of children toward the argument that is said to be correct by the law and is also believed, on account of experience, to be really correct by those who are most decent and oldest.³⁸

It follows that “the things we call songs” are in fact “incantations for souls” that lead them toward feeling correctly about each and every matter relevant to virtue, but “since the souls of the young cannot sustain seriousness, these incantations are called ‘games’ and ‘songs’, and are treated as such” (*Laws* 659e). In short, the purpose of Platonic musical education, both in the *Laws* and in the *Republic*, is to “make the irrational realm [of the soul] that which it is capable of being without knowing it, namely *a realm of unconscious rationality*”, in Jan Patočka’s (1999, 70–1) words.³⁹

Such a conception of musical education is, roughly, what Nietzsche had in mind when he says that the Greeks demanded of themselves “den Staat auf Musik zu gründen” (1.458). This is

³⁸ Cf. also the forceful formulation of the same principle in the *Republic* (401d–2a), where Socrates tells Glaucon that “the rearing in music is most sovereign” because “rhythm and harmony most of all insinuate themselves into the inmost part of the soul and most vigorously lay hold of it in bringing grace with them; and they make a man graceful if he is correctly reared, if not, the opposite. [...] And, due to his having the right kind of dislikes, he would praise the fine things; and, taking pleasure in them and receiving them into his soul, he would be reared on them and become a gentleman. He would blame and hate the ugly in the right way while he’s still young, before he’s able to grasp reasonable speech [λόγος]. And when reasonable speech [λόγος] comes, the man who’s reared in this way would take most delight in it, recognizing it on account of its being akin”.

³⁹ Gabriel Richardson Lear argues along similar lines that “Plato believes that, with sufficient repetition, the practice of mimesis will train us to take some sort of non-rational pleasure in the outward manifestation – in the appearance – of the character-type imitated” (2011, 197). If she is correct in her contention that, for Plato, the real danger of dramatic poetry is about “the *multifariousness* of mimesis” – i.e. about the variety of characters being imitated (and especially bad characters) rather than about *mimesis* as such (ibid., 198), this would make Nietzsche’s Wagnerian-Platonic musical education especially conducive not just to the cultivation of one’s soul, but to an external culture defined as unity of artistic style (1.163) as well.

also why he considers music to be a great “erzieherische Gewalt” (1.458) that has (re)appeared in modern times.⁴⁰ If we look at Wagner’s music from this perspective, we’ll see that it produces in its audience a sensitivity to their genuine needs (cf. 1.333) – to what is necessary for their spiritual growth and/ or for the cultivation of their tragic sensibility. In other words, it *attunes* them to these needs, and conversely, it tunes them out of caring for the pseudo-needs that are propagated by the empty modern conventions and by the alienated modern language.

Furthermore, by instilling this “richtige Empfindung” in the souls of its listeners, Wagner’s music also “verlangt [...] nach ihrer ebenmässigen Schwester, der *Gymnastik*” (1.458): it demands that appropriate outward motions accompany the inner motions – the feelings – it has awakened within the soul.⁴¹ That is to say, it fosters within us “den wahren Begriff von Form als von einer nothwendigen Gestaltung” (1.457), as opposed to the modern conception of form as an arbitrary convention that bears no relation to the ‘content’ it presents (cf. 1.275). Thus it promotes not just the unity of style that is a sign of genuine culture, but also the unity of one’s thinking and actions, and works contrary to the modern tendency toward the ‘weak’ or ‘split’ personality that consists precisely in the lack of connection between thinking and action (cf. Chapter II.3). It also works against the related phenomena of philistine pseudo-culture, which is the “chaotische Durcheinander aller Stile” as opposed to the unity of style (1.163), and of the use of culture as a

⁴⁰ The idea of music and tragedy as means of education appears very early on in Nietzsche’s thinking: cf. notes such as 5 [9] (7.94); 7 [139] (7.195); or 19 [274] (7.505).

⁴¹ Wagner offers a somewhat similar conception of the relation of music and gymnastics in his essay *Über musikalische Kritik* (Wagner 1983, 6.385, 389/ 1966, III.68, 71), a conception that also harks back to the ancient Greeks (in particular to the Athenians). Nietzsche takes up Wagner’s words and uses them in his much more ambitious conception. Nietzsche thus makes his conception of musical education appear much closer to Wagner’s conception than it actually is: he uses the same *words* as Wagner, and thereby masks the difference of *concepts* underlying those words. More generally, *WB* contains a wealth of borrowings from and allusions to various writings of Wagner, which are documented by Mazzino Montinari in KGW IV.4, 119–60.

“*schöne Form*”, a mere decoration, by those who “*sich eines hässlichen oder langweiligen Inhaltes bewusst sind*” (1.389).

Such a ‘spiritual’ understanding of gymnastics again has its precedent in Plato, who has Socrates argue in the *Republic* that although gymnastics is apparently done for the sake of the body, its chief importance is for maintaining proper harmony within the soul: souls that lack gymnastic training become cowardly and easily excitable, while souls that lack musical education become savage and misologicistic (*Republic* 410c–11e). Nietzsche’s reasoning here is analogical: while the term ‘gymnastics’ refers primarily to exercise of the body, its true importance lies in its promoting of the “plastic power” of one’s soul, i.e. of the robustness of the order within one’s soul.

The practical form a gymnastics thus understood would assume would likely be various kinds of “dancing” – rhythmic motions with emphasis on breathing and on becoming aware of the organic rhythms of one’s *Leib*; we can consider yoga and martial arts (Hutter 2006, 195), or the dancing of Xenophon’s Socrates (Hutter 2006, 71; cf. Xenophon, *Symposium* II.15–19), as kindred practices. This “Gymnastik im griechischen und Wagnerischen Sinne” (1.459) is, then, in an important sense a spiritual exercise, a “gymnastics of willing”⁴² that teaches us to take control of our outward lives and to shape them according to our innermost needs. This is another way in which Wagner’s music is capable of re-naturalizing its audiences and their spiritual development.⁴³

⁴² On this term and its potential practical applications cf. Hutter (2013).

⁴³ Alternatively, Hutter (2006, 187) suggests that Plato’s (and hence also Nietzsche’s) conception of musical education “would seem to follow a social practice known from many traditional cultures in which communal orgiastic abandonment to chaotic forces of the soul periodically interrupt the normal performances of social labor.” On this account, this “gymnastics” would also be a way of discharging various normally repressed passions in a controlled manner, thus preventing their festering in the sub-conscious part of the soul and occasional uncontrolled, chaotic outbreaks of such passions. This would be yet another way in which gymnastics contributes to a healthy balance of forces within the soul.

The structure and purpose of this Wagnerian musical education are, then, fully analogous to its Platonic forerunner. Music in concert with gymnastics is to train or harmonize the various feelings or passions which coexist within our soul in the correct way before we are able to do this consciously.⁴⁴ It is a pre-rational or pre-conscious preparation of the order the soul requires for its proper work, which can be performed only at a later stage of spiritual maturity (and which would be significantly more difficult if the lower elements of the soul were striving in a direction that is contrary to this work). The main difference between the Platonic and the Wagnerian musical education lies in the particular order that it is supposed to prepare in the soul: for Plato this means a soul that is harmonized under the rule of the *logistikon*, the ‘rational part’ of the soul, while for Nietzsche the goal is a soul which knows itself in the sense of knowing the “Grundgesetz [ihres] eigentlichen Selbst” (1.340), and which is willing and able to follow this innermost tendency wherever it leads. For Nietzsche, the “correct feeling” that Wagner’s music should instill in the young is feeling in a way that is consistent with the imperative of *sei du selbst*, it is this imperative itself in the form of affective preference rather than of conscious understanding. It is a sub-conscious preparation for the later conscious choice of the life of culture.

However, it has to be emphasized that the musical education sketched in this section is just Nietzsche’s vision or speculation. If it is at all possible that Wagner’s music could accomplish these effects, it would be a matter of quite distant future. This education would first have to be elaborated in detail, institutionalized, and given its solid place in the structure of German culture. And even then, its efficacy in shaping the souls of the young would depend on how early in their

⁴⁴ In accordance with the twofold audience of Wagner’s art we can distinguish a twofold emphasis in the process of harmonizing one’s passions: the emphasis on one’s genuine needs for the Schopenhauerian men, and the emphasis on the tragic sensibility, or unconditional devotion to a higher cause, for the lower type of audience. The difference between these two groups is fundamentally a matter of self-selection; cf. Chapter III, fn. 49.

life it begins and with what precision and regularity it is practiced. As Plato's Socrates says (*Republic* 377a–b),

Don't you know that the beginning is the most important part of every work and that this is especially so with anything young and tender? For at that stage it's most plastic, and each thing assimilates itself to the model whose stamp anyone wishes to give to it.

The earlier the age at which the education starts, the better the eventual results (cf. *Republic* 429d–30b). And, being based on the same principles, the same holds for the possible Wagnerian musical education of the future. Its effects on the present-day people should be sought rather in the effect of alienation from the alleged certainties and necessities of one's unreflective existence so far, which were described in Chapter IV.2.

IV.4 Finale: The Free Men of the Future

We have seen the importance that Wagner's art holds according to Nietzsche: it is capable of strengthening those who strive for their higher selves to persevere in their difficult endeavor; it can induce a feeling of alienation in its audience, a feeling that is conducive to their turning toward this striving; by articulating this fundamental human need, it can create a community of those who feel it and who find a satisfaction in watching Wagner's heroes pursue the same goal; and finally, it may become a basis of a new system of musical education based on the Platonic model. In sum, it provides us with the means to pursue the life of the Schopenhauerian man. Wagner's art thus provides us with the answer to the last of the questions posed at 1.177: it is Nietzsche's "courage". The questions posed by Nietzsche to D.F. Strauss – and implicitly to himself as well – are now all answered, and the project of the *UB* is almost fully laid out. The last remaining task is gather all its strands together, and so to show what future is this project meant to lead toward: what kind of men will it educate, and what kind of world will they create and live in.

Nietzsche describes the character of these men of the future in the first two paragraphs of *WB* 11. He first insists that Wagner – and by extension also Nietzsche himself – is no utopian: his goal isn't remaking human beings according to some fanciful notion that has no foundation in experience, such as that all men and women should be brothers and sisters and live in perfect harmony. Nietzsche and Wagner rather strive to change the changeable in man in accord with the unchangeable necessity (cf. 1.445), with human nature and its true height as they came to know it from their own experience, from their own struggle to become what they are. Their legislation of human greatness is original justice based on their knowledge of that which is. Their teaching is meant to help others cultivate themselves in a similar manner, to help them become as free and healthy as Nietzsche and Wagner are.

These men of the future may not look very appealing to us on the first sight: Nietzsche says they might “sogar böser erscheinen” than the men of today, and it is possible that the sight of them “unsere Seelen [...] erschüttern und erschrecken würde” (1.506). This is because these men will be characterized above all by openness, for good as well as for evil. However, this doesn't mean they will not have any standards; they won't be spiritual anarchists for whom ‘anything goes’. It is rather that the current (post-)Christian moral conventions of good and evil (*Böse*) will hold little importance to them. *Their* standard will be human nature and the process of growth inherent in it; and in terms of this standard, they will be good rather than bad (i.e. *schlecht*) human beings.⁴⁵ Nietzsche sums up the attitudes of these free men as follows (1.506–7):

Oder wie klingen diese Sätze an unser Ohr: dass die Leidenschaft besser ist, als der Stoicismus und die Heuchelei, dass Ehrlich-sein, selbst im Bösen, besser ist, als sich selber an die Sittlichkeit des Herkommens verlieren, dass der freie Mensch sowohl gut, als böse sein kann, dass aber der unfreie Mensch eine Schande der Natur ist, und an keinem himmlischen, noch irdischen Troste Antheil hat; endlich, dass Jeder, der frei

⁴⁵ Nietzsche's argument here recalls the ancient conception of *ἀρετή* ('virtue') as the excellence that is proper to a particular kind of being, and prefigures the *Gut – Schlecht* vs. *Gut – Böse* distinction of *GM I*.

werden will, es durch sich selber werden muss, und dass Niemandem die Freiheit als ein Wundergeschenk in den Schooss fällt.

In short, they will know that following the imperative *sei du selbst* is the path to the only humanly attainable freedom and happiness, to the genius within them; that this is a task only they themselves can accomplish; and that their passions, rather than conventions, are what they should take their guidance from. Moreover, they will also *feel* these attitudes, attitudes that are “genau Das, was ich früher richtige Empfindung [...] nannte” (1.507): they will incorporate them so deeply that they will become a second nature to them, a “neue und verbesserte Physis” (1.334).

The key distinction in their ethical thinking will be between the *Natur* of themselves and their striving to further growth, and the *Unnatur* of the spiritually crippled modern society. Their naturalness will be the source of their freedom: the freedom from the degrading influence of modern society, the freedom to pursue their own genuine self that is immeasurably high above them (cf. 1.340), and to genuinely act as a consequence of this pursuit. They will know that the modern unfree man doesn't live, but is “being lived” (Hutter 2006, 31); that he's not capable of any greatness whatsoever (cf. *Republic* 495b); that he “eine Schande der Natur ist, und an keinem himmlischen, noch irdischen Troste Antheil hat” (1.506–7).⁴⁶ Ultimately, they will see *the* fundamental choice we have to make as between genuinely *leading* one's life, i.e. a life that seeks to grow and that finds meaning in the further unfolding of itself, and ‘leading’ a comfortable life that can find no such meaning, that amounts to senseless suffering – and knows this if it doesn't anaesthetize itself with *divertissements*. Nietzsche concludes with the sharpest possible formulation of this distinction which marks the free men of the future as life-affirming, and their unfree counterparts as life-denying because lacking any genuine way of coming to terms with the

⁴⁶ Nietzsche quotes and affirms these sentences at the end of *FW* 99.

suffering life inevitably entails: “[die Unnatur] will *nicht* sein, [die Natur] will *anders*⁴⁷ sein” (1.507).⁴⁸

These free men will use Wagner’s art as it is meant to be used – as art *as such* ought to be used: it will provide them with salutary mythic images of their own life and striving, and it will strengthen them for the trials and sufferings they have to undergo. They will furthermore strive to make a “people” of their kind, a free people, a genuine community based on a shared highest need and a shared satisfaction thereof, i.e. on a shared highest goal (1.506; cf. 1.278, and Lampert 2017, 121). We can see what their shared highest need or ruling passion is from the satisfaction they derive from Wagner’s art, from the myths it provides them with: it is the need to become their true selves, wherever it may lead them and whatever it may cost them. Wagner will thus be for them “der Deuter und Verklärer einer Vergangenheit” (1.510), but this will be a mythical-symbolic account of their own past strivings, not an actual interpretation of the historical past, as has been argued above (cf. 1.262; contra Brooks 2018, 204).

Bayreuth is to be the central institution of this endeavor: a meeting place for the community or ‘people’ of those devoted to the new, genuine culture, and a place of their spiritual renewal. Here they will be able to relax their spiritual tension and draw strength “zu weiterem und höherem Wollen” (1.449); and here they will meet and discuss their various projects to spread and enhance their new, genuine culture. Plans for new educational institutions seem to be of particular importance for Nietzsche – institutions of Wagnerian musical education on one hand, and on the

⁴⁷ “Different” in the sense of being ever higher and higher than it currently is.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Wa* Epilog: “Der Christ will von sich *loskommen*. [...] — Die vornehme Moral, die Herren-Moral, hat umgekehrt ihre Wurzel in einem triumphirenden Ja-sagen zu *sich*, — sie ist Selbstbejahung, Selbstverherrlichung des Lebens”.

other hand the “philosophical monasteries” that Nietzsche hoped would soon arise.⁴⁹ These ‘monasteries’ would be institutions focused on the more talented of the young souls, who could find a refuge from the external world in them and work on cultivating their souls, which is to say, strive to “ihr Werk vollenden” (1.403). The conditions of these ‘monasteries’ would be conducive to the practice of various kinds of “gymnastics of willing” or spiritual exercises: the members of these communities would be learning to live philosophically in a sense similar to the understanding of the ancient philosophical schools.⁵⁰ Thereby they would become ever more “themselves”, and new geniuses would be produced – all thanks to the work of Nietzsche and Wagner that provided the foundations for this process.⁵¹ The Bayreuth festival would in effect be the annual council of the chief representatives of this new culture, and its flagship event.

At the center of this entire project lies the conception of the human soul and its natural growth articulated principally in *HL* 1 and *SE* 1, but employed throughout the *UB*. Everything in

⁴⁹ As discussed in *SE* 6 and Chapter III.4. This idea appears as early as in the letter to Rohde from 15 December 1870, where Nietzsche plans “eine neue *griechische* Akademie” – the word *griechische* pointing to the Platonic Academy, of course – and explicitly connects this idea with the “Baireuther Plan *Wagners*” (KGB II.1, 165). In the same letter Nietzsche speculates on how to get funds for this plan, including trying their luck in lotteries, and generally using “jedes nicht unerlaubte Mittel” (ibid., 166). Also cf. the notes 16 [45] (8.294) and 17 [50] (8.305) – both from 1876 – which call for the establishment of modern ‘monasteries’ for *Freigeister*. And in the letter to Reinhart von Seydlitz from 24 September 1876 he describes his upcoming stay in Sorrento as “eine Art Kloster für freie Geister”, and expresses the hope of founding “mein Kloster, ich meine ‘die Schule der Erzieher’ (wo diese *sich* selbst erziehen) in *höherem* Style” (KGB II.5, 188–9). The usage of the word ‘monastery’ probably denotes that these new institutions are to be places of contemplation sequestered from the outside world (cf. *FW* 280). It is one of several similar approximations: elsewhere Nietzsche describes it as “auch modernes Kloster, Idealkolonie, université libre genannt” (15.71). Hutter (2006, 32–3) notes that Nietzsche strived to establish such an institution not just in his early years, but throughout his active life. For evidence of this we can turn e.g. to the postcard to Peter Gast from 26 March 1879, where he asks “Wo wollen wir den Garten Epicurs erneuern?” (KGB II.5, 399); or to the letter to his mother and sister from 28 November 1884, where he says he wants to stay in Nizza [today’s Nice] “zum Zweck *meiner* zukünftigen ‘Colonie’, welche mir jetzt möglicher erscheint (ich meine: sympathische Menschen, vor denen ich meine Philosophie dozieren kann)” (KGB III.1, 563).

⁵⁰ Cf. Hutter (2006, 32–3) on the exercises practiced in these schools, including the importance of ‘gymnastics’ in the general sense of cultivation of the body for one’s spiritual growth. For a more thorough account of the ancient spiritual exercises, but without reference to Nietzsche, cf. Hadot 1995, ch. 3.

⁵¹ Again, there are multiple pronouncements of Nietzsche on this subject in his notebooks. Cf. the notes 5 [11]: “Da liegen meine Hoffnungen: Züchtung der bedeutenden Menschen” (8.43); 5 [22]: “Meine Religion, wenn ich irgendetwas noch so nennen darf, liegt in der Arbeit für die Erzeugung des Genius” (8.46); and 5 [25]: “*Erzieher erziehn! Aber die ersten müssen sich selbst erziehn!* Und für diese schreibe ich” (8.47).

these essays is written with reference to this conception of the soul and the structures that constitute it: the ways in which the soul should be cultivated, the choice of Nietzsche's audience (i.e. the 'young souls'), the rhetoric he uses to appeal to them, the project of the educational institutions of the future, as well as the image of the free men these institutions will educate. From the critique of the contemporary pseudo-culture in *DS*, through the diagnosis of the psychic pathologies underlying this pseudo-culture in *HL*, the appeal to the young souls' conscience and exposition of how one learns what one's *eigentliches Selbst* is in *SE*, up to the powers ascribed and the tasks assigned to Wagner's art in *WB*: all this emerges as a single, coherent project when seen in the light of the erotic-historic conception of the human soul, and of the growth of such a soul as guided by the *Grundgesetz* of its unfolding (cf. 1.340). Already in the *UB*, psychology is "Herrin der Wissenschaften" and "der Weg zu den Grundproblemen" (*JGB* 23).

The project of the *UB* is one of re-shaping, or rather re-naturalizing the world by teaching individual souls how to counter their current denaturalization, how to (re-)shape themselves, and thus how to attain the genuine human good (as Nietzsche understands it at this point), with the hope that these methods and attitudes of self-shaping will soon become an influential force in German, and eventually European, culture. It is a project of establishing a new justice, a new legislation for life, a new way of life that is founded on that which is, on the "unveränderlichen Charakter und Knochenbau des menschlichen Wesens" (1.506; cf. 1.445). This project is open to anyone willing to devote themselves to it, and it offers to each person the satisfaction of their innermost need – of the need to spend their life in a truly meaningful way – according to one's capacity of understanding this need. There will be ways of contributing to it for the meanest as well as for the highest of human capacities, and satisfactions that any of them may require. And there will be a community of all who find their satisfaction in this striving – a community in which,

at least for the duration of Wagner's artistic illusions, "es keine höchsten Güter und Beglückungen mehr giebt, die nicht den Herzen Aller gemein sind" (1.503–4).

This is the future as it was projected by the twin geniuses of Nietzsche and Wagner,⁵² of the latter-day Plato and Homer working together for their shared goal, as Wagner wrote to Nietzsche in 1870: *this* is "die grosse 'Renaissance' [...], in welcher Platon den Homer umarmt, und Homer, von Platons Ideen erfüllt, nun erst recht der allergrösste Homer wird" (KGB II.2, 146). Indeed, "es sind lauter welthistorische Accente in dieser Schrift [i.e. in *WB*]" (*EH* GT 4), as Nietzsche tells us twelve years later, in 1888: and the meaning of these immense hopes and projects can be properly understood only on the foundation that the previous three *UB* provide. The world-historical hopes of *WB* are the hopes of the project of the *UB* as a whole. The only thing to be done now is to execute the project, and that will happen soon enough: the future shall begin on 13 August 1876.

⁵² At 1.498 Nietzsche describes Wagner with a quotation from Schopenhauer's essay *Den Intellekt überhaupt und in jeder Beziehung betreffende Gedanken* (*Werke*, V.105). This quotation characterizes the genius as such, and forms the finale of the entire essay.

V. The Failures – and the Successes – of the *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*

Was ich selber einstmals, in meinen “jungen Jahren”, über Schopenhauer und Richard Wagner schrieb und weniger schrieb als malte – vielleicht in einem allzuverwegenen übermüthigen überjugendlichen al fresco – das will ich am wenigsten heute auf “wahr” und “falsch” hin ins Einzelne prüfen. Gesetzt aber, ich hätte mich damals geirrt: mein Irrthum gereicht zum Mindesten weder den Genannten, noch mir selber zur Unehre! Es ist etwas, sich so zu irren; es ist auch etwas, gerade mich dergestalt zum Irrthume zu verführen. [...] Und wer mit einer jungen und feurigen Seele jene Schriften liest, wird vielleicht die schweren Gelöbnisse errathen, mit denen ich damals mich für mein Leben band, – mit denen ich mich zu meinem Leben entschloß: möchte er Einer jener Wenigen sein, die sich zu einem gleichen Leben und zu gleichen Gelöbnissen entschließen – dürfen!¹

¹ Nachlass 1885, note 41 [2], KSA 11.670–1.

However, the prophesied future did not come to pass. The inaugural Bayreuth festival did begin on 13 August 1876, and it was Wagner's great triumph after decades of hardship and struggle, as Nietzsche himself admits – "Bayreuth bedeutet den grössten Sieg, den je ein Künstler errungen hat" (*MA II Vorrede 1*) – but its reality was far removed from the grand hopes Nietzsche had expressed for it in *WB*. Bayreuth turned out not to be the triumph of the new, genuine culture Nietzsche had hoped it would be. With attendees like the German Kaiser Wilhelm I or the Brazilian emperor Pedro II, whose presence signaled the admission of Wagner into the officially recognized canon of German greatness and into high society, the festival was rather pandering to the old philistine pseudo-culture and to the German *Reich*. The Wagners themselves mostly ignored Nietzsche, as they were too busy with catering to the various rich and powerful elites in attendance (Janz 1978, 1.716). Wagner in effect chose popular success over any of the ambitions and aspirations to a cultural revolution he had professed in the past.² As Nietzsche expressed it twelve years later: "man hatte Wagner ins Deutsche übersetzt! Der Wagnerianer war Herr über Wagner geworden! – Die *deutsche Kunst!* der *deutsche Meister!* das *deutsche Bier!*" (*EH MA 2*). In a word, the reality of Bayreuth was a fiasco from Nietzsche's perspective. It shattered all the hopes he might have had left for Wagner at this point – his break with Wagner was more or less immediate³ – and he found the festival so difficult to bear that he had to take a break from it and go to a spa in Klingenbrunn to recover from this shock (which included also various physiological difficulties,

² On this subject consider Nietzsche's later critique of Wagner as essentially an actor for whom avowing principles of any kind was just a means to enhance his stature and to increase his popular success. "Was lag ihm an Principien, selbst den eigenen!" (*Wa Nachschrift*; cf. *Wa passim*).

³ The last personal meeting of the two men occurred in late 1876 (cf. 15.70–1 and the letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche from 28 October 1876 – KGB II.5, 197). They ceased to have any contact thereafter, except for the last letter that Wagner sent to Nietzsche: a copy of the text of *Parsifal* accompanied by a short greeting, signed "Richard Wagner, Oberkirchenrath" (letter from 1 January 1878, KGB II.6.2, 788), upon which Nietzsche comments in *EH MA 5*. Critical references to Wagner started to appear in Nietzsche's works, at first in a veiled manner (e.g. *MA 215*), but later on (especially after Wagner's death) also openly. Wagner too hadn't refrained from a veiled critique of Nietzsche in his essay *Publikum und Popularität*, published after *MA* showed Nietzsche's break from him to be definitive.

mostly with his eyes; cf. 15.68, and Janz 1978, 1.715–6). The letter to Elisabeth Nietzsche from 6 August 1876, (KGB II.5, 182–3) is very telling in this respect: “Ich weiss ganz genau, dass ich es [in Bayreuth] *nicht* aushalten kann, ja eigentlich hätten wir es vorher wissen sollen! [...] Ich fühle mich von dem kurzen Aufenthalte dort so ermüdet und erschöpft, ich komme gar nicht wieder recht zu mir”.⁴

This event opened up the question of how Nietzsche could so mislead himself that, despite all he privately knew about Wagner, he didn’t realize Wagner would choose popular success over the cause of genuine culture. All of Nietzsche’s earlier hopes, however conditional they may have been, have come to nothing. And if he was as wrong about Wagner as has now become apparent, what *else* was he wrong about? Did he have an adequate understanding of what genuine culture is? And how about the basis of culture, i.e. about the nature of the human soul? In other words, the shock caused by the reality of Bayreuth had triggered a deep crisis in Nietzsche: a crisis that consisted in a sudden loss of all ground, in a realization that what were up to now his central beliefs are nowhere near as evident as he had thought, and that he has to rethink the very premises of his intellectual activity and of his way of life. He described this crisis in retrospect as “eine Gesamt-Abirrung meines Instinkts” (EH MA 3). This strong phrase points to the core problem behind the immediate disappointment of Bayreuth: if Nietzsche’s instinct had led him into such a dead end, how can he trust it again? How does he know that the instinct won’t lead him into a similar disappointment in his next engagement? Can the instinct be trusted *at all*? In sum, Nietzsche realized that he needed a thorough examination of his thinking and of his actions as a public writer

⁴ The letter speaks apparently only of Nietzsche’s physical state, but it is fully plausible to read it as simultaneously commenting on his spiritual state after the great disappointment of Bayreuth – a disappointment which he did not expect, although he seems to think he should have known better, given his private critiques of Wagner discussed at the beginning of Chapter IV.

so far, which he tells us he had undertaken in the years of writing *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* and its two sequels.⁵

The retrospective note 9 [42] (12.354–5) from 1887 is very instructive in this respect. Nietzsche comments here, first, “*gegen 1876 hatte ich den Schrecken, mein ganzes bisheriges Wollen compromittirt zu sehn, als ich begriff, wohin es jetzt mit Wagner hinauswolle*”, and second, “*um dieselbe Zeit schien ich mir wie unauflösbar eingekerkert in meine Philologie und Lehrthätigkeit*”. Third, and most importantly, he had realized that “*mein Instinkt auf das Gegentheil hinauswollte als der Schopenhauers: auf eine Rechtfertigung des Lebens, selbst in seinem Furchtbarsten, Zweideutigsten und Lügenhaftesten: – dafür hatte ich die Formel ‘dionysisch’ in den Händen.*” In short, he became aware of his bad choice of allies, bad choice of occupation, and that his instinct failed to hit the target it aimed at, that his conceptualization of the goal of life-affirmation was completely inadequate. A reflection was overdue on all these fronts.⁶

Now that the project of the *UB* and the thinking behind it have been fully laid out, I will reconstruct the said reflection with reference to the *UB* themselves. I will take a synoptic and critical look at the *UB* – both at their weaknesses and failures that had set up the situation in which Nietzsche’s crisis fully manifested itself, and at their successes which withstood the crisis and were further developed in his later thinking. The perspective from which these failures and successes will be assessed is that of the mature philosopher Nietzsche. I shall begin with a couple of critical

⁵ “‘Menschliches, Allzumenschliches’ ist das Denkmal einer Krisis” (*EH MA 1*). For a thorough account of this self-examination cf. Meier 2019, ch. IV, esp. pp. 104–6.

⁶ We find contemporary evidence for the third point, for his realization of the inadequacy of his earlier Schopenhauer-influenced presentation of philosophy and ‘life-affirmation’, in the letter to Cosima Wagner from 19 December 1876. Nietzsche confesses here “*eine allmählich entstandene, mir fast plötzlich in’s Bewußtsein getretene Differenz mit Schopenhauer’s Lehre*”, and goes on to say that “*ich stehe fast in allen allgemeinen Sätzen nicht auf seiner Seite; schon als ich über Sch. Schrieb [in *SE*], merkte ich, daß ich über alles Dogmatische daran hinweg sei; mir lag alles am Menschen*” [i.e. on Schopenhauer as his educator; cf. Chapter III, fn. 27 and 65] (*KGB II.5*, 210).

points about the *project* of the *UB*, addressing its unrealistically grandiose scale in particular. Thereafter I will critique the *thought* behind the *UB*, with the aim of diagnosing the core from which the many other problems of Nietzsche's early thinking issue. After this critique I shall take a twofold look at the successes of the *UB*: first at those aspects of his early thought that had proved their worth in the examination of the crisis; and second at those attitudes which, although they ultimately were not fully adequate to Nietzsche's mature thought, were instrumental in helping him carry out the necessary self-examination – attitudes that, as it were, formed a ladder on which the young Nietzsche climbed up to what he was, to the philosopher Nietzsche.

V.1 The Failure of the Project of the *UB*

The project of the *UB*, beyond the effect they may have on individual readers, relies heavily on Wagner's planned transformation of the entire German culture: Nietzsche conceived Wagner's project as a vehicle for his own project, or as the first stage thereof. However, it remains very unclear how exactly the cultural transformation is supposed to have looked. Let us imagine for a moment that Bayreuth had in fact fulfilled Nietzsche's expectation, that it had been a triumphant presentation of the new, genuine culture: what would the next step be? Nietzsche tells us simply that with the reformation of the theatre "wäre der moderne Mensch verändert und reformirt: so nothwendig hängt in unserer neueren Welt eins an dem andern" (1.448). But he doesn't discuss or even suggest any concrete mechanisms or processes by which this transformation of the entire German culture, in the extensive sense of "allen Lebensäußerungen eines Volkes" (1.163), would proceed. Even if we imagined that Bayreuth were a complete and resounding success in the narrower cultural-artistic sphere, and consequently the entire musical-theatrical establishment converted to Wagnerianism in a meaningful sense, it by far does not follow that this success would

do anything to challenge (let alone transform) powers like capital or the state, which Nietzsche had singled out as great dangers to the cause of genuine culture (1.387–9). However influential Wagner’s cultural productions may become, they would still be in no position to challenge the logic of the profit motive or the state’s monopoly on violence. Art may at best hope to influence these powers to treat it favorably for a period of time, but this hardly amounts to a reform of the entire culture in the extensive sense.

The idea that Wagner’s reform of theatre will recreate “die einstmalige Wirklichkeit des griechischen Theaters” (1.449), that theatre can have the same effect for us as it did for the Greeks, is questionable as well.⁷ It is true that theatre can be deeply meaningful for individuals, and in this sense it may well be the opposite of the modern art-as-*divertissement*.⁸ But it can hardly have the same effect on the community of citizens. Modern theatrical performances are always played for a relatively small audience, as opposed to the performances of tragedies at the Athenian Dionysia, which were observed by a large part of the citizen body. This is a question of scale: given how much larger modern political communities are, theatrical performances cannot serve the same purpose in them. In the modern world, theatre is a medium for small, elite groups, and not the communal (in the sense of relating to the entire community) affair it was in the ancient city.⁹

We see that Nietzsche’s hopes for the transformative effect Wagner’s art could have had on the culture at large were out of proportion to what it could realistically accomplish. But his hopes went even further than that in seeing Wagner as a potential founder of a new people and, in

⁷ Church (2019, 212) points out this hope, but he doesn’t see anything problematic about it.

⁸ Incidentally, the technical level of the 1876 props and special effects was so low that it *detracted from* rather than contributed to the audience’s absorption into Wagner’s mythic stories (Janz 1978, 1.717–8, 722–3).

⁹ It is an interesting but tangential question whether modern mass media – especially television and cinema, these heirs of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* in their artistic means – could produce a similar effect in modern societies. They have long overcome the technical limitations of Wagner’s time. And the problem of scale no longer exists in them: thousands and even millions of human beings can be the audience of a single event or artwork simultaneously.

a certain sense, even a potential unifier of mankind under the banner of *tragische Gesinnung* (cf. Chapter IV.2). This is not to say that great art doesn't have the capacity to create a people by shaping its self-understanding: the Homeric epics, the Torah, the Aeneid, or the Chronicle of Kosmas clearly exemplify this foundational capacity of great art (cf. *Za I, Von tausend und Einem Ziele*; Gmirkin 2016 *passim*; Patočka 2006, 264–6). But this is not a free-standing, absolute capacity: it has certain pre-conditions that allow it to occur, such as political independence of the community and a long period of uncontested influence of the artwork in question. It would take centuries until Wagner would have changed the self-understanding of the German people and become “der Deuter und Verklärer einer Vergangenheit” (1.510) for them – centuries in which his art, moreover, would have to maintain its preeminence against all past, present, and future competitors. It certainly would be an event far beyond the lifespan of anyone living at the time of the publication of *WB*. The second possibility, the creation of a supra-national Wagnerian ‘people’, is even more difficult to imagine. Barring a political revolution to this effect (which we have no reason to expect, as no such suggestions were made by either Wagner or Nietzsche), such a ‘people’ would in effect consist of fragments of other peoples that have no political power, organization, or independence of their own, with no power to defend themselves against an external enemy or to compel unity and obedience internally. A ‘people’ of this sort, if it were somehow to arise in the first place, if it were to constitute itself on the basis of a shared fundamental need which they find expressed and satisfied in Wagner’s works (cf. 1.278, 450, 477, 509), would be a rather short-lived experiment.

If this is the case regarding Wagner’s prospects for the creation of a people, it holds *a fortiori* for the global cultural renaissance and transformation of human life, for the spread of *tragische Gesinnung* among the peoples of the Earth, that this people is supposed to spearhead.

Simply put, these are utterly excessive hopes, out of proportion to anything art had *ever* accomplished; and despite his many assets, Wagner was not in a position to make such a groundbreaking event happen. Even if Wagner actually were committed to the ideals and principles which he publicly professed, and which Nietzsche promotes tirelessly in *WB*, reality would remain far behind their expectations, and Wagner would remain just an artist.

Setting these grander hopes aside, one also has to wonder whether Nietzsche's proposal of new educational institutions would be viable. As described in Chapter IV, fn. 49, Nietzsche dreamed of establishing a philosophic school of some sort throughout his productive life. But the description of this institution we get in *SE* (1.402–3) seems to have a particular twist: the suggestion that *all* members of this institution, the difference in their natural capacities notwithstanding, would be able to live meaningfully and thus become their true self. The suggestion is that *sei du selbst* is not just the imperative for the future geniuses whose purpose in the institution is “ihr Werk vollenden”, but also for those “aus der Reihe der zweiten und dritten Begabungen” (1.403). All members of these institutions would contribute to the production of the genius according to their capacities, and would in turn be able to cultivate their own genius according to their capacities. This is a surprisingly harmonious – even utopian – picture of the social body, one that is without parallel in Nietzsche's *oeuvre* either before or after the *UB*. Nietzsche would deny that there can be a society in which everyone has become what they are as early as in *Der griechische Staat* with the principle that “zum Wesen einer Kultur das Sklaventhum gehöre” (1.767; cf. Chapter I, fn. 17). It would be strange if this new, genuine culture should not require some kind of “slavery” – i.e. ministerial subordination on part of the less talented members thereof. Nietzsche emphatically returns to the principle from *Der griechische Staat* in his post-*UB* works: cf. *WS* 275; *FW* 4, 21, 23, 116, 296, 356; *JGB* 262. While the details vary to a certain

extent, the principle remains constant: that one can either be a good individual (i.e. attain their true self), or a good member of society – but not both – and that not every member of a society can be a good individual. Moreover, this is a well-established principle of Western political thought: in the terms of *Republic IV*, the man who is like the just city is not identical with the citizens of the just city (with the possible exception of the rulers); and Aristotle expresses it as the difference between a good human being and a good citizen (*Politics III.4*). Nietzsche's abandonment of this principle in *SE* is most likely a piece of deceptive rhetoric to match the rhetoric of the culture-perverting forces (cf. 1.403), which likewise (falsely) promises freedom and countless other goods to its followers.

The preceding points are only tangential to the central problem of the project of the *UB*: namely its inseparable connection to Wagner's Bayreuth project. This connection has its roots in the young Nietzsche's misunderstanding of who Wagner was and what he stood for. On one level, Nietzsche was deceived by Wagner – deceived into taking Wagner and his professed ideals and plans for a cultural reform seriously, as he tells us in *Wa 3*: “ich war im Stande, Wagnern ernst zu nehmen”. The deep friendship Nietzsche shared with Wagner in the latter's Tribschen period certainly contributed to this. But Wagner's great actorly capacity, his ability to project a persona designed to seduce the observer, was also a highly significant factor. Already in this early period Nietzsche ascribed “eine schauspielerische Urbegabung” to Wagner (1.467), and already here he sees it as a problem (albeit he says so only in his private notes – 7.756–75 – that were discussed at the beginning of Chapter IV). But he thinks Wagner as an actor only in relation to his artistic productions, not to his life as a whole: in fact, in the note 32 [41] (7.766) he writes “[Wagners] Begabung als Schauspieler zeigt sich darin, dass er es *nie* im persönlichen Leben ist”. Nietzsche had to completely rethink Wagner's relation to his alleged principles; the deconstruction of

Wagner's theoretical writings at the beginning of *Wa* 10 is very instructive in this regard. Put simply, Wagner's 'principles' were a pose, a mask meant to attract a particular kind of audience and turn them into devotees of Wagner. The audience in question were idealistic young men¹⁰ who saw very well the corruption and pettiness of contemporary German culture and yearned for something new and better, for a genuine culture. In other words, they were men very much like Nietzsche's principal audience in the *UB* – the young souls – and like the young Nietzsche himself. In his later years, Nietzsche would describe this group as "deutsche Jünglinge".¹¹ As Nietzsche's principle is not to attack persons, but rather to make use of them "wie eines starken Vergrößerungsglases" to demonstrate a more general phenomenon on their example (*EH* Weise 7), Wagner isn't special or particularly corrupt with regard to his masks and deceptions. Artists are rather in a position of structural dependence to some of the powers that be: "sie waren zu allen Zeiten Kammerdiener einer Moral oder Philosophie oder Religion" (*GM* III.5), and thus it is imprudent to expect of them leadership in any radical or revolutionary movements.

The final, and intellectually most interesting, factor that led Nietzsche into Wagner's trap was the latter's Schopenhauerian pessimism – Schopenhauer being also the subject of their very first conversation, and thus the beginning of their friendship (cf. Chapter I.1). In *FW* 370, Nietzsche admits that in his younger days he misunderstood the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Wagner, "wie als ob [dieser Pessimismus] das Symptom von höherer Kraft des Gedankens, von verwegenerer Tapferkeit, von siegreicherer *Fülle* des Lebens sei". However, rather than being the expression of a fullness of life that affirms itself and the entire world, the *Romantic* pessimism of Wagner and Schopenhauer is rather a symptom of their suffering from life, and an attempt to

¹⁰ Nietzsche attributes quite different motives to the typical female Wagnerian (cf. *Wa* Nachschrift), although in principle it is possible that a woman would belong among the *deutschen Jünglingen*.

¹¹ Cf. the note 37 [5] (11.579) with the usage of this phrase in *Wa* 10 and *Wa* Nachschrift.

revenge oneself to the world by pronouncing the suffering they feel to be the essence of all things.

In Nietzsche's own words, it is an expression of a "tyrannical will",

welcher das Persönlichste, Einzelste, Engste, die eigentliche Idiosynkrasie seines Leidens noch zum verbindlichen Gesetz und Zwang stempeln möchte und der an allen Dingen gleichsam Rache nimmt, dadurch, dass er ihnen *sein* Bild, das Bild *seiner* Tortur, aufdrückt, einzwängt, einbrennt.

Nietzsche says he mistook this life-denying pessimism for a pessimism of strength. But if we make the *Rückschluss* "vom Ideal auf Den, der es *nöthig hat*", as Nietzsche invites us to do in *FW* 370, we see that this wasn't just an accidental cognitive error. If Nietzsche put himself into the company of these life-deniers and put his hopes in them, if he subscribed to a life-denying ideal, he apparently had suffered from life himself at this point. And he admits this much in *Ecce Homo*. In *EH* MA 3 he explains us that the "Gesamt-Abirrung meines Instinkts" of which he became aware at Bayreuth included also his professorial way of life, which was bad not just for his philosophic development, but even for his health in the usual sense of the word: "antike Metriker mit Akribie und schlechten Augen durchkriechen – dahin war es mit mir gekommen!"

Living in bad health, lacking the kind of company he required, spending his time in a profession he did not care much for and that made his health even worse – no wonder that Nietzsche suffered, and that he would consequently find the Schopenhauerian life-denying ideal attractive (even though he never fully subscribed to it). Wagner's music was of eminent use to him in this situation: first, it is "das Gegengift gegen alles Deutsche par excellence, – Gift, ich bestreite es nicht..." (*EH* Klug 6), a counterpoison or a *pharmakon* against the Germans to which he found himself "verurtheilt" (*ibid.*). And given that Nietzsche didn't suffer just from the Germans, but also from other aspects of his situation at the time and was in need of an escape from himself, Wagner's "narkotische Kunst" (*EH* MA 3) was very welcome to him. To state this as a principle, "eine Widernatur *erzwingt* förmlich eine zweite" (*ibid.*); it was because he lived against the needs

of his nature that he suffered, and it was because he suffered that he needed an art like Wagner's that provided him with a temporary escape from his suffering.

We have seen the substance of two critical points from the note 9 [42] (12.354–5) – Nietzsche's bad choice of allies and of occupation. The third one, the inadequate character of his early thought, comes to light in the admission that he used to subscribe to a life-denying ideal. But what exactly, beyond the misunderstanding of Wagner and what he stood for, is wrong with the thought of the *UB*? How is it itself *abgeirrt*? How is the denial of life expressed in it? Is it only a tangential tendency in these four essays, or is the thought behind the *UB* life-denying at its core?

V.2 The Sickness of the Thought of the *UB*

Nietzsche's thought in the *UB* contains, of course, many elements that appear inadequate when compared with how the same subjects are treated in Nietzsche's later works. For example, the young Nietzsche's critique of modern culture and of the "modern ideas" (1.175, 190, 407) already grasps the main symptoms of these phenomena that he will keep on emphasizing in his later years, such as human dignity, social equality, or the allegedly necessary moral progress (cf. *FW* 377). One important exception is pity [*Mitleid*] and morality of pity, which is held in high regard in the *UB* (1.197, 382), apparently due to the influence of Schopenhauer – whereas in his later works, pity is subjected to a thorough critique as one of the most important reactive "Rach- und Nachgefühle" (*EH* Weise 6) and as "die *Praxis* des Nihilismus" that multiplies misery and makes life palpably more miserable for everyone involved (*AC* 7).¹² Now, pity is in Nietzsche's

¹² We may consider the fact that Schopenhauer's doctrine of pity made its way into the *UB* as another symptom of the young Nietzsche's suffering from life. Pity undergoes a thematic critique in *M* 133–8. Nietzsche considers it to be especially dangerous to the philosopher: cf. *FW* 271, and *EH* Weise 4, where the entire fourth part of *Zarathustra* is

later thought one of the key features of Christian morality and one of its most powerful means for winning over the allegiance of the multitudes of weak, decadent human beings. The critique of pity thus points to the core of the later Nietzsche's critique of morality: to the distinction between master morality and slave morality as the two basic *types* of morality (*JGB* 260, *GM* I, *Wa* Epilog, *EH* Schicksal 4–5), with corresponding characteristic sets of evaluations (*gut–schlecht* vs. *gut–böse*) and pathoses (affirmation of life and oneself vs. denial thereof). The mention of these distinctions at 1.507 is merely foreshadowing this.

At the same time, the identification of Christianity and Christian morality as a case of slave morality *par excellence* leads to the late Nietzsche's understanding of history as the struggle between these two basic types of morality and the human types they value and produce (*GM* I.16, *AC* 3–5). But although Nietzsche has a clear preference among the contenders in this struggle, he nevertheless does not understate the power and appeal of Christianity. His mature critique of Christianity is so forceful precisely because he sees both the power of Christianity (cf. *AC* 23 and Meier 2019, 207–9) and the life-denying end toward which it leads (*AC* 62). In the *UB* we find the appreciation of the power of Christianity at quite an advanced stage (1.389), but the critique of it is only vaguely present with its consequences not being drawn out (1.305, 345).¹³

However, as important as the shift between the early Nietzsche's and the late Nietzsche's critique of modern ideas, morality in general, and of Christianity is, his earlier position cannot be described as a symptom of some underlying sickness of thought. The early critique describes the surface-level phenomena faithfully enough, without any significant distortions; and the later

described as dramatizing the danger of pity to Zarathustra, the overcoming of which is "sein eigentlicher Beweis von Kraft". Other relevant passages include *MA* 50, 103, 321, 499; *VM* 68, 377; *WS* 45; *FW* 13, 118; *JGB* 202, 222.

¹³ However, this critique is developing in private already in 1875: cf. the notes 5 [148] (8.79–80), 5 [166] (8.87–8), and especially 5 [146] (8.77–9), which articulates many of the points of *VM* 220, published in 1879.

critique is a deepening and a consequence of the early critique. The fact that the early critique lacks what would come to be the core of the late critique is due to its rudimentary form, and not due to any corruption of Nietzsche's thinking.

Let us now return to the question of life-affirmation and life-denial in the *UB*. At first sight it appears simple enough to conclude that the thought of the *UB* is life-affirming. The purpose of working on the production of the genius within and without oneself – which is “*der Grundgedanke der Kultur*” (1.382) – is precisely to bring about the exemplary human beings who by their insights and works redeem existence and thereby justify the nonsensical bad infinity that is the existence of the animals and of the vast majority of human beings. And although Schopenhauer is held up as an exemplary philosopher in *SE* (and in the *UB* as a whole), Nietzsche refuses to accept his negative judgment of the value of existence and refers us instead to the (affirmative) “*Antwort des Empedokles*” (1.363; cf. Chapter III, fn. 35). But things start to appear in a different light once we follow the logic of the idea that there is a *fundamental and insoluble conflict between truth and the needs of life*. This is one of the central thoughts of the *UB*: it appears obliquely already at the first page of *DS* with the claim that “*es giebt die heilsamsten und segensreichsten Irrthümer*” (1.159); it is famously prominent in *HL* in the statement about “*Lehren, die ich für wahr, aber für tödtlich halte*” (1.319), but also in the description of the genuinely just man, of the philosophic legislator, who “*in jedem Augenblicke an sich selbst sein Menschenthum zu büßen hat und sich selbst an einer unmöglichen Tugend tragisch verzehrt*” (1.286); in *SE* it is manifest in the notion of “*Leiden der Wahrhaftigkeit*” (1.371) that leads to the knowledge that life as such is unsatisfiable striving and hence senseless suffering – “*wir selbst sind die Thiere, die sinnlos zu leiden scheinen*” (1.378); and it culminates in *WB* with the account of “*die grössten Leiden des Einzelnen, die es giebt*” – of the insoluble conflict between the Schopenhauerian man's philanthropy and his

knowledge of the reality of human life – and with the awareness of the inevitable eventual extinction of humanity (1.451–3).

What this means in practice is that happiness – understood not as some kind of exceptional, exalted state of mind, but more widely, including even a basic level of satisfaction with one’s life that is necessary for continuing to live it as one did until now – is essentially incompatible with the truth: that happiness is of necessity a product of either ignorance or illusion. By saying that this is *essentially* so, I mean that it is the case for all kinds of human beings, even for those at the highest levels of knowledge that the philosophic conception of the *UB* knows of. The philosophic legislator of *HL* 6 (1.286) and the Schopenhauerian man of *SE* 5 and *WB* 4 (1.378, 451–3) suffer from the truth, and indeed, the more they know, the more they suffer: it is at these highest levels of human understanding that one encounters “die *grössten* Leiden des Einzelnen, die es giebt” (1.451–2; emphasis added). The life of this Schopenhauerian man is thus *not self-sufficient*, not sustainable by itself: living in the tension between one’s philanthropy and one’s knowledge of human nature is a huge drain on one’s psychic capacities, and it would ultimately be unbearable if one didn’t occasionally indulge in illusions such as those depicted in Wagner’s art. “*Damit der Bogen nicht breche, ist die Kunst da*” (1.453), is how the young Nietzsche expresses this point, this crucial *limitation* of his conception of the life of the thinker in the *UB*.¹⁴

¹⁴ Church (2019, 54) takes Nietzsche’s project in the *UB* to be one “not of embracing but of dispelling illusion and self-deception”. However, given the unbearable nature of the truth in the *UB*, this can be the case only to a limited extent and at the personal cost of the individuals who choose to expose themselves to the truth. It certainly cannot be the case for a culture at large, as Church claims: “Nietzsche does not simply enjoin cultures to embrace illusion [...] all such illusions are unjust, and [...] we must provide a new [and truthful] justification for modern culture” (ibid., 73). This necessity of illusions ultimately comes to the fore in Church’s reading as well, e.g. when he discusses (what he understands as) the natural teleology in *SE* 5 as an ideal with a “regulative status” (ibid., 174) or as a “rhetorical means” (ibid., 180) that Nietzsche substantially “cannot defend” (ibid., 182) – i.e. as a *falsehood*, strictly speaking.

The path traversed by Nietzsche in the ten years after *WB* becomes apparent when we look at *JGB* Vorrede, where the centuries-long struggle against Christianity had created “eine *prachtvolle* Spannung des Geistes” (emphasis added) that allows us “nach den fernsten Zielen [zu] schießen”. *This* spiritual tension is productive rather than self-destructive: whereas the tension in *WB* is one whose resolution is structurally impossible and living with it passively drains one’s forces just so one can go on with living, the tension in *JGB* is an agonistic tension in which we strive to mobilize and exert our forces to overcome the opponent, in the process increasing our forces and – metaphorically speaking – aiming and shooting farther than we were able before. And while it is true that in *JGB* 39 Nietzsche says that the strength of a spirit can be measured by “wie viel er von der ‘Wahrheit’ gerade noch aushielte”, in *JGB* 30 we get a suggestion that it is possible to be so strong so as to bear all of the truth, i.e. so as *not to suffer from the truth at all*: “es giebt Höhen der Seele, von wo aus gesehen selbst die Tragödie aufhört, tragisch zu wirken”. Similarly, in *EH* Schicksal 5 Nietzsche says of Zarathustra’s *Übermensch* that he “concipirt die Realität, wie sie ist: [er] ist stark genug dazu” (and analogously in *FW* 347, regarding certainty). Such claims have no parallel in the thinking of the *UB*. That is to say, Nietzsche of the *UB* is not yet aware of such heights of the soul.

Closely connected to the insoluble conflict between truth and life is the idea that the world needs to be redeemed [*erlöst*] (1.363, 378, 380, 382, 384, 404, 469). We saw that the life of animals amounts only to senseless suffering, and so does the life of the majority of humans (1.378). Moreover, human history has so far been ruled by chance and is therefore nonsensical; and, as we have seen above, not even those humans who are aware of all this are an exception to the rule that life is suffering – for they suffer from that very knowledge, and apparently they suffer even more than the lesser, more ignorant humans (1.451–2). As a consequence, life – life of all living beings,

life as such – doesn't amount to much: to the best understanding of the *UB*, life so far appears to be “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing”. Life has to be redeemed, and this redemption is the work of heroic individuals, of geniuses such as Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, or Wagner, who willingly take the suffering of truthfulness upon themselves in order to make life livable for others. They sacrifice themselves and their own happiness so that the lesser men can live happily, i.e. live in a culture that provides them with the best possible conditions of life and growth, with the most salutary illusions. This redemption is in principle the establishing of such a cultural-political order of life, or original justice, that fosters human greatness – an establishing which has to take place through the production of salutary illusions, such as those of Wagner's art. This new order of life will redeem all previous existence (human and animal) by becoming the *ex post* meaning of all the suffering that had hitherto been meaningless, and by making all future that will occur under its sign meaningful as well. The project of the *UB*, in conjunction with the project of Bayreuth – the project of a cultural renewal centered on Wagner's tragedies and the new educational institutions planned by Nietzsche – was intended to be such a redemption. It was to be the founding of a new culture based on the insight into the true nature of human existence; this new culture was then expected to prevail over the old pseudo-culture, and spread its constitutive *tragische Gesinnung* all over the world, thus in a nontrivial sense unifying mankind; it was to be a world-historical redemptive event not just in its meaning, but also in its intended scope.¹⁵

¹⁵ Church takes the problem of nihilism to mean simply the value-less character of our natural existence, “natural” understood in terms of the Kantian distinction between nature as the realm of necessity and culture as the realm of freedom. He interprets the “wisdom of Silenus” (1.35) as expressing simply this valueless character of natural existence (2015, 18, 30) that is compounded by the self-contradictory character of human nature (2015, 30, 58). Church 2019 refrains from talking about nihilism in these terms, but doesn't offer an alternative reading of it. This valueless and contradictory human nature is then to be ‘redeemed’ simply by creation of autonomous meaning, of which Church recognizes a multitude: redemption by the just individual (2019, 103), by one who adopts the suprahistorical perspective (2019, 107), by the lives of exemplary individuals (2019, 126), by education (2019, 143),

Nietzsche has dramatized a thoroughgoing critique of this kind of project in his *Zarathustra*. In the Vorrede, Zarathustra presents his initial, *futuristic* teaching to the people: the teaching of the future coming of the *Übermensch* who is to be “der Sinn der Erde” (Z 1 Vorrede 3), and for whose coming Zarathustra’s disciples are to prepare the way. This teaching is analogous to the project of the *UB* in that it aims toward a redemptive event in the near future which is supposed to provide meaning for the entire world that would remain meaningless without it. Meier (2017, 92–103) shows how this futuristic teaching comes into a crisis in *Za II Von der Erlösung*, and how Zarathustra abandons it on substantial philosophic grounds. Already a brief consideration of the presuppositions behind the idea of such a redemptive event shows how untenable this idea is. Would all life remain forever meaningless if the redemptive event fails to occur, as it happened with the project of the *UB*? If the event succeeded in establishing the redeeming order of life, but this order were to break down at a later point in time, would this make life meaningless again? Would it all have been *umsonst*? And more importantly, even if the redemptive event fully succeeded, how would it change the fact that life is essentially senseless suffering, a bad infinity? Wouldn’t it rather merely cover it up?

Zarathustra does in fact conclude that the futuristic doctrine is untenable because of these and related reasons, and turns from the failure of the doctrine to the failure of the thinking that produced it: he uses the crisis as an occasion for self-critique. Zarathustra tells us that that as long as he held fast to the futuristic doctrine, he saw everyone as “Bruchstücke und Gliedmaassen und

by Schopenhauer’s reform of culture (2019, 155); in short, by just about any act of self-determining freedom (2019, 140). I believe this account misses the core of the problem of human existence as Nietzsche sees it in the *UB*: namely, that our lives are essentially unsatisfiable striving and hence senseless suffering, a bad infinity (a view that Church 2015, 101–2 ascribes only to Schopenhauer); and a redemption of life thus understood consists not in *any* given act of freedom, but rather in the insight into this fundamental character of life and in the consequent denial of one’s will to live, in the cessation of participation in this bad infinity. Acts of self-determining freedom may well (and in most cases do) participate in this bad infinity, and thus they by themselves cannot be considered redemptive in the sense developed above.

graue Zufälle – aber keine Menschen!”¹⁶ and that as long as this was the case, he was “auch noch gleichsam ein Krüppel” (*Za II Von der Erlösung*), i.e. was not complete and self-sufficient due to projecting all his hopes onto an uncertain future.¹⁷ He comes to see that “die futuristische Lehre wurzelt in der Empörung über die Wirklichkeit” (Meier 2017, 95), that this doctrine is ultimately a projection of its author’s own dissatisfaction with life. Doctrines and projects such as Zarathustra’s futuristic doctrine and the project of the *UB* come from the *Geist der Rache*, which is “die größte Gefahr für den Philosophen” (Meier 2017, 97; cf. Heidegger 2000), from the will’s anger at everything that refuses to bend to its demands, in particular everything past. As an act of revenge against these immovable rocks, the thinker’s will devaluates them – thereby exercising some form of power against that which in fact shows the will’s impotence or at least the limits of its power – and then comes to see these now-worthless things, this now-worthless world, as in need of being given meaning and worth. Now the thinker’s will can fully assert itself, and take revenge on everything that had previously resisted it: it bestows its own meaning and laws on everything, including the previously immovable past, and thereby the will subjects everything to itself.¹⁸ But as glorious as this triumph of the will may appear, reflection shows the untenable nature of such futuristic projects that aim to make the world meaningful by bringing about the world-historical redemptive event – including the project of the *UB*. Zarathustra concludes that what needs redemption is not the world or life as such, but the thinker’s will: it needs to be

¹⁶ The young souls are to see spiritual cripples in everyone who has not yet been transformed by the redemptive event, including themselves – just like Zarathustra. Cf. 1.385–6 and Chapter III, fn. 50.

¹⁷ Church (2015, 235–6) sees nothing problematic with this futuristic teaching, and reads *Za II Von der Erlösung* as an affirmation thereof rather than as a profound critique. Brooks (2018, 130) also reads the late Nietzsche as “the redeeming philosopher-artist depicted in the combined teaching of *SE* and *WB*”, and believes that “the redeeming task of such philosophers [as Nietzsche or Zarathustra] is bound up with the fact that they are the creators of values, truths, and even of ‘nature’ itself”.

¹⁸ Meier (2017, 99) points out that the logic of the spirit of revenge ultimately leads to making (the ‘unredeemed’) life itself into suffering and punishment, so that it can ascribe the greatest possible significance to its ‘redeeming’ act.

‘redeemed’ from its need to redeem things, from its need to bring everything under its control at least in its mental constructs. The will needs to learn to accept the world and the things *as they are in themselves*.¹⁹

Underlying this desire for redemption of the whole of life is a basic attitude of dissatisfaction with life, a creeping sense that life by itself *is not good*. If life, including its highest forms, is unbearable, if the truth about life is that life is livable only under the spell of some illusion, why bother with the truth? Why is the life of the Schopenhauerian man – the redemptive genius who is “wahrhafter *Mensch*” and “*Nicht-mehr-Thier*” (1.380)²⁰ – desirable at all, given that it consists of suffering more intensely than the lesser kinds of life? And if this highest kind of human life is not desirable, can we consider life to be desirable at all? We may well come to suspect that such an understanding of life is not really life-affirming. This becomes clearer when we take a closer look at the “Schopenhauerian affirmation” of *SE*. This ‘affirmation’ presupposes the insight that all willing as unsatisfiable striving and hence senseless suffering, and that one ceases to play this game. In other words, it presupposes a denial of the will, a cessation of striving and desiring.²¹ But denial of the will in the strict sense in which it is used here – not merely a self-disciplining of some unruly impulse or another, but a complete cessation of striving (Schopenhauer, *Werke* V.380; quoted at 1.373) – is incompatible with Nietzsche’s psychological theory already at this point. Life

¹⁹ Cf. *AC* 14, which directly contradicts the notion that animal life (including human life) is somehow imperfect and in need of redemption by the self-sacrificing redeeming genius. This of course doesn’t imply a practical attitude of complacent quietism – cf. *EH* Zarathustra 6, and fn. 55 below.

²⁰ Regardless of how seriously Nietzsche meant this metaphysical notion of the genius, he soon came to critique it explicitly: cf. *MA* 162–4, *VM* 378.

²¹ At 1.374 we read about ceasing to be a toy of eternal becoming; at 1.375 we read that the power of the Schopenhauerian man “liegt in seinem Sich-selbst-Vergessen”; the redeeming insight at 1.380 is that “[die Natur] begreift, dass sie verlernen müsse, Ziele zu haben”; at 1.472, the tragic wisdom is described as ending in “einem wonnereichen Untergehen und Nicht-mehr-Wollen” – all these phrases say, more or less directly, that genuine wisdom and happiness lie in the denial of one’s will. The same is true of the description of the redemptive geniuses as “wahrhafte *Menschen*” and “*Nicht-mehr-Thiere*” (1.380) – they are such in contrast to the regular humans who have not denied their will and who thus are not fully human, but rather “die Thiere, die sinnlos zu leiden scheinen” (1.378).

that is essentially willing or desiring, that is “jene dunkle, treibende, unersättlich sich selbst begehrende Macht” (1.269), cannot cease willing or desiring without ceasing to be what it is. As long as a living being is living, it is willing or desiring; as soon as it ceases to desire, it ceases to live; the only *natural* cessation of willing or desiring is death. This ‘affirmation’ is a vision of transcending the limits of the human condition, but it runs against the conditions of its own existence. It is self-contradictory, and, as Nietzsche will understand in a few years, sickly (cf. *VM* 349). It is unclear whether Nietzsche actually believed something like it was possible when he was writing *SE* – given its psychological impossibility, and given that *SE* shows very few traces of Schopenhauer’s doctrines in general, I am inclined to think he didn’t – but in any case, he apparently didn’t have anything better to offer to his audience as an image of the insight into the being of the whole at this point.²² Thus the image of the highest knowledge and happiness the *UB* offer to us is a sham, and there is no genuine affirmation of life in the *UB*. This ‘affirmation’ tells us that life can be affirmed only by ceasing to be life. The thought of the *UB* is, despite its best efforts, *life-denying*.

The best life that the *UB* knows of is a tragic or heroic life (as is explicitly said in the Schopenhauer quotation at 1.373): a life that is in an inescapable conflict both internally (truth vs. the needs of one’s life) and externally (opposition of the individual against the ‘world’ that is in the wrong and needs to be redeemed), in which the task of the tragic-heroic individual is to sacrifice himself and his own good for the sake of a greater, common good (which he will not be able to

²² We can see Nietzsche’s difficulties with this subject in the letter to Franz Overbeck from 30 July 1874. Nietzsche reports here that *SE* is almost finished, apart from what would become *SE* 5, i.e., precisely the account of the affirmation of life: “Allerdings graut mir vor dem, was noch fehlt, ein kleines Capitelchen in der Mitte, vom Schwersten! Schwerzusagendem!” (KGB II.3, 252). As for the intention behind using the trinity of redeeming geniuses as images of the good life, I believe they were to be a conception that honors the eminent role of philosophy in human life, but one that isn’t limited to philosophy and that can take into account the great diversity of human types without simply condemning all non-philosophers as worthless. The multiple audiences recognized by the later Nietzsche can be seen as resulting from a similar, but more carefully considered intention (cf. fn. 37 below).

enjoy; and, as discussed above, it is questionable how far that alleged greater good is genuine). This kind of life consequently does not admit the possibility of inner peace or happiness other than in the cessation of itself, be it in death or in the fabled “Schopenhauerian affirmation” of the three types of the redeeming genius.²³ There is a hope that this may be different for the free men of the future after the redeeming event takes place, but there is no such hope for Nietzsche himself and for the present-day young souls, who “auch an den Gegenmitteln [der historischen Krankheit] zu leiden haben” (1.331) and can only hope that they will one day manage to overcome this sickness (1.332). Such a life, a life ruled by the ethos of *tragische Gesinnung*, by the belief that a self-sacrificing tragic struggle with ourselves and with the world is the best life available to us, is fundamentally a *moral* life.²⁴

The moral character of this way of life is reflected also in the way Nietzsche conceives of his primary audience, of the young souls. In accord with the larger theme of the tragic-heroic life, they are thematized as believers willing to sacrifice themselves for a task assigned to them from outside (e.g. at 1.403), as ‘camels’ in Zarathustra’s sense (cf. *Za I Von den drei Verwandlungen*). In contrast, the free spirits, one of the later Nietzsche’s primary audiences, are characterized by two qualities that mark them as the opposite of the young souls: their intellectual independence or skepticism (as a character trait), and their having freed themselves from harmful ideals they had hitherto believed (as an experience they have undergone). It is in this sense that Nietzsche speaks of himself as a “*freigewordener Geist*” in *EH* MA 1, and of his desired readers in *AC* 36. Although

²³ While it strictly speaking is true that “these exemplary individuals make many appearances in Nietzsche’s work early and late” (Church 2015, 64), the artist and the saint are radically devalued compared to the role they have in the *UB* (cf. e.g. *GM* III.5 for the artist and *JGB* 47 for the saint), and the philosopher is understood in a completely different way, as I will momentarily show. They certainly no longer appear as types of the redeeming genius.

²⁴ Thus, although Fink (1992, 41) is incorrect that in the *UB* Nietzsche merely “auf dem Boden von Schopenhauers Philosophie seine Artistenmetaphysik errichtet”, he is right that “die Gründung des Kulturbegriffs auf das tragische Weltbild [ist in den *UB*] unverkennbar.” (ibid., 36).

both the young souls and the free spirits can both be fruitfully characterized as thymotic natures, the free spirits have attained a higher level of maturity, both in an experiential and in a spiritual sense. Their experiential maturity shows itself in having overcome the kind of rash and passionate devotion to causes one finds admirable, the “Geschmack für das Unbedingte” (*JGB* 31), which Nietzsche criticizes as characteristic of “youth” in passages like *MA* I Vorrede 3, *MA* 599, *JGB* 31 or *EH* *MA* 4. The spiritual maturity of the free spirits is their actual spiritual independence, their having attained the stage of Zarathustra’s “lion” (cf. Hutter 2009, 214). Seen from this perspective, *nobody* in the *UB* is actually free – even the philosopher is bound by his moral, redemptive purpose (as well as to the task of producing genuine culture), to which he is to contribute without regard for his own good.

A moral life is fundamentally different from the philosophic life as the mature Nietzsche understands it. First of all, whereas the philosophic life strives to attain one’s own good, understood as the increase of one’s power and knowledge, as the increase of one’s virtue or *virtù* in the sense of *AC* 6 or *EH* Klug 1, the good of the moral life is determined by some (heterogeneous) moral purpose that is in principle unconnected to one’s own good in the above sense.²⁵ The life of the *UB*’s redeeming genius is ruled by such a moral purpose that requires him to suffer for its sake, to suffer from truthfulness more than any other human being suffers (1.371, 451–2), and to do so even though it doesn’t contribute to his good: “Seine Kraft liegt in seinem Sich-selbst-Vergessen”

²⁵ This includes philosophy as a way of life in the ancient sense, as it was described in Chapter II.3 above, at least insofar as the standards according to which one lives and orders one’s soul are not the product of original insight into one’s own good, but just doctrines, i.e. products of another thinker meant for public teaching, which one adheres to. The philosophic life in the mature Nietzsche’s understanding means precisely *not* following any master, being a “skeptic” (*AC* 54) – one who takes nothing for granted and examines (gr. *σκέπτομαι*) everything. On a related note, the philosophic life no longer has to be externally visible: it is rather the internal devotion to the truth, or to the passion of knowledge, understood as one’s genuine good; all its external manifestations (or lack thereof) depend on the thinker’s circumstances and judgment. In this regard, consider also the prominence of the concept of the *mask* in the mature Nietzsche’s thinking (e.g. *JGB* Vorrede, 25, 40, 270, 278, 289, or *GM* III.9–10; cf. Kaufmann 1982).

(1.375). Second, it is a life based in *belief* rather than knowledge. On the one hand, the actions and projects of such a life are based on the belief that the moral purpose is the unconditional good: they are not actions and projects that correspond to the knowledge of what one's good is and how this good is grounded in the being of the human being and of the whole. The thinker's philanthropy is such a moral belief to which one is to devote oneself, even at the cost of one's own good. On the other hand, it is a life that believes in the future redemptive event and derives its own meaning (and, as we saw, the meaning of everything else as well) from bringing that event about. But, this being a *future* event, it is of necessity uncertain, and as such it is a matter of belief rather than of knowledge. Here it should be emphasized that because the thought of the *UB* in general holds truth to be deadly and deadening, it places a great premium on belief (of whatever kind) – on belief that is, to the thinker at least, known to be an illusion (cf. 1.319) – as the motivating force of life and action. Thus Nietzsche tells us “nur in Liebe aber, nur umschattet von der *Illusion* der Liebe schafft der Mensch, nämlich nur im *unbedingten* Glauben an das Vollkommene und Rechte” (1. 296; emphases added); or that “das Fundament aller [menschlichen] Sicherheit und Ruhe [ist] der *Glaube* an das Beharrliche und Ewige” (1.330; emphasis added); that the motivation of the young souls is “*der Glaube an eine metaphysische Bedeutung der Kultur*” (1.401); and even that truthfulness means “an ein Dasein *glauben*, welches überhaupt nicht verneint werden könnte” (1.372; emphasis added) – that *truthfulness* itself is a matter of belief. In a word, knowledge is not its own goal and its own reward in the *UB*: it is just a means to bring about the redemptive event on which one's hope and belief are oriented.²⁶

²⁶ In retrospect, Nietzsche names *Glaube* as one of the principal prejudices of which he freed himself during his crisis (*EHMA* 1).

This emphasis on belief has in turn important consequences for how the *UB* conceive of the philosopher. These four essays contain no reflection on what does it mean to be a philosopher, to be engaged in a life of thinking, what is the good of such a life and what kind of happiness does it entail.²⁷ They consider the philosopher only “from the outside”,²⁸ from the perspective of what he is supposed to accomplish for the sake of genuine culture and for the redemptive event.²⁹ It is this completely instrumental conception of the philosopher that makes it possible to speak of Wagner as a “philosopher” at all (1.445). We have already seen that in the *UB* it is impossible to speak of the happiness that a life devoted to the truth entails, a subject of eminent importance to the mature Nietzsche. Insofar as happiness is possible for the thinker in the *UB* at all, it would be tightly bound up with the success of the project; his life would be ‘tragic’ in the sense of it being a struggle against overwhelming odds, and the possibility of success (and of the consequent happiness) is minuscule. Furthermore, given that the conflict between truth and life is a background of this entire conception, it is questionable how genuine would even the happiness of bringing about the redemptive event be.³⁰ In any case, this life would be unbearable for the most part, and it would have to be complemented (at least occasionally) by artistic illusions (cf. 1.453). The philosopher, as he is conceived in the *UB*, is an unhappy and not-self-sufficient existence, guided by a moral purpose – in sum, not much to be envied.

²⁷ Two years later, in the letter to Mathilde Maier from 15 July 1878, Nietzsche points out very clearly “wie ich jetzt *selber*, bis in’s Kleinste, nach Weisheit strebend *lebe*, während ich früher nur *die Weisen* verehrte und anschwärmte”, and comments that his pre-crisis ‘philosophizing’, combined with his devotion to Wagner’s art, was what “mich endlich krank und kränker machte und mich fast meinem guten Temperamente und meiner Begabung entfremdet hätte” (KGB II.5, 338).

²⁸ And consequently also “von Unten hinauf” (*JGB* 30).

²⁹ Cf. Meier 2019, 108n32 and 117 for an instructive discussion.

³⁰ A consequence of this is the image “des nach Leben dürstenden theoretischen Menschen” (1.503), in which truth and life are once again pictured in irreconcilable conflict. In *M* 41, the theoretic or contemplative life appears already in a much more positive light, as something that possesses its determinate worth despite how most of the world misunderstands it and despite the fact that it is suitable only for a small number of people.

Nietzsche would later admit that in his early works, including the *UB*, he was practicing “Jesuitism”, defined as “das bewußte Festhalten an der Illusion und zwangsweise Einverleibung derselben als *Basis der Cultur*” (note 16 [23], 10.507). We have seen ample evidence of how the illusions of Wagner’s artworks were supposed to fulfill this cultural role.³¹ But the crucial problem here is that Nietzsche, an aspiring philosopher, is here prescribing a moral view of life not just for others, but for himself as well. He has no sight of a life higher than that, a life that would be “for himself”, in which he would be nobody’s servant. The core to which the moral life should point and for which it should be a preparation – the philosophic life in the proper sense of the term – is missing in his thinking here. And insofar as Nietzsche is a philosopher above all, this way of thinking leads him in a totally wrong direction; it constitutes a “Gesamt-Abirrung meines Instinkts”, as he later called it (*EH MA 3*). That his thought, guided by the idea of the insoluble conflict between truth and life, leads him to a moral life instead of the philosophic life, is the sickness of his thought. This sickness is, ironically, the same as what he diagnosed in the philistines: running away from himself and using *divertissements* to hide this fact from himself (Wagner’s art and Wagner’s project being his *divertissements* of choice – *EH MA 3*). And the ultimate result of this sickness is that the thinking he presents in the *UB* is *life-denying*, the very opposite of Nietzsche’s innermost aspiration.

* * *

To summarize this line of critique, when Nietzsche diagnosed the crisis of his time in *HL*, he articulated a profound insight: namely that truth is not necessarily compatible with the needs of

³¹ This directly contradicts Church’s (2019, 57) claim that the *UB* embrace the modern culture’s “unconditional valuing of truth and knowledge” and merely seek to slightly correct this culture of truthfulness. Cf. Chapter II, ftn. 20.

human life, that the life of societies and of the vast majority of individuals depends on some kind of illusion for its health and flourishing. But he overestimated the validity of his insight and went on to claim that truth is *essentially* in conflict with the needs of life. His further development put the lie to this, as he discovered that the life devoted to truth, the philosophic life, the life in which the soul is ruled by the *Leidenschaft der Erkenntnis*, is not just possible, but is in fact the best life available to human beings. Whereas truth can be, and indeed often is, deadly, it need not be so. What the young Nietzsche believed to be impossible turned out to be merely something of which he was not yet capable; his insight was genuine, but he unduly absolutized it. And this incapacity gave rise to the most serious intellectual error of the *UB*. The incapacity to live well turned him – temporarily – into a life-denier. This new insight found its correlative in a new, more structured rhetoric that distinguishes between different kinds of audience and hides the dangerous truth while pointing to it in oblique ways (cf. *JGB* 30). Nietzsche thereby entered into a tradition of a philosophic art of writing that goes back at least to Plato's *Phaedrus* and its apparent paradox of criticizing writing in the medium of writing itself.

Nietzsche explicitly rejects the thesis of the necessary conflict between truth and life in *M* 550, where he tells us that “die Erkenntnis auch der hässlichsten Wirklichkeit schön ist”, i.e. that even though the world may be terrible, the knowledge thereof is not terrible – that knowledge makes one happy and thus leads to the genuine affirmation of even what would otherwise be a ‘terrible’ world. If knowledge has the capacity to make one happy, then there is no *necessary* conflict between truth and life.³² The path then stands open to a conception of a life devoted to the truth, or to put this in terms of Nietzsche's desire-based psychology, of a soul that is ruled by and

³² Cf. *AC* 11: “eine Handlung, zu der der Instinkt des Lebens zwingt, [hat] in der Lust ihren Beweis, eine *rechte* Handlung zu sein”.

ordered according to the needs of the *Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss*. This passion – another innovation of *Morgenröthe* (cf. *M* 429, 482) – is, unlike other passions, capable of giving an account of itself and self-correction in a way that other passions with their determinate desiderata aren't. Thereby it provides a solution to the core problem of the crisis: the passion for knowledge may be the guiding force of one's soul precisely because it doesn't have to *believe* that its present goal is 'unconditionally good'; it is rather capable of questioning and correcting its direction, and thereby the direction of one's entire life. Not instinct, but a passion for questioning and examination of each of the beings – and especially of oneself – is now to guide Nietzsche's life: that is the core of his mature conception of the philosophic life, and the solution to the crisis into which he was plunged by the failure of the project of the *UB*. Such a life is emphatically *not* a life of suffering or renunciation (*M* 440). From then on, the connection between knowledge and happiness, happiness and love of the whole, and love of the whole and the affirmation of the whole³³ will become a regularly (if somewhat obliquely) discussed subject in books of the mature Nietzsche, in passages such as *Za IV Mittags*; *JGB* 30, 152; or *AC* 1.³⁴

It is fundamentally because of the thought of the essential and insoluble conflict between truth and life that Nietzsche in the *UB* aims at the same time *too low* and *too far*. Too low, because he didn't yet see the height of a genuinely philosophic perspective from which the world is good and justified – or rather, in no need of a justification at all – as it is. Consequently he wasn't able to see the life of knowledge, a life ruled by the *Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss*, as the good life. Too

³³ On this subject cf. the excellent discussion in Meier 2019, 73–4.

³⁴ Given this *fundamental* difference between the conception of the philosopher in the *UB* and that of the mature Nietzsche, I must disagree with Brooks' (2018, 130–1) claims that "the older Nietzsche [...] understood himself to be the redeeming philosopher-artist depicted in the combined teaching of *SE* and *WB*" and that "Nietzsche is both the herald for the redeeming philosopher and a kind of redeeming philosopher, just as Zarathustra was both a herald for the overman and a kind of overman". The similarities in the cultural role of the young and mature Nietzsche's conception of the philosopher do not warrant such a strong blanket statement. This is not to say that the *UB*, and especially *SE*, had no positive influence on Nietzsche's further development – a subject I will treat below.

far, because the tragic perspective conditioned by the thought of the insoluble conflict between truth and life led him to believe that happiness is impossible, that the world is not good, and that consequently it needs to be redeemed. He then conceived of the task of the philosopher as the striving to bring about a redemptive transformation of this worthless world, which is far beyond what any philosophy can hope to accomplish. Life-denial, conditioned by the young Nietzsche's incapacity to live well, stands at the root of both these misdirected tendencies.

V.3 The Successes of the Thought of the *UB*

However, although the thought of the *UB* does harbor this life-denying tendency at its core, it would be a mistake to dismiss the four essays of the *UB* as complete failures that have little bearing on Nietzsche's mature philosophy. It should not be overlooked that these early works already provide statements of various Nietzsche's ideas in what is basically their mature form, and by paying attention to them we will come to see also the continuity of the *UB* with Nietzsche's later works, at least in these partial aspects.

While the death of God is not announced as such in the *UB* – Nietzsche's first pronouncement of the famous words "Gott ist todt" takes place in *FW* 108 – the core of this dictum, which he sums up in *FW* 343 as the awareness "dass der Glaube an den christlichen Gott unglauwürdig geworden ist", is clearly present already in the *UB*. This is evident in the subject matter of *DS*, which is a critique of D.F. Strauss' attempt to establish a post-Christian morality and spirituality. The main thrust of the critique of *DS* is not that Strauss has abandoned Christianity prematurely or without any good reasons, but rather that he failed to develop a genuinely post-Christian way of thinking. In particular, Strauss was shown to lack the courage to actually face the consequences of a godless cosmos that does not care about humans at all, and dealt with this simply

by smuggling a baseless notion of cosmic providence into his “new faith” (cf. 1.197). The most direct statement in the *UB* of the end of Christianity as a cultural force, as a force that guides the thoughts and lives of humans in the West, is at 1.446–7, where Christianity is treated as “ein Stück orientalischen Alterthums” that has been “zu Ende gedacht und gehandelt”. The possibilities of Christianity (and hence of the “Oriental”, at least for the time being) having been exhausted, it is now time for the other major European cultural force, the Hellenic, to assert itself: “die Erde, die bisher zur Genüge orientalisirt worden ist, sehnt sich wieder nach der Hellenisirung” (1.447).³⁵ The only other alternative that the *UB* recognize is barbarism, i.e., life devoid of culture in any strong sense of the term: the life of the philistines.

The philistines of the *UB* (who make significant appearances in all four essays: cf. *DS* 2; 1.323; 1.389–90; 1. 460–4) in fact prefigure quite faithfully the complacent and self-satisfied last men, one of the key corollaries of the death of God. The philistines’ key characteristic is their belief that *they* know what the truly important things in life are, and hence what the good life is – their “Ernst des Lebens” comprises “den Beruf, das Geschäft, sammt Weib und Kind” (1.170), or providing a comfortable existence for themselves and their immediate family. All other concerns, in particular anything related to art, philosophy, or another form of self-cultivation, is relegated to the status of entertainment or *divertissement*. They certainly do not allow these concerns to put their own way of life into question: “es darf nicht mehr gesucht werden; das ist die Philisterlösung” (1.168). These philistines are as much incapable of and/ or unwilling to strive beyond what they already are, beyond their comfortable existence, as the last men who believe to have “das Glück erfunden” (*Za I Vorrede* 5). And, as the enthusiastic reaction of the crowd at the marketplace to

³⁵ We can see traces of this approach already in *GT*, in what Nietzsche calls “das behutsame und feindselige Schweigen [...] mit dem in dem ganzen Buche das Christenthum behandelt ist” (*GT Versuch* 5).

Zarathustra's description of the last man shows, the last man is not so much an object of a prophecy as a real and already existing phenomenon. This comes up time and again in Nietzsche's critiques and diagnoses of modernity in his post-*Zarathustra* writings: he describes *JGB* as "in allem Wesentlichen eine *Kritik der Modernität*" (*EH JGB* 2), and his genealogical analyses occasionally show a polemical edge against the present age in passages such as *GM* I.12 or *AC* 38.

This polemical tendency, as well as Nietzsche's general position of 'untimeliness' (cf. Large 1994), are connected in a ministerial way to another important facet of his thought that appears for the first time in the *UB* and remains central ever after: namely his concern with educating his readers, in the best case toward helping them become philosophers in their own right.³⁶ Although already *GT* addresses the German youth with the hope they will come to "live resolutely" and create a new culture based on Wagner's tragic art (1.119), it doesn't have any kind of educational strategy: it simply points the ambitious readers to Wagner and his cause. In contrast, the *UB* do have a specific audience they strive to address: the young souls, who are understood as having a particular psychological profile with particular needs and desires. The rhetoric of the *UB*, as well as the plan it has for the young souls, are derived from this understanding of their specific nature. The *UB* offers the young souls a teaching designed to address their spiritual problems, to help them orient themselves in a world they find themselves alienated from, and to employ their productive forces in the project that Nietzsche envisions himself and Wagner to spearhead. Moreover, he presents this teaching with a rhetoric designed to appeal to their passions: on one hand, Nietzsche appeals to their contempt for D.F. Strauss and their anger that his worthless book is celebrated as a "Canon für starke Geister" (1.201); he's explicitly siding with the disaffected

³⁶ As Lampert (2017, 85) notes, "that Platonic goal [i.e. "neue Platone zu erzeugen" at 1.413] can be said to be Nietzsche's most basic political motive from the beginning to the end of his career".

young souls in their opposition to the established cultural forces. On the other hand, he appeals to their pride and to their desire to make their limited lifespan worth the while by telling them of the uniqueness of their existence and by promising them a happy and meaningful life if they develop it in the right way, i.e., if they follow the teaching of the *UB*. The basic idea of rhetorically seducing ambitious youths for a course of Nietzschean education is important to all of Nietzsche's subsequent works, although the profile of the intended audience changes in significant ways, and the rhetorical means get much more refined.³⁷ From the *UB* onward, Nietzsche's philosophical style constantly develops and changes, guided by the question of how best to reach the various kinds of readers he wants to reach, challenge them to examine their yet-unreflected beliefs, and induce them to actively *lead* their lives.³⁸

In the *UB* we find for the first time also the counterpart to the attitude of the last man incapable of making any distinctions. This counterpart is the attitude of the 'Nietzschean humanism' of *HL 2*: the idea that human greatness consists in constant striving "[um] den Begriff 'Mensch' weiter auszuspannen und schöner zu erfüllen" (1.259). While the quoted passage presents this idea as the "commandment" [*Gebot*] of the monumental man, it finds a wider field of applicability in the thought of the *UB*, in that it supports the activity of making distinctions – not just between oneself and others, but also and more importantly between oneself as one currently is and an ideal that one holds up for oneself. It is because of the direct opposition of the monumental commandment to the philistine principle "es darf nicht mehr gesucht werden" (1.168)

³⁷ Heinrich Meier describes how this stratification of intended audience is dramatized in *Zarathustra*. First, Zarathustra decides to speak to *Gefährten* rather than to the people in general (*Za I Vorrede* 9; Meier 2017, 26–7). Second, he divides his disciples into the (merely) noble natures and the potential philosophers, with each of these groups being addressed in a different way (*Za I Vom Baum am Berge*; Meier 2017, 33–5). Finally, he decides to abandon his disciples when he realizes that none of them, not even his favorite disciple, have managed to lift themselves beyond the stage of the obedient believer, the "camel" (*Za II Der Wahrsager*; Meier 2017, 92).

³⁸ On this cf. the valuable discussions in Conant 2001, 216–26 and 240n7.

that Nietzsche presents this commandment as exemplary to his readers, and uses it as an important tool in the service of his educative effort in the *UB*. And for the same reason, this attitude of what Nietzsche will later call “self-overcoming” – most generally of what one currently is, and in the best case of the human as it was hitherto understood – will remain a central part of Nietzsche’s pedagogy vis-à-vis his readers, even though the goals to which it should aim will be different than those of the self-sacrificing Schopenhauerian man. The characters held up by the later Nietzsche as the goals of one’s self-overcoming include the “philosophers of the future” from *JGB*, the “sovereign individual” from *GM* II.2, or the “Hyperboreans” from *AC*. They also include, with a crucial caveat, the slogan *Übermensch*. The *Übermensch* namely appears in Nietzsche’s works in two very different senses. The first of these is *Übermensch* as the “Sinn der Erde” from *Za* I Vorrede 3, as the goal of the futuristic teaching, as the being whose coming about is supposed to redeem all existence that is meaningless and would forever remain meaningless without the redeeming event. This usage of the *Übermensch* is a reflection of the young Nietzsche’s belief in a similar redeeming event, which we saw play itself out in the course of the *UB*. But Zarathustra never uses the phrase “Sinn der Erde” in *Za* II–IV; its thematic replacement is the statement “*das Herz der Erde ist von Gold*” (*Za* II Von grossen Ereignissen), which implies that the Earth and life have worth on their own and do not need the *Übermensch* (or anyone else) to give meaning and value to them. The *Übermensch* thus becomes a much more limited concept, an image of the perpetual self-overcoming of the human, in line with Nietzsche’s usage of this word in his other writings. Already in *M* 27 Nietzsche describes a passion that has been given an illusion of permanence as “einen neuen übermenschlichen, den Menschen hebenden Begriff”. In *AC* 4, Nietzsche describes the higher human type whose side he takes in similarly relational terms, as “Etwas, das im Verhältniss zur Gesamt-Menschheit eine Art Übermensch ist”. In *EH* Bücher 1,

Nietzsche explicitly says he uses the word *Übermensch* “zur Bezeichnung eines Typus höchster Wohlgerathenheit, im Gegensatz zu ‘modernen’ Menschen, zu ‘guten’ Menschen, zu Christen und andren Nihilisten”. In *EH* Schicksal 5 Nietzsche first continues with the same point: “[Zarathustras] Typus Mensch [ist] ein relativ übermenschlicher Typus, gerade in Verhältniss zu den *Guten* übermenschlich ist”; a couple of lines earlier he determines that this relative *Übermensch* is “der eigentlich Wahrhaftige”, i.e. the knower whose life is oriented on the truth and nothing besides the truth. He then flips the perspective of this opposition and points out that “die Guten und Gerechten seinen Übermenschen *Teufel* nennen würden”. In sum, the *Übermensch* is for the mature Nietzsche a symbol of the ceaseless striving to push human limits – in particular the limits of human *knowledge* – ever farther and higher, a striving that he first articulated in *HL* 2 and that he worked to promote in his readers ever since.

Another matter that deserves to be highlighted is the seriousness with which the *UB* deal with the problem of suffering. Of course, the sufferings inherent in the very effort to simply keep on living have been highlighted already in *GT* in the form of the “wisdom of Silenus” (1.35).³⁹ But while *GT* frames these sufferings simply as the undifferentiated “Schrecken und Entsetzlichkeiten des Daseins” (1.35), the *UB* explore in much greater detail the manifold forms in which humans suffer from life. It is no exaggeration to say that in the *UB*, every kind of human existence is examined with an eye to the peculiar sorts of suffering it entails. Here belongs “das Leiden der *Convention*” (1.455), the suffering resulting from our incapacity to express our needs due to the

³⁹ This passage obliquely shows the ubiquity and longevity of the recognition of the sufferings of human existence. Nietzsche’s immediate source for this story is Plutarch (*Moralia, Consolation to Apollonius* 27); Plutarch is quoting a now-lost work of Aristotle; and Aristotle says in the quoted passage that “this is such an old and ancient belief with us that no one knows at all either the beginning of the time or the name of the person who first promulgated it”. More generally, recognition and attempted justification of the miseries inherent in human existence are already a staple of pre-philosophic reflection across time and space, as universal as the miseries themselves.

alienated character of modern language. The philistines suffer from the bad conscience that results from their avoidance of their particular genius (1. 337, 463), as well as from the creeping sense of the meaninglessness of one's existence, from the sense that their ordinary existence is a pointless bad infinity (1.378), which they cover up with *divertissements*. On the other hand, the young souls who heed the command of their conscience to *sei du selbst* face their own sufferings that are even greater than those of the philistines. There are the manifold sufferings inherent in the striving for truthfulness, which they are voluntarily to take upon themselves in the process of their becoming a redeeming genius (1.371–2).⁴⁰ Furthermore, this process is risky and dependent on forces beyond oneself – and this results in the “Leiden des Werdenden” that arise from the uncertainty of attaining the completion of one's project (1.439–41). And, at the highest level of insight that the *UB* recognize, “die grössten Leiden des Einzelnen, die es giebt” (1.451–2) await: namely the suffering caused by the unbearable tension between one's philanthropy and one's knowledge of the nature of human life, the suffering of knowing that however much one may strive, the redeeming insight of the Schopenhauerian man will remain a preserve of a small group, and the vast majority of human beings will continue to lead lives that amount to senseless suffering.

As discussed above, the mature Nietzsche no longer thinks that the life of knowledge is suffering, let alone the greatest suffering of all – quite the opposite. Already in his next book, in *MA* 235, he addresses again the tension between one's philanthropy and one's knowledge of human affairs, but no longer as an insoluble and unbearable tension. Here, the tension between “das wärmste Herz” and “die höchste Intelligenz” is resolved unambiguously in favor of knowledge. In its desire to institute a perfect state in which humans would no longer suffer – a

⁴⁰ Nietzsche will always speak clearly about the dangers and difficulties of knowing, and of the – at least up to a certain point – unbearable character of the truth; a characteristic late discussion of this issue can be found in *JGB* 39.

state akin to that which the redemptive event should bring about – “das wärmste Herz” wants not only something that may well be impossible, but also something that goes against the conditions of its own existence. For “das wärmste Herz” is a *passionate* heart, and the only way to establish a perfect state without suffering is to populate it solely with “ermatteten Individuen”, with last-man-like people no longer capable of such a passion as “das wärmste Herz” itself exhibits. Thus, Nietzsche concludes, “das wärmste Herz will also Beseitigung seines Fundamentes, Vernichtung seiner selbst, das heisst doch: es will etwas Unlogisches, es ist nicht intelligent”. And therefore, “der Weise muss jenen ausschweifenden Wünschen der unintelligenten Güte widerstreben, weil ihm an dem Fortleben seines Typus’ und an dem endlichen Entstehen des höchsten Intellectes gelegen ist”. The status of philanthropy that wants to remove suffering from human affairs is reduced because, on examination, this philanthropy has shown itself to be a self-defeating enterprise. Knowledge, as the love of necessity (cf. Meier 2019, 74), now determines the limits on the love of man – limits which are necessary if both these passions are to coexist and if they are not to engage in self-contradictory projects. This solution of *MA 235* was to remain decisive for Nietzsche ever since, as evident e.g. from *JGB 87*.

However, the suffering inherent in human existence, and suffering that the vast majority of humans have to find a way of dealing with, remains a major concern of Nietzsche’s thinking throughout his career. One example of central importance to Nietzsche’s mature thought is the famous sentence “lieber will noch der Mensch *das Nichts* wollen, als *nicht* wollen” that appears in *GM III.1* and *III.28*, thus framing the body of *GM III*. What emerges from the overall argument of *GM III* is that a crucial reason behind the world-historical success of Christianity is precisely that it was able to provide the vast numbers of subjected and miserable human beings with a reason for their suffering, namely that it is the punishment for their sins (*GM III.15*); with ways to redirect

and discharge their vengeful affects that they cannot turn against their masters, even if this means turning these affects against oneself (*GM* III.16–20); and with a goal – a goal in the illusory *Jenseits*, but a goal nevertheless – at which they could aim their willing, and for the sake of which the ascetic practices should be performed. The function of the life-denying ascetic ideals is precisely to give meaning to the sufferings of human existence by presenting them as a path to an alleged better existence after death. The ascetic ideals gave meaning to human suffering, and this meaning “war bisher der einzige Sinn” (*GM* III.28), at least for the vast majority of mankind. Their enormous success is the result of them fulfilling the essential function of making suffering meaningful and giving it a place in the overall psychic economy of its followers, while having no competition in the form of a life-affirming ideal that could fulfill this function.

What brings all these insights of the *UB* together is their close relation to human soul, of which they all speak in one way or another. Be it the death of the Christian God who served as the capstone of a moral structure (cf. *GD* Streifzüge 5) that effectively knew no rival in Europe for almost two millennia, or the rise of the last man who, without such a God, fails to cultivate his desiring in any direction whatsoever and instead sinks into a self-satisfied comfortable life; be it Nietzsche’s wish to promote striving beyond what one currently is, his account of how one may get to know oneself and one’s genuine needs (i.e. knowledge of what striving beyond oneself means in one’s particular case), and his efforts to educate his readers and to induce them to such a striving on their own part; or be it the manifold ways in which we experience life as suffering and even as unbearable – all these insights of the *UB* speak of psychic phenomena and can be explicated in the terms of the erotic-historic soul.

I would moreover like to contend that the psychological theory of the *UB*, the theory of the erotic-historic soul whose cornerstones can be found in *HL* 1 and *SE* 1, is in its core the same

as that of the mature Nietzsche, which is discussed in most detail in *JGB*. This soul is composed of desires as mutually conflicting driving forces of our action, and of memory-based higher structures such as conscience through which the desires express themselves and from which the human soul receives its complexity. In *JGB* 12 we find the soul characterized as a “Gesellschaftsbau der Triebe und Affekte”: in terms of a multitude of “wills”, or desires, that exist alongside each other and vie with each other for domination, i.e. for the capacity to direct the entire human being toward their own satisfaction at the expense of the competing wills or desires. *JGB* 19 expands on this by constructing willing itself in terms of this manifold structure: in each act of what is commonly called “willing” “handelt es sich schlechterdings um Befehlen und Gehorchen, auf der Grundlage, wie gesagt, eines Gesellschaftsbaus vieler ‘Seelen’”, where we identify our “self” with that will or desire that prevailed over the others. The conflicting nature of our desires furthermore necessitates that the chaos which they by nature form within us be ordered in some way, as otherwise we would not be capable of any higher psychic functions than satisfaction of our immediate physiological needs. In other words, human beings necessarily need a morality: “Moral nämlich als Lehre von den Herrschaftsverhältnissen verstanden, unter denen das Phänomen ‘Leben’ entsteht” (*JGB* 19).⁴¹ He then expands on this understanding of morality as a tool of psychic organization in *JGB* 188: each morality is, he says, “ein Stück Tyrannei gegen die ‘Natur’, auch gegen die ‘Vernunft’”.⁴² *JGB* 188 continues by explaining that any morality is above all a compulsive force that strives to keep the activities of the soul within boundaries determined by the ruling desire of the soul in question, and as such it not only limits the expression

⁴¹ That Nietzsche speaks of *Leben* rather than of *Mensch* here implies that a similar, albeit a much simpler, structure exists also in other living beings – a conception that harks back to Aristotle’s conception of the soul as the specific form of a given kind of living being (cf. *De anima* II.1).

⁴² For a similar and more thorough account of Nietzsche’s understanding of morality cf. van Tongeren 1989.

of other desires within that soul, but it also sets the terms in which the other drives may express themselves: a morality of any sort entails the “Bedürfniss nach beschränkten Horizonten” – a phrase that harks back precisely to *HL 1* – to the horizons of significance formed by the ruling desire itself. It is thanks to these manifold forms of compulsion that humans have set upon themselves and each other that manifold human capacities were able to develop into the immense height and breadth in which we can observe them throughout human history, into the astonishing diversity of human ways of life, acting, and thinking: out of such a ‘single-minded’ compulsion

kommt und kam auf die Dauer immer Etwas heraus, dessentwillen es sich lohnt, auf Erden zu leben, zum Beispiel Tugend, Kunst, Musik, Tanz, Vernunft, Geistigkeit, – irgend etwas Verklärendes, Raffinirtes, Tolles und Göttliches.

As always, it is thinking in particular that draws Nietzsche’s attention when he goes on to say that it was precisely the compulsion of morality through which “dem europäischen Geiste seine Stärke, seine rücksichtslose Neugierde und feine Beweglichkeit angezuchtet wurde”. Needless to say, Nietzsche himself, and we ourselves, are the heirs and beneficiaries of this long compulsion. And just as in *SE 1* conscience was understood a memory-based structure that compares our current existence with the kind of existence that our ruling desire prescribes to us, so it is in *JGB 158*: “unserm stärksten Triebe, dem Tyrannen in uns, unterwirft sich nicht nur unsre Vernunft, sondern auch unser Gewissen”. “Reason” is understood here instrumentally, as a tool that calculates the best course of action on behalf of a desire which sets the goal for it; in terms of the erotic-historic soul, this would make it yet another memory-based, or “historical” in the sense of *HL 1*, structure.

The opposite case – the lack of a ruling desire and of a stable structure of command within a soul, the lack of a morality that compels the other desires to obedience and servitude to the ruling desire’s goal – is what the mature Nietzsche calls *decadence*. Decadence understood as “Anarchie der Atome, Disgregation des Willens” (*Wa 7*; cf. *GD Streifzüge 35*) can be considered a general

description of the condition that Nietzsche diagnosed in *HL* as the “historical sickness”; but decadence is a much wider term that can encompass many more causes than just the oversaturation with historical learning that was the core problem in *HL*. A telling example is the fact that Wagner, who in the *UB* was hailed as the exemplary artist and one who has managed to learn a lot without succumbing to the historical sickness (cf. 1.442), is in *Wa* (esp. Epilog) precisely the exemplary decadent, the “*lehrreichste* Fall” of the modern soul divided against itself. Here it is important to note that this reevaluation of Wagner’s spiritual health does not imply a denial of the capacity for learning ascribed to him in *WB*.

JGB 230 expands this account of the soul by describing knowledge and experience as something to be digested and *einverleibt* by the soul – again a notion that appears already in *HL* 1 (1.251). Our soul tends to approach the things it encounters in the world with “einem starken Hange, das Neue dem Alten anzuähnlichen, das Mannichfaltige zu vereinfachen, das gänzlich Widersprechende zu übersehen oder wegzustossen”. This process of assimilating the new into the pre-existing structure is, as it was the case with the useful kinds of history in *HL* 2–3, simultaneously a process of falsification: the new things and experiences are not examined for what they are in themselves, but are taken in terms of their utility for our goals and are forced into the roles we prescribe to them. This process of “Einreihung neuer Dinge unter alte Reihen” is “Wachstum”, or the feeling thereof: it is the feeling of being ever more in control of our world, of making our world conform to an ever-greater degree to our structures of meaningfulness. A part of this basic way of relating to our world is also the “scheinbar entgegengesetzter Trieb” toward ignorance and “dem abschliessenden Horizonte” that is regulated by the strength of our nature – just as in *HL* 1, there are limits to how much we can process and incorporate, and matters whose relevance to our goals we fail to see remain outside of our mental horizon. These two drives,

toward incorporation and exclusion, are two sides of the same coin: their combined effect is the limiting of our world to matters we find meaningful and the ever-greater integration of such matters into our structures of meaningfulness. In this way, our world becomes ever more “our”, and we come to see ourselves as ever more “at home” in it.

At this point in *JGB* 230 Nietzsche introduces an innovation that has no thematic parallel in *HL*: namely “jenen sublimen Hang des Erkennenden, [...] der die Dinge tief, vielfach, gründlich nimmt und nehmen *will*”, which is as such opposed to our natural way of approaching the world, dubbed “Grundwille des Geistes” by Nietzsche.⁴³ Knowledge as the desire to understand things as what they are in themselves stands in a peculiar opposition to our basic tendency to incorporate them in terms or horizons of the ruling passion.⁴⁴ This opposition carries several important implications for Nietzsche’s cognitive psychology. First of all, it means that if we are at all to know things as they are, we first need to get to know ourselves and our soul, and become aware of the distorting tendencies that our particular needs and desires implant into the way we look at the world. Knowledge requires self-knowledge; only by carrying out this reflexive turn can the being for whom its own being is at stake find out how its existential investment distorts its way of seeing, and subsequently take distance from its own biases and correct them. Second, this clearly is no

⁴³ As Meier (2019, 270) points out, the description of this *Grundwille des Geistes* makes clear that it is the same thing as what Nietzsche elsewhere calls *Wille zur Macht* (cf. *JGB* 9 in particular). My discussion of *JGB* 230 here is indebted to Meier’s reading thereof (Meier 2019, 269–73) also more generally.

⁴⁴ From this we can also see why truth – in the sense of seeing things as they are in themselves rather than in terms of their utility for our goals – is ‘deadly’ for Nietzsche. Things often – in the case of a regular person, much more often than not – are not what we would like or need them to be, and becoming aware of this gap between what a thing is and what we have so far taken it to be, becoming aware of our hitherto-deluded way of seeing and acting, can deal a painful blow to our confidence that we know how to satisfy our ruling passion, how to get what we want. It leads to a state of *aporia*, in which the previous way of acting or thinking is no longer feasible (and may have even come to light as violent, shameful, disgusting, or otherwise unacceptable in the light of our current self-understanding), and no new and better way is immediately in sight. Moreover, this is the case not just for the regular person, but (up to a certain point) also for the knower who, after all, willingly seeks out such truths about himself: “jeder, der irgendwann einmal einen ‘neuen Himmel’ gebaut hat, fand die Macht dazu erst in der *eigenen Hölle*” (*GM* III.10).

easy task: it requires that one consciously and deliberately oppose one's most natural tendency, and this over a long period of time. It requires a "moral" training in the sense of *JGB* 188, an *askesis* of wisdom, a long and arduous training in searching for one's biases and correcting them.⁴⁵ Third, this process of coming to see, oppose, and correct the distorting tendencies of the *Grundwille des Geistes* is a difficult and painful undertaking, a process of strict *Selbstzucht*, a kind of cutting oneself open and severing the ligaments of one's cognitive apparatus in order to replace them with new and more adequate connections – which explains why Nietzsche calls it "eine Art Grausamkeit des intellektuellen Gewissens und Geschmacks".⁴⁶ Fourth and finally, an endeavor like this requires a powerful driving force that would provide us with the strength to oppose our natural tendency to distort the world according to our wishes, a power that would outweigh the power of this natural tendency. The *Leidenschaft der Erkenntniss*, whose goal is precisely to know things as they are in themselves, can fulfill this crucial function, at least for those in whom it had become the ruling passion.⁴⁷

In short, the mature Nietzsche's psychology in principle follows the erotic-historic model of the soul from the *UB*. His main focus is on the "erotic" part of the soul: on the desires, on their internal conflicts, and on ways of ordering them into a single structure not torn by mutual strife; in a word, on the "politics of the soul", as Thiele (1990) puts it. The Platonic tripartite model of

⁴⁵ The word *askesis* originally denoted athletic training, and the ancient philosophic tradition came to use it as a name for various kinds of practices and spiritual exercises whose purpose was to improve the order of one's soul and thus to orient one's life on the activity of philosophizing. For examples of such usage, see *Gorgias* 527e; *Cleitophon* 407b; Xenophon's Socrates (*Memorabilia* I.2.23); or Diogenes Laertius VI.48, 71 (in reference to Diogenes the Cynic). Nietzsche speaks of this kind of *askesis* e.g. in *M* 195, where he mentions the "praktische Asketik aller griechischen Philosophen". The current sense of *askesis* that implies self-denial or mortification of the flesh – the sense in which also Nietzsche speaks of "asketischen Idealen" in *GM* III – is the result of the later Christian appropriation of the philosophic usage (Hadot 1995, 128). Cf. van Tongeren, Schank, & Siemens (eds.) 2004, 155–73 for an exhaustive account of Nietzsche's usage of the word.

⁴⁶ However, unlike the pain caused by scientific history, these are genuine growing pains (cf. Chapter II.3).

⁴⁷ This has important implications for the thinker's striving to become what he is, which I will discuss in the next section.

the soul, in which each of the three ‘parts’ (and, at least in the case of the appetitive ‘part’, their sub-parts) has its own desire to satisfy, and caring for the soul means harmonizing these ‘parts’ under the rule of the calculating ‘part’, is clearly an inspiration for Nietzsche.⁴⁸ Both Plato and Nietzsche examine the reality of psychic conflict among the various desires that constitute the soul; they examine both *what* rules the soul and *how* does it rule, what kind of *regime* does the ruling passion establish within the soul (cf. Acampora 2013, 195–6); as well as the various possible ways of ordering the soul into a single, ordered, and non-self-contradictory whole (inasmuch as this is in human capacities). I believe it could be shown that many features of Nietzsche’s mature writings, such as decadence (see above) or his typological enterprise in *AC*, can and should be understood in terms of this conception of the soul as a plurality of contesting parts. However, that argument is beyond the scope of this dissertation.⁴⁹

Of course, the psychological understanding is much more refined in the later works, not least through the historicization of origin of the structures of the soul (e.g. *GM passim*); Parkes (1994, 331) calls this “the increasing realization of how much more of the ‘foreign’ past comes to us through ‘the blood’”. A result of this procedure is historicization and immanentization of many features of the human psyche that would otherwise seem to be ‘natural’ or ‘transcendental’, such as the distinction between *Gut* and *Böse*; the existence of *bad* conscience (as opposed to conscience working in the service of our ruling passion); or the recognition that philosophy is nothing self-evidently good and valuable, but rather that for the greatest part of human history, philosophy and independent thinking more generally has been considered criminal to the highest degree (*GM* III.9; *GD* Streifzüge 45; *AC* 13). But since it is in *HL* where Nietzsche first tells us that he considers the

⁴⁸ On this subject cf. the excellent discussion in Parkes 1994, 305–34, and Chapter IX in general.

⁴⁹ Fink (1992, 132) has a particular blind spot here, claiming – in discussion of the late Nietzsche! – that “Nietzsche präzisiert nirgends die Voraussetzungen seiner Psychologie, nirgends die Struktur der Psyche überhaupt”.

doctrine “von dem Mangel aller cardinalen Verschiedenheit zwischen Mensch und Thier” true (1.319), this historicization does not constitute a substantially different model of the soul. Such evolutionary changes are more properly conceived of as a further elaboration of the erotic-historic conception of the soul. Thus, the late Nietzsche’s framework for thinking about the soul is in its central features the same as the one he first developed in the *UB*.

V.4 The Thought of the *UB* as a Means to Overcome Itself

Nietzsche’s thinking in the *UB* contains also two moments which, although by themselves they fall short of the perspective of Nietzsche’s later philosophy, were nevertheless instrumental in helping him attain that perspective. Although the thinking of the *UB* led Nietzsche into the crisis triggered by the Bayreuth festival, these two moments moved him not to remain stuck in it and to emerge from it with the recognition of his earlier errors.

The first of these is the voluntary acceptance of the suffering of truthfulness (1.371). This is admittedly a moral attitude: the suffering of truthfulness is accepted not for one’s own sake, but rather in order to bring about the redemptive event and thus to justify the world that would otherwise remain meaningless. We could describe it as a kind of “piety of knowledge” in the language of *FW* 344, although a different kind than the one discussed in that aphorism. Whereas the man of science described in *FW* 344 is unconditionally opposed to lies and untruths of any kind, his attitude being “ich will nicht täuschen”, Nietzsche’s attitude is far removed from this, as is evident already from the very first page of *DS*, where he tells us that “es giebt die heilsamsten und segensreichsten Irrthümer” (1.159). In *HL* Nietzsche agrees with Goethe’s idea that scientific knowledge should be hidden from the general public and contribute to life “nur durch eine *erhöhte*

Praxis” (1.301), and he explicitly warns against the spread of “Lehren, die ich für wahr, aber für tödtlich halte” (1.319) precisely because of their corrosive effects on the solidarity of a *Volk*, which would then dissolve into “Systeme von Einzelegoismen”. We saw that the image of Wagner in *WB* is a monumental fiction that has little to do with Nietzsche’s private understanding of Wagner at that point, and this essay ends with the hope that Wagner’s fictions will become myths that will give meaning to the lives of the free men of the future (*WB* 11). In the thinking of the *UB*, truth is to be the preserve of an elite group, a group among whose members Nietzsche counts himself. Because the *UB* understand truth as essentially hostile to life, this ‘privilege’ is actually an act of self-sacrifice on their part for the benefit of lesser men.

But it is precisely this attitude of desiring the truth at any cost, regardless of how painful or difficult to bear it may be, that allowed – or rather *forced* – Nietzsche not to close his eyes in the face of the fiasco of Bayreuth. He had to face the facts that the project he had just outlined in the *UB* was never going to happen, and that he was tricked by Wagner’s big words into publicly supporting a man who was much more of an actor than Nietzsche had supposed. Nietzsche could have followed Wagner’s example, thrown out whatever of his own ideas was no longer applicable, and pretended that everything was going swimmingly. Had he done this, he could have enjoyed a comfortable existence as one of the Master’s foremost disciples at a time after “dem grössten Sieg, den je ein Künstler errungen hat” (*MA* II Vorrede 1), as Nietzsche described the first Bayreuth festival in retrospect. But this was never a genuine option. For Nietzsche, the attitude of accepting the suffering of truthfulness was not a pose, but a genuine commitment. To abandon it for the sake of living comfortably alongside Wagner would be completely un-heroic and unphilosophic; it would mean giving up everything that had defined him until then. Thus he had to suffer from truthfulness once more, and to examine where his thinking had gone wrong. Nietzsche’s

pessimistic attitude of wanting the truth at any cost led him also to examine the truth behind the presuppositions of this attitude itself. As he tells us in *EH* MA 1, in the period of *MA* he formulated critiques of concepts like “das Genie”, “der Heilige”, “der Held”, “der Glaube”, “Überzeugung”, “Mitleiden”, and “das Ding an sich” – almost all of which play a prominent role in the thought of the *UB*. And, as we saw, in *M* 550 at latest he achieves the rejection of the idea of the insoluble conflict between truth and life, which was the main premise of his early pessimism. The practical attitude issuing from his pessimism came to overcome the thinking behind it – just as Nietzsche will later say that it was in fact the Christian morality of unconditional honesty that made the Christian faith unbelievable, that in this way the Christian God abolished himself. As he says in *FW* 357, and repeats in *GM* III.27,

Man sieht, *was* eigentlich über den christlichen Gott gesiegt hat: die christliche Moralität selbst, der immer strenger genommene Begriff der Wahrhaftigkeit, die Beichtväter-Feinheit des christlichen Gewissens, übersetzt und sublimiert zum wissenschaftlichen Gewissen, zur intellektuellen Sauberkeit um jeden Preis.

Just as the practice of Christian faith abolished its theoretical basis and thus itself, so did the practice of Schopenhauerian pessimism abolish its theoretical basis in Nietzsche’s case. In the note 27 [80] (8.500) from 1878, Nietzsche indeed interprets the attitude of the Schopenhauerian man as what drove him to “Skepsis gegen alles Verehrte Hochgehaltene, bisher Vertheidigte (auch gegen Griechen Schopenhauer Wagner)”, and says that this “*Umweg*” was how he came to his “*Höhe*”. This “height”, although in 1878 it can’t yet be Nietzsche’s mature philosophical outlook, is a height in relation to the earlier Schopenhauerian-pessimistic position. His mature outlook, even though Nietzsche is fond of calling it a kind of pessimism as well (“Pessimismus der Stärke” in *GT* Versuch 1, or “der *dionysische* Pessimismus” in *FW* 370), is rather an overcoming of pessimism. As it is described in *JGB* 56, Nietzsche came to it by thinking pessimism “in die Tiefe” – i.e. by uncovering and examining its premises by the practice of unconditional truthfulness – and by consequently opening his eyes “für das umgekehrte Ideal”. This ideal entails the affirmation of

everything there was and is, and even the affirmation of the eternal return of everything there was and is – the eternal return being the “höchste Formel der Bejahung, die überhaupt erreicht werden kann” (*EH* Za 1). We can thus sketch a path from the denial of the livability of the truthful life in the *UB* to a full affirmation of the whole – a path on which the pessimistic ideal of unconditional truthfulness was, at least initially, an indispensable guideline.

The second matter of particular importance in this respect is the doctrine of *sei du selbst*. Here we must distinguish between its function as a universal ideal for the project of the *UB* and its personal-individual dimension, in which it is an exhortation to specific self-chosen individuals – the young souls in *UB* – as well as to Nietzsche himself. Both these senses are clearly present in *SE* 1: Nietzsche first laments the present rule of “öffentlich meinenden Scheinmensen” and speculates that because of it, the present age may be the “unmenschlichste Abschnitt der Geschichte” (1.338–9). But he then opens the next paragraph by emphasizing that the effort to *sei du selbst* is of greatest importance to our lives “auch wenn uns die Zukunft nichts hoffen liesse” (1.339). In this personal-individual dimension it was to remain one of Nietzsche’s central positive doctrines. He changed the wording of this doctrine from *sei du selbst* to *werde, der du bist*, but this doesn’t substantially change its content: it rather serves to emphasize the paradox of exhorting us to become what we think we already are. The doctrine appears in this new wording in *FW* 270 as the voice of Nietzsche’s own conscience (and in *FW* 255 it describes his ambition as a teacher), and he chose it – in a significantly modified form⁵⁰ – as the subtitle for *EH*, his intellectual autobiography.

⁵⁰ The subtitle of *EH* is “Wie man wird, was man ist”. First, this is no longer an imperative, but an answer to a question. Second, the question is not how to become who we are, but how to become *what* we are. Taken together, these changes imply that Nietzsche has fulfilled what was earlier the imperative of his conscience, that he is now in position to

However, this is not to say that the doctrine as it is presented in the *UB* is the same as in the mature Nietzsche, and that it hasn't undergone important developments after the *UB*. Acampora (2013, ch. 5), who contrasts the account of Wagner's becoming-himself in *WB* (which is the principal example of this process in the *UB*) with Nietzsche's account of his own becoming-himself in *EH*, points out several important differences between these two accounts. First, the Wagner of *WB* becomes himself by undergoing heroic struggles with himself as well as with the world, whereas the Nietzsche of *EH* claims "es ist kein Zug von *Ringen* in meinem Leben nachweisbar, ich bin der Gegensatz einer heroischen Natur" (*EH* Klug 9). Second, while Wagner became himself by pursuing his artistic ideals and realizing them with ever-greater fidelity, in *EH* Klug 9 Nietzsche asserts that "dass man wird, was man ist, setzt voraus, dass man nicht im Entferntesten ahnt, was man ist", that the process becoming-oneself is not under our conscious control and direction; and even that in cases such as Nietzsche's, when one's task is as enormous as the revaluation of all values, "nosce te ipsum das Rezept zum Untergang wäre". These two points of direct contrast between the accounts of becoming what one is in *WB* and in *EH* (Acampora 2013, 154) lead us to consider further divergences between these two accounts.

Third of these is that while the Wagner of *WB* is devoted to his ideals, the Nietzsche of *EH* emphasizes the importance of selfishness in the sense of self-love and self-care (indicated by words such as *Selbstsucht* or *Selbsterhaltung*). This selfishness means putting oneself and one's own bodily well-being at the first place, paying the greatest attention to seemingly small things such as "Wahl von Nahrung, von Ort und Klima, von Erholung" (*EH* Klug 8), which Nietzsche discusses in detail on his own case in *EH* Klug 1–8. This search for the optimal conditions of one's day-to-

explain the inner workings of this process to us, and that he now understands it as closely related to one's psychophysiological type, to the "what" of one's nature.

day existence is guided by the question “wie hast gerade *du* dich zu ernähren, um zu deinem Maximum von Kraft, von Virtù in Renaissance-Stile, von moralinfreier Tugend zu kommen?” (EH Klug 1), i.e. by the effort to gather and increase one’s powers without wasting them in struggling with unimportant but annoying everyday problems: “unsere *grossen* Ausgaben sind die häufigsten kleinen” (EH Klug 9). Here I would add that this emphasis on the body⁵¹ does not have a precedent in the *UB*; it was thematically introduced in *WS 5* as the turning from the ‘first and last things’ to the “*nächsten Dingen*” that encompass precisely the small, everyday conditions of our embodied existence. It receives its most forceful expression in *EH Klug 10*, where Nietzsche declares that

Diese kleinen Dinge – Ernährung, Ort, Klima, Erholung, die ganze Casuistik der Selbstsucht – sind über alle Begriffe hinaus wichtiger als Alles, was man bisher als wichtig nahm. [...] Alle Fragen der Politik, der Gesellschafts-Ordnung, der Erziehung sind dadurch bis in Grund und Boden gefälscht, dass man die schädlichsten Menschen für grosse Menschen nahm, – dass man die ‘kleinen’ Dinge, will sagen die Grundangelegenheiten des Lebens selber verachten lehrte...

The goal of this Nietzschean selfishness isn’t merely that we feel good about ourselves and our lives (though that certainly is *a* goal of it too): it is rather the accumulation of our productive forces. As Acampora (2013, 184) describes it, it aims “not at preserving mere existence or sheer survival [...] but rather at achieving a certain ‘self-sufficiency that overflows and gives to men and things’ (*The Gay Science 55*)”.

Another way of describing this kind of selfishness is the metaphor of pregnancy, which Nietzsche uses in *M 552*. In a state such as pregnancy, says Nietzsche, we do everything “in dem stillen Glauben [...], es müsse irgendwie dem werdenden in uns zu Gute kommen”. At the same time, we do not know or care what it is that grows in us or what will become of it, what kinds of

⁵¹ Understood as *Leib* rather than *Körper*, as the living, ensouled body, as the interrelated unity of our psychic and physical powers that forms a single, temporary, mortal whole. Cf. Hutter 2006, 26–31.

effects will it have: it is “ein reines und reinigendes Gefühl tiefer Unverantwortlichkeit”, in which our only care is for ourselves and for the conditions in which *we* live, so that our ‘offspring’ may turn out as well as possible. Nietzsche is rather emphatic on the benefits of living in such a ‘pregnancy’:

In dieser Weihe soll man leben! Kann man leben! Und sei das Erwartete ein Gedanke, eine That, — wir haben zu allem wesentlichen Vollbringen kein anderes Verhältniss, als das der Schwangerschaft und sollten das anmaassliche Reden von ‘Wollen’ und ‘Schaffen’ in den Wind blasen! Diess ist die rechte idealische Selbstsucht: immer zu sorgen und zu wachen und die Seele still zu halten, dass unsere Fruchtbarkeit schön zu Ende gehe!

And by living in such a way – not caring for what we “want” to do or achieve, but rather keeping ourselves healthy and prepared for whatever thoughts or deeds may come to us when their time arrives – “sorgen und wachen wir für den *Nutzen Aller*”; this is the best way of using our powers on an everyday basis.

But what are these thoughts or deeds that should come out of our selfishness or self-care? They are the particular works or tasks which come to our sight in the course of our life and which we take upon ourselves. To be sure, what tasks *we* in particular choose for ourselves is to a large degree dependent on the kind of person we already are, but this doesn’t mean they are a matter of simple self-expression. They rather contribute significantly to our further growth and becoming, to the process of ordering our soul in new and more complex ways. As Acampora (2013, 186) puts it, in accomplishing one’s tasks

One does not simply realize some potency already there, fully formed, from the start; nor does one make oneself into something other than what one already is. Rather, *becoming what one is* is realized through an interactive process in which the constitutive rank ordering of drives is achieved by virtue of a form of ruling expressed in engaging others.

In Nietzsche’s case, these tasks were his engagements with philosophical problems and spiritual opponents. He tells us that he sought out to engage with such problems and enemies “an denen man seine ganze Kraft, Geschmeidigkeit und Waffen-Meisterschaft einzusetzen hat” (*EH Weise*

7). There is thus a transformative dimension to Nietzsche's "Kriegs-Praxis" (*EH* Weise 7): "his agones represent his efforts to engineer, harness, and direct in the future the efficient force that is the will to power that he *is*" (Acampora 2013, 191). At the same time, his choice of worthy and victorious opponents to fight seeks to challenge their strengths rather than their weaknesses, and thereby formulate alternatives that can overcome the hitherto victorious causes Nietzsche attacks. Another consequence of this approach is the polemical bent it gives to his arguments: Acampora (2013, 188) says that "virtually all his positive views are inseparable from the positions he battles such that his *Kriegs-Praxis* plays a significant role in shaping both *what* ideas he expresses and *how* he does so". Nietzsche's *Kriegs-Praxis* thus transforms him by giving him an occasion for a full exercise of his powers, and thereby for psychic growth and integration; it challenges his opposition in its strong points, precisely where it hitherto was able to prevail over enemies, i.e. at the core of its appeal; and it shapes the expression of his ideas in writing. Nietzsche's philosophic works are the results of this *Kriegs-Praxis*, artifacts of his spiritual becoming. This assessment can be applied already to the *UB*, which Nietzsche retrospectively describes as "durchaus kriegerisch" (*EH* UB 1) and as "Attentate" (*EH* UB 2).

What all these differences amount to is a significant change of orientation between the early doctrine of *sei du selbst* and the mature account of "becoming what one is" in *EH*. The thematic effort to *sei du selbst* is no longer to be the chief object of one's desire. One's immediate task is rather to develop a "Casuistik der Selbstsucht" that seeks out the optimal for one's body, learning to live according to the needs of one's psychophysiological (or *leibliche*) nature, an effort to live well in an everyday sense so as to achieve the optimum of strength. This strength is then to be utilized, expressed, and increased by carrying out particular tasks that come to one's sight. These tasks or *agones* are "both *expressive* of the order of rank that he is and *effective* in rendering

that ordering” (Acampora 2013, 193). These tasks or *agones* are not to be taken as of absolute importance, but rather as partial expressions of whatever we are, or of whatever we are pregnant with – which will show itself when it sees fit. “Becoming what one is” is not itself a task, as it was the case in *SE* (cf. p. 164 ff. above); it is rather by taking up and completing various tasks that one becomes what one is; tasks are ultimately ministerial. Meier (2019, 102) describes the central integrative role of the task (meaning his overarching task of revaluation of all values) in Nietzsche’s becoming-himself as follows:

Es ist die Aufgabe, mit der Nietzsche sich erkennt; durch die er seine Natur, die Rangordnung seiner Vermögen, seiner Leidenschaften, seiner Tugenden und seiner Fertigkeiten feststellt; die ihn in den Stand setzt, Eins zu werden; die es ihm erlaubt, seine Geschichte zu integrieren und als sinnvoll zu betrachten.

Finally, both Acampora (2013, 196) and Meier (2019, 67) point out that “becoming what one is” is not a process of realizing a pre-given end state to which we would proceed teleologically: failure is a genuine possibility, and self-knowledge is essential for avoiding wrong turns.⁵² We saw above that Nietzsche dealt with his crisis – which he perceived as a serious danger of losing himself – by a thorough self-examination, by a reflection on who he was, how he lived, and how he acted.

To summarize, “becoming what one is” is for the mature Nietzsche not something that we can willfully and deliberately accomplish, nor is it a matter of fulfilling some entelechic destiny that would await us. It is rather a process of ordering and maximizing the drives and capacities of our nature, of the type of human being that we are; it is making it possible for a ‘destiny’ that is appropriate to our nature to come to our sight and then being able to seize it. I believe that the crucial difference between the *sei du selbst* of *SE* and the *werden, was man ist* of *EH* is not so much in what is done, but in the *how*, in the attitude which underlies these two strivings. Whereas

⁵² Meier (2019, 122) emphasizes that just as there isn’t any personal providence for the mature Nietzsche, there also isn’t any kind providential world-order with regard to our projects; we only get what we manage to make ourselves.

in *SE* it is a heroic struggle that gets all-too-easily subsumed under that other heroic struggle to redeem the world, regardless of personal consequences, what we find in *EH* is, above all else, the concern with one's genuine good and with knowledge thereof. *Werden, was man ist* means freedom as opposed to servitude to a (*any*) morality; it means the focus on *Leib* and the "nearest things" that constitute its material good, as opposed to the overly 'spiritual' conception of the human in *SE*; and it means the orientation on the *ἀγαθόν*, as opposed to the *καλόν*.⁵³

But despite the significant differences of the articulation of "becoming what one is" that we find in *EH*, the doctrine of *sei du selbst* from the *UB* was still beneficial to Nietzsche on his path to actually becoming himself. It cannot be overlooked that its presentation in *SE* and its exemplification in *WB* form the first articulation of what is one of the major concerns of Nietzsche's thought. The basic point that education is fundamentally self-education persists, and is affirmed in *WS* 267 and later. As mentioned above, "become what you are" is still a dictate of conscience in *FW* 270, and thus obtains its power from our awareness of our mortality and ephemerality. Given that the later Nietzsche still holds (in broad terms) an 'erotic-historic' conception of the soul, his method of self-knowledge, of getting to know such a soul, is also 'erotic-historic' (in the sense of taking into account both the ordering of our desires and our personal history), just as the method outlined in *SE* 1 is. Self-knowledge is not simply a matter of knowing how our desires are organized, but also of how those drives have developed, waxed and waned,

⁵³ Another major difference between the account of *SE* and of *EH* is that the later Nietzsche employs only a *retrospective* teleology, which can be seen only once the process of becoming-oneself has been completed (cf. Meier 2019, 102). This differs from the *prospective* teleology of *SE* (1.340), which wants to extrapolate the retrospective teleological account of how we've become what we are (at this point) to our future becoming as well. The later Nietzsche's critique of the early Nietzsche would be that *prospectively* we can only focus on particular tasks to guide us in our growth and to serve as means of our growth; the teleological perspective is valid only in the retrospect. As Meier (2019, 102) describes it, "bevor [Nietzsche] die Aufgabe und sich selbst zu Gesicht bekommen hat, ergibt sich notwendig ein anderes Bild".

conflicted and integrated with each other, until our soul has assumed the shape it has at the point where we come to be able to articulate this self-knowledge, this account of who (or what) we are and how we have become this. Both the ‘erotic’ and the ‘historic’ dimensions remain present here, and they are as intertwined as in *SE* 1, if not more so. Finally, it would be a mistake to think, despite Nietzsche’s optimistic language, that even in *SE* he thinks that we can *fully* understand what we are ahead of the fact. He tells us explicitly there that our true self is “*unermesslich* hoch über dir oder wenigstens über dem, was du gewöhnlich als dein Ich nimmst” (1.340–1; emphasis added), and he is aware of the uncertainty inherent in the process of becoming-oneself (cf. 1.449) – although these aspects are much more marginal than in *EH*, and they are treated more as problems to be dealt with than as elements constitutive of this process.

I would like to suggest that despite the somewhat inadequate formulation of the doctrine of *sei du selbst* in the *UB*, already this formulation has proved sufficient in guiding Nietzsche toward his ‘destiny’, i.e. toward becoming a philosopher. He tells us that in this doctrine, as presented in *SE* and *WB*, “[verlangte] ein Problem der Erziehung ohne Gleichen [...] nach seinem ersten Ausdruck” (*EH UB* 3). The expression of, and the solution to, this problem is not yet adequate, but the problem itself is already present. And this problem understood *as a problem* led Nietzsche to diagnose the crisis that followed the *UB* and the fiasco of Bayreuth in terms of losing his task (as can be seen in the discussion in *EH MA* 3–4), i.e., of him running away from his true self. He understands his crisis through the logic of becoming what one is, and therefore this logic, as formulated already in the *UB*, provides the grounds for the eventual overcoming of the crisis. If his (spiritual) sickness was his fear or refusal to become what he is, overcoming this sickness meant to follow his own prescription and to return to himself.

We have copious evidence for this understanding of the *UB* – especially of *SE* – on Nietzsche’s part from his correspondence across the years between their publication and the writing of *EH*. In a draft intended for Lou von Salomé from December 1882 (KGB III.1, 299), he writes that “ich gab Ihnen in Luzern meine Schrift über Schopenhauer – ich sagte Ihnen daß da meine Grundgesinnungen drin stünden.” He writes in the same vein to Georg Brandes six years later (letter from 19 February 1888; KGB III.5, 260) that “die beiden Schriften über Schopenhauer und Richard Wagner stellen, wie mir heute scheint, mehr Selbsterkenntnisse, vor allem *Selbstgelöbnisse* über mich dar als etwa eine wirkliche Psychologie jener mir ebenso tief verwandten als antagonistischen Meister.” After Brandes reports having enjoyed *SE*, Nietzsche expands in response (letter from 10 April 1888; KGB III.5, 287): “diese kleine Schrift [*SE*] dient mir als Erkennungszeichen: wem sie nichts *Persönliches* erzählt, der hat wahrscheinlich auch sonst nichts mit mir zu thun.” A letter to Karl Knortz from 21 June 1888 (KGB III.5, 340) likewise highlights the importance of the *UB* for his intellectual development: “Die ‘Unzeitgemäßen Betrachtungen’, Jugendschriften in gewissem Sinne, verdienen die höchste Beachtung für meine Entwicklung. [...] die Schrift über Schopenhauer, deren Lektüre ich besonders empfehle, zeigt, wie ein energischer und instinktiv jasagender Geist auch von einem Pessimisten die wohlthätigsten Impulse zu nehmen versteht.” And in the note 41 [2] (11.670), Nietzsche likewise judges that “ohne daß ich es wußte, sprach ich [in *SE* und *WB*] nur für mich, ja im Grunde nur von mir”.

The second major judgment of the later Nietzsche is that the *UB*, and especially *SE*, are a *promise* for the things to come, for his mature thought and body of work. Already in 1883, Nietzsche wrote to Peter Gast the following regarding *SE* and *Zarathustra* (letter from 21 April 1883; KGB III.1, 364): “es ist ein curiosum: ich habe den *Commentar* früher geschrieben als den *Text*. *Versprochen* ist Alles schon in ‘Schopenhauer als Erzieher’; es war aber ein gutes Stück Weg

von ‘Menschliches, Allzumenschliches’ bis zum ‘Übermenschen’ zu machen.” In August 1884 he wrote to Franz Overbeck (KGB III.1, 518): “übrigens habe ich *so gelebt*, wie ich es mir selber (namentlich in ‘Schopenhauer als Erzieher’) vorgezeichnet habe. [...] (ihr *Fehler* ist, daß eigentlich in ihr *nicht* von Schopenhauer, sondern fast nur von mir die Rede ist – aber das wußte ich selber nicht, als ich sie machte.)”. A year later, in August 1885, we read in a draft to an unknown addressee (KGB III.3, 75): “meine ‘Unzeitgemäßen’ bedeuten für mich *Versprechungen*: was sie für Andre sind, weiß ich nicht. Glauben Sie, daß ich längst nicht mehr leben würde, wenn ich diesen *Versprechungen* nur um Einen Schritt breit ausgewichen wäre!” And finally, in the letter to Georg Brandes from 10 April 1888 (KGB III.5, 287), Nietzsche comments about *SE*: “im Grunde steht das Schema darin, nach dem ich bisher gelebt habe: sie ist ein strenges *Versprechen*”. Thus, a promise to live truthfully and according to his ownmost nature, without any compromise in these two fundamental regards: despite his incomplete youthful understanding of these two principles, Nietzsche always remained oriented on them, and this orientation was essential to his becoming what he is.

V.5 Conclusion

The examination of the *UB* from the perspective of the mature Nietzsche has shown us three central points. The first of these is that the thought of the *UB* is deeply marked by the idea of the fundamental and insoluble conflict between truth and life, the ultimate consequence of which is its life-denying character. Such thought cannot be considered philosophic in the sense in which the mature Nietzsche understands philosophy; it is rather just an expression of one’s suffering from life. This issue, together with the central problem of the project of the *UB* – its connection to Wagner, who turned out to be nothing like Nietzsche had hoped – led to the fiasco of Bayreuth

and to the crisis which Bayreuth triggered. In this crisis, Nietzsche had to reexamine and rethink all his views and beliefs, and especially give up the reliance on instinct, which had shown itself to be untrustworthy (after all, it was the instinct that led him to Bayreuth).⁵⁴ The first fruit of the crisis was *MA*, a book that explicitly repudiates many of Nietzsche's earlier positions and is very different from Nietzsche's previous writings also in stylistic terms. The ultimate result of this process of rethinking was the abandonment of the thesis of the fundamental conflict between truth and life, and an affirmation of philosophy, of the life devoted to the truth, of the life for which truth is no longer an enemy, but rather a friend, as the best possible way of life.

The second point is that the *UB* contain a surprisingly sophisticated psychological thinking, whose fundamental principles are the same as those of the psychology of *JGB*. Besides that, these four essays present virtually all the major concerns of Nietzsche's mature thought – concerns such as the death of God, the problem of suffering and life-affirmation, the soul and the ways of unifying it, the critique of morality, education of his readers, or effecting a change on human life at large.⁵⁵ In (almost) all cases, his formulations of these concerns, and especially his proposed solutions to them, leave a lot to be desired. However, the *concerns* themselves never ceased to be concerns for Nietzsche, and in this sense the *UB* are a first full exploration of the intellectual space in which his thinking would continue to move throughout his career. As he says, already in the *UB* “*sah* [ich]

⁵⁴ Cf. Meier (2019, 113) on the connection between the need to examine one's instincts and the figure of Socrates.

⁵⁵ The late Nietzsche sees even the fanciful project of Bayreuth as a prefiguration of his actual world-historical task, of his spiritual founding of the “Partei des Lebens, welche die grösste aller Aufgaben, die Höherzüchtung der Menschheit in die Hände nimmt” (*EH* GT 4). We cannot take seriously Nietzsche's claim that he “bricht die Geschichte der Menschheit in zwei Stücke” (*EH* Schicksal 1) without considering *how* he believes he will have such an immense historical impact; and for this consideration we need to understand what the failure of this first project was and what lessons Nietzsche took from it. We thus cannot simply project *WB* onto the late Nietzsche, as Brooks (2018, 211) does; nor does it seem accurate to claim that the late Nietzsche opposed “the entire social and political framework of the modern West” (*ibid.*). To be sure, there appear to be interesting parallels between the patterns first articulated in *SE* and *WB* and the task the late Nietzsche takes upon himself. But we would first have to understand the latter task in order to competently discuss these parallels.

das Land” (*EH UB 3*) after which he strived, and they are his “*Gelöbniss*”, his promise to himself to fully attain what he strives for already here, albeit not yet with full success.

The word *Gelöbniss* brings us to the third and final point. On a personal level – with regard to Nietzsche’s intellectual development after the *UB* – we cannot overlook the importance of Nietzsche’s commitments to intellectual honesty and to becoming who he is. Although, again, his commitment to truth at any cost is in the *UB* a moralistic attitude (cf. p. 235 above), and the formulation of “becoming what one is” would later undergo significant changes, they nevertheless proved to be important motive forces that helped Nietzsche to overcome their own inadequacy. The commitment to truthfulness for its own sake pushed him away from the errors of the *UB*, and his wish to become what he is pulled him toward his mature self. When Nietzsche says that in *WB* “an allen psychologisch entscheidenden Stellen ist nur von mir die Rede” (*EH GT 4*), he is talking above all about the early model of “becoming what you are” that he exemplifies on Wagner, and on which he understood his own becoming as well at this point. When he claims the *UB* speak of “Schopenhauer und Wagner *oder*, mit Einem Wort, Nietzsche” (*EH UB 1*), and that he used these two men just as Plato used Socrates, “als eine Semiotik für Plato” (*EH UB 3*) – as semiotics for Nietzsche himself – the content of these ‘semiotics’ are the commitments to unconditional truthfulness and to *sei du selbst*, which were central to his self-understanding. These two commitments are integral parts of Nietzsche’s becoming what he is, a stage of his development without which the mature Nietzsche cannot be imagined.

* * *

I propose the following final assessment of the *UB*. These essays should be considered a beautiful document of Nietzsche’s path to philosophy – but the goal, the perspective of the

philosopher in the proper sense of the word, the perspective that encompasses and affirms the whole of being, is not yet present here. Serious students of Nietzsche can find much to learn herein, both from the achievements of these early works (which I see in his understanding of the human soul and related matters), and also from their failures (especially their ultimately life-denying position, and their excessive hopes for changing or even redeeming the world). For Nietzsche himself they served as a ladder on which he climbed up to the height of his mature thought, and which he then discarded or substantially modified. And for us they remain a testimony to the thinker's seriousness in grappling with the problematic nature of human existence, of the existence of the entity for whom alone its own being is at stake, and an inspiration for – as well as a challenge to – our own striving to understand the world and ourselves.

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