

The Pennsylvania State University

The Graduate School

College of the Liberal Arts

**DISLOCATIONS: NIETZSCHE, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AND THE WRITING OF
BODILY EVENTS**

A Thesis in

Philosophy

by

Melanie Jan Shepherd

© 2007 Melanie Jan Shepherd

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

December 2007

The thesis of Melanie Jan Shepherd was reviewed and approved* by the following:

Dennis Schmidt
Professor of Philosophy
Co-chair of Committee
Thesis Advisor

Charles Scott
Distinguished Professor of Philosophy
Vanderbilt University
Co-chair of Committee

Vincent Colapietro
Professor of Philosophy

Nancy Tuana
DuPont/Class of 1949 Professor of Philosophy

Jeffrey Nealon
Professor of English

Christopher Long
Associate Professor of Philosophy
Director of Graduate Studies

*Signatures are on file in the Graduate School

ABSTRACT

In this dissertation, I look to Nietzsche's autobiographical texts in order to develop an insight found in the work of Pierre Klossowski: a Nietzschean reading of Nietzsche should understand Nietzsche's body as the locus of his thinking. Reading Nietzsche in this way leads to three central problems. First, Nietzsche understands his philosophical project as a liberation of the body from a history of asceticism, but he explicitly associates his own thinking with intense physical suffering. In considering this problem, we come to a second concern: Nietzsche evaluates his suffering body in a way that reinitiates a division of the spirit and body. While Nietzsche's work is invested in the overcoming of such a division, his description of spiritual joy during times of physical agony leaves traces of the division within his text. Furthermore, Nietzsche's suffering seems to be embraced for the sake of continuing to think and write, which gives a sacrificial logic to his thinking. This sacrifice for the sake of writing indicates that the body's liberation and the self-overcoming of ascetic ideals cannot be understood to take place as singular events, but are rather dispersed through writing across space and time.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction. 1

PART I: Locating Nietzschean Dynamite Within the History of Philosophy.13

Chapter One: Bringing Something Home. 13

 Section I: The Life and Death of Socrates and the Historical Decision of
 Philosophy. 20

 Section II: Relocating Philosophy. 42

PART II: The Locus.59

Chapter Two: Circles. 64

Chapter Three: Explosion? Nietzsche’s Dispersal and the Social Political Space. . . . 101

 Section I: Which One? Articulating the Multiplicity.105

 Section II: Thanatographies. 125

PART III: Materiality

Chapter Four: Bodily Resistance: Lived Experience and the Basic Conditions of Life
166

Chapter Five: Toward a Political Future for the Nietzschean Corpus. 215

SELECTED WORKS CITED

Nietzsche

- AC* *The Antichrist*, trans. Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- BGE* *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966.
- BT* *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- DD* *Dionysos-Dithyramben*. in *Nietzsche: Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, vol. VI.3. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1969.
- EH* *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- GM* *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967.
- GS* *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974.
- HH* *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- KSA* *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 volumes. Berlin and Munich: Walter de Gruyter and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980.
- TI* *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- TL* "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*, trans. Daniel Breazeale. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979, pp.79-97.

- UL* *Unpublished Letters*, ed. Kurt F. Leidecker. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- WDB* *Werke in Drei Banden*, ed. Karl Schlecta. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1965.
- WP* *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- Z* *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Penguin, 1966.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank a number of people for their support of this project. First, my committee—Dennis Schmidt, Vincent Colapietro, Nancy Tuana, and Jeff Nealon—for reading the dissertation and providing valuable feedback. Chris Long also provided extremely helpful comments in the early stages. My advisor, Charles Scott, read each chapter draft, and always responded promptly with challenging and supportive comments. The Rock Ethics Institute helped me to complete the dissertation with the Humanities Initiative Dissertation Fellowship. Jennifer Mensch, Alex Stehn, Steele Nowlin, Shannon Walters, and Nivi Menon also took the time to read chapters and all provided helpful feedback along the way. Conversations with Josh Miller allowed me to better articulate several points in the project. Drena Russler made bound copies of the dissertation for me, and Terry McGrail helped with administrative issues arising throughout the dissertation process. My parents, Mardy and Glenda Shepherd, and brother, Kyle Shepherd, offered support and encouragement. Finally my husband, Matt Rogers, supported me in countless ways throughout the writing process, and I am especially grateful for the cheerful spirit in which he did more than his fair share of dishes and laundry in order to allow me to work.

Introduction

We no longer consider the biography of a “philosopher” as a corpus of empirical accidents that leaves both a name and a signature outside a system which would itself be offered up to an immanent philosophical reading—the only kind of reading held to be philosophically legitimate. This academic notion utterly ignores the demands of a text which it tries to control with the most traditional determinations of what constitutes the limits of the written, or even of “publication.”

- Jacques Derrida, “Otobiographies”

The unconscious disguise of physiological needs under the cloaks of the objective, ideal, purely spiritual goes to frightening lengths—and often I have asked whether, taking a large view, philosophy has not been merely an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*.

- Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

Always presupposing that there are ears—that there are those capable and worthy of the same pathos, that there is no lack of those to whom one *may* communicate oneself.—

- Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*

* * *

It is no coincidence that Derrida makes the claim above concerning the philosopher’s biography in the context of a lecture on Nietzsche. Indeed, it is with Nietzsche that the biography and autobiography of the philosopher become properly philosophical problems, thus pushing the limits of which Derrida speaks—the limits of the written and of the philosophically legitimate. Nietzsche is by no means the first philosopher to write autobiography, but the Nietzschean practice of autobiography in the context of Nietzsche’s other writings changes the way that we think about philosophy and, more specifically, where and how philosophy happens or takes place.

In this dissertation, I will show that Nietzsche’s practice of autobiographical writing must be understood in the context of his many comments on the body as a great reason (Z, I, Despisers), the organic nature of consciousness, and the centrality of perspective and interpretation. Philosophy is, for Nietzsche, an expression of an individual physiology. Thinking occurs in every sense as a bodily event, as do all spiritual and mental activities, for as we will see, human spiritual and mental capacities are merely expressions of organic life for Nietzsche. Thus he says that all consciousness

is merely a product of organic, bodily processes—an afterthought of the intelligence of organic life. The localization of thinking in a body is a deconstruction of philosophical objectivity, and this deconstructive localization is the important background against which Nietzsche's autobiographical gestures must be understood. Autobiography is a crucial element of Nietzsche's philosophical thought as a whole because it brings Nietzsche's own body to bear on his philosophical thought. This gesture toward his own embodiment invites and does not attempt to suppress the "contamination" of individuality and contingency of philosophy. In Nietzsche's move to autobiography, we see that such contamination is included in the way thought occurs. Therefore, I develop a hermeneutic stance toward Nietzsche's text in which Nietzsche's body is understood as the active and pervasive locus of his thinking. I am very much indebted to Pierre Klossowski's semiotic of the impulses in *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle* for the development of this hermeneutic, but Klossowski's framework ultimately proves insufficient to account for the trajectories arising from this hermeneutic.

Three major themes arise out of this localized hermeneutics. The first concerns the question of what "body" means for Nietzsche. Whenever Nietzsche concentrates on a given bodily locus, be it that of a priest, a Christian, a German, an artist, a musician, or any other type of person, his focus always reveals ways in which these types of people, in their espousal of certain values, are unknown to themselves. Nietzsche's analyses of the values attached to particular groups or types opens onto a deconstructive genealogy. In attending to a particular bodily locus as a seat of various drives and instincts, Nietzsche shows that values and identities claimed as true or essential are the ephemeral constructions of a will to power. In giving narratives of various values as products of

instinctive life and contingent encounters, Nietzsche's work destabilizes the stories by which values establish themselves as true and permanent. In this way, a rigorous thought of the body that understands all areas of life as expressions of living physicality gives way to the deconstruction of any ideal that would claim to be beyond such contingency and physicality. Attention to the localized, bodily character of all spiritual expression therefore allows Nietzsche to tell a story of physicality and contingency that undermines the claims that a given set of values makes for itself. In concentrating on a bodily locus, Nietzsche finds new stories to tell about values—stories of origination that remain unknown or unacknowledged by whomever believes in a value. These narratives of origination reveal a gap between the kind of instinctive life expressing a value and the self-understanding of the value holder. Isolating a locality for a value thus subjects that value to destabilization and deconstruction, which are never for Nietzsche neutral processes, but always put us on a path to new values.

These considerations are significant for the hermeneutics of the bodily locus that I develop in this work. In *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche judges it indispensable to say who he is (*EH*, P, 1), but we need not think of this autobiography so much as an authoritative account as an invitation to the deconstructive possibilities of a bodily locus. A philosopher with such a suspicion of and aversion to all truths that would attempt to establish themselves as monoliths cannot believe that his story of himself is the only one to be told. Rather than understanding this final work as an account of the “real Nietzsche,” then, it would be much more Nietzschean to think of *Ecce Homo* as a reminder to readers to circle back to the locus in a way that, by allowing new stories to be told, plants the seeds for new values. A reading of Nietzsche that understands his body as

the locus of his thought will therefore be open to incongruities between Nietzsche's self-understanding and the performance of his thought as a bodily event.

At this point, however, we must recognize an additional layer in Nietzsche's claim that bodily forces produce thought and evaluation. As we have seen, thinking is never a neutral endeavor for Nietzsche, but as a physical event oriented toward the creation of new values, it is the action of a body making an imposition on the world. I will argue that the best way to think of Nietzsche's philosophical practice on his own terms is as a bodily liberation, whereby the thought of the body's priority in making values is also the effort of the body to create values that free it from a history of ascetic ideals. The physical locus to which Nietzsche's autobiographical gestures lead us are thus doubly important. It is not simply the case that we must, in the style of Nietzschean genealogy, analyze Nietzsche's thought as an event of forces tied to the specificity and contingency of a certain location. We must also understand Nietzsche's thought as a physical event whereby the body recognizes and resists a history of repression by ascetic ideals. Nietzsche understands the mode of evaluation initiated by his philosophical practice to be healthier and less cruel to the life of the body. His reflection on his own body is therefore an essential component of his revaluating task insofar as it allows us to see how the body's practice of liberating thought makes a difference at the site of liberation. The autobiographical gesture not only reminds us to consider the locality and contingency of philosophy, but it also provides us with a representation of a particular body performing its own liberation. Nietzsche's discussions of his own body thus provide a glimpse not only into the logic of a bodily liberation, but also into the way the body, at the site of liberation, lives.

When we allow the autobiographical gesture to open our inquiry onto the question of the way that thought is performed, a division occurs. Not only is Nietzsche's biography rife with pain and illness, but, more to the point, Nietzsche explicitly associates periods of productive thinking with intense pain and suffering. Furthermore, Nietzsche, who has carefully undone the metaphysical distinction between spirit and matter by thinking the thoroughly material nature of what is called spirit, evaluates his own illness in a way that brings the distinction back into play. He privileges his states of pain for the spiritual delight that they bring him, while dismissing the way that his physical body is debilitated in these states. While it is certainly true that the spiritual delight felt in times of pain is a physical event, the consistent privileging of what would traditionally be called spiritual over material leads us to ask whether Nietzsche does not continue to evaluate in metaphysical and ascetic ways even as he proclaims new values. If thinking is located as a bodily act, then Nietzsche's thought performs a division of the body itself into spiritual and material elements. This division at the locus marks a beginning for a deconstruction of Nietzsche's understanding of thought as an action with liberating possibilities for the body. This deconstruction is by no means a *destruction* of such a notion, but rather shows the contradiction and failure of this notion in Nietzsche's case in a way that helps us to gain more precision concerning the ways in which thought might indeed be active and liberating. Gaining this precision will depend upon a more thorough treatment of the element of the body that is quietly subordinated even as a division is denied—that is, the body's materiality. This is, therefore, the first trajectory that will be followed in this hermeneutics of the bodily locus—a deconstruction that calls

into question what precisely is meant by “body” and brings a renewed focus to the body’s materiality.

Clearly, the question of the body arising in the first trajectory is tied up with the notion of thinking as an action delivering liberating possibilities. In the division of the bodily locus into spiritual and material, the idea that thinking is a liberating action also becomes questionable. For if the thinking body as the locus of a liberation is also the locus of an intense suffering, we must ask how, exactly, thought can be understood as a liberating action and where exactly this liberation (and self-overcoming, to speak a more Nietzschean language) occurs. Locality thus becomes questionable within the very frame of a hermeneutics of the locus. The first issue presenting itself as we attend more carefully to locality is that Nietzsche’s body is for us only text—we are dealing with a body that is a written translation of living flesh. If Nietzsche’s understanding of physical events has led us to examine the locality of thinking, the written form in which it becomes available makes it necessary to think of the *dislocation* of such events. Furthermore, the fact that Nietzsche writes this bodily event leads us to think differently about the possibilities for its liberating impact. Given the connection between thinking and suffering for Nietzsche’s own body, the written character of his work forces us to understand the impact of thinking away from the locus, as a dislocated and dispersed event. Therefore, the question of thought’s potential as an active political force is taken up in the context of writing and its dispersal among readers. With this dispersal, the framework of the bodily locus inherited from Klossowski becomes too limited by its location, and I turn to Jacques Derrida’s work for its helpfulness in thinking problems of textuality.

Finally, these two trajectories, that of increased attention to materiality and that of the dislocation and dissemination of events into writing, come together in an effort to articulate how written philosophy can move among and change bodies and the worlds they inhabit. Therefore, the third trajectory of this work, in bringing together materiality and written dispersal, is the question of how we might understand the political future of Nietzsche's text, or more specifically, how the Nietzschean corpus might become fleshed out in the world. Placing an emphasis on the way that Nietzsche subordinates a materialized sense of body to a more spiritualized one allows for a twofold thesis. On the one hand, it shows a division between the way Nietzsche's thought is performed and what it strives to effect, thus revealing a sacrificial logic that opens our understanding of self-overcoming to the future on behalf of which the sacrifice is performed. On the other hand, it allows us to develop an understanding of the suppressed material element that accounts for Nietzsche's difficulty in thinking it. Looking to the work of feminist critics such as Luce Irigaray, I will show that Nietzsche's forgotten materiality is best defined as the contingency of the way that one's world nourishes the body and shapes it into what it is. It is the contingency of being subjected to the material conditions in and through which the body lives. Emphasizing materiality as the body's malleability in relation to what sustains and shapes it, I will argue that materiality is crucial for thinking about the possibilities for a re-fleshing of the Nietzschean corpus. The complexities of material life determine the temporality in which a text may be dispersed among bodies in a way that changes worlds. But the temporality by which a text changes bodies and worlds is distinct from the everyday temporality of bodies and their material needs. A renewed attention to materiality thus shows the possibilities of a text to liberate bodies, while also

showing the limits of such a liberation. If the event of a changing world occurs in the temporality of a multiplicity of bodies across time gradually awakening to the possibilities announced by a text, then written events of thinking are always oriented toward the future, unable to respond to sometimes urgent material needs. This futural orientation helps to explain Nietzsche's constant overlooking of the material body in and as which he lived, and, more importantly, helps us to define more clearly the possibilities and limits of a thinking that claims to explode.

The major theses of this project are therefore as follows:

1) Nietzsche's autobiographical gestures, read together with his thinking of the body and the organic, should be understood as an invitation to develop a hermeneutic that makes Nietzsche's body the locus of his thinking.

In developing such a hermeneutic, it becomes clear:

2) That Nietzsche re-spiritualizes the body, subordinating the body's materiality to its spirituality in the performance of his thought.

3) That thought's liberating possibilities must be understood in the time and space of a dislocated and dispersed writing.

4) That recovering this suppressed materiality is crucial for understanding the possibilities and limits of thinking as an active political force because it determines the temporality in which writing is dispersed.

The Structure of this Work

Part One: Locating Nietzschean Dynamite Within the History of Philosophy

Chapter One gives an account of Nietzsche's self-understanding in relation to the history of philosophy. I begin by asking what Nietzsche means when he claims to be

dynamite, taking the question up in the context of the space in which philosophy happens in relation to the polis. Central to the historical treatment of this question is an examination of the philosophical practice of Socrates in the polis, which I approach through a detailed reading of Diotima's speech in Plato's *Symposium*. The space of philosophy changes greatly after the death of Socrates as a philosophical tradition emerges in the space of writing, practiced in the Academy outside of the polis. I combine Nietzsche's diagnosis of Socrates' decadence with this account of the space inhabited by philosophy in relation to politics in order to suggest that the explosive nature of Nietzsche's thought can be understood as a philosophical liberation of the body, in which philosophy localizes itself after a long history of delocalization that follows the death of Socrates.

Part Two: The Locus

In Chapter Two, I develop the thesis that Nietzsche's autobiographical texts lead us to understand his body, for us a purely textual phenomenon, as the locus of his thinking. This, I claim, is a Nietzschean understanding of Nietzsche's thought. Working closely with Klossowski's semiotic of impulses, I suggest that Nietzsche's thought can be understood as an event of bodily impulses in the service of overcoming ascetic ideals. The physiological event through which Nietzsche's body begins a transformation of values can be thought in a circle of impulses punctuated by conscious awareness—a circle by which subjectivity is destabilized. The physiological circle shares a similar structure with Nietzsche's thought of eternal return, but the physiological circle happens in a way that allows thought to occur, whereas an analysis of the eternal return will show that the full implication of the thought would mean oblivion. In analyzing what it would

mean to will the eternal return, I show that thinking the thought is not the same as willing it because the thought demands of the will conflicting dispositions of affirmation and destruction. Nietzsche's connection of his intense physical pain together with his spiritual strength perform a division between a spiritual and material body that occurs in the act of thinking. I suggest that we can think of the divided and divisive thought of eternal return as a sign the thinking of which is a performance of division in the bodily locus of thought. In attending to the bodily locus, then, we see one way in which thinking becomes dislocated, for the very act of thinking performs a bodily division that puts the body at odds with what is articulated.

Chapter Three begins with the suggestion that divisions such as the one described in Chapter Two appear in Nietzsche's work beyond simply his autobiographical texts. In the first section of this chapter, I combine Nietzsche's autobiography and genealogy in order to show how Nietzsche's various knowledges can be understood as expressions of will to power, shifting according to his physical states. In the second section, I explore Sarah Kofman's notion of thanatography in order to examine how the act of writing defers the explosive event of force that Nietzsche describes in *Ecce Homo*. Nietzsche's written deconstruction of himself requires a constant circling back to himself that creates a non-explosive stability. This is important because the difference between the performance of writing and exploding indicates that the event at the locus is not itself an explosion, but is rather a signing toward such an event. I then show that there is a sacrificial logic to the performance of Nietzsche's thought, thus, once again, indicating a futural and dislocated component to this bodily event of thinking. The event, and thus the political future of Nietzsche's text, is therefore undecidable insofar as it is given over

to the readers of Nietzsche's text, as Derrida suggests in "Otobiographies." I conclude the chapter by refining the possibilities for Nietzschean dynamite in light of the considerations on the space of writing made in the chapter.

Part III: Materiality

Chapter Four is a more sustained articulation of the way that Nietzsche's thought divides the body and subordinates its materiality to its spirituality. Beginning with the passages in *Ecce Homo* that emphasize the importance of such contingent material factors as nutrition, climate, and recreation for becoming what one is, I show how the priority of contingent materiality gradually becomes eclipsed by a physiology that occurs prior to the soil that constitutes it. I also demonstrate that Nietzsche's praise of and identification with his dead father goes together with a failure to acknowledge his debt to his mother. Looking to the work of several feminist critics, I suggest that Nietzsche's disdain for his mother is inseparable from a horror of what she represents for him: the contingency of having come to be from the materiality of another. Finally, I will show that Nietzsche's attitudes toward women, and what Irigaray recognizes as Nietzsche's failure to engage a sexual other, are inseparable from an effort to distance himself from the contingency of his body's materiality in having been born of another body. This distancing keeps his thought of the body from expressing the body's materiality as malleability, porosity, contingency, and exposure to life's basic conditions.

Chapter Five combines the effort to think materiality with the question of the political future of Nietzsche's text, which I claim is best understood as a genealogical politics—the work of exposing orders in which we live in a way that destabilizes them and opens them for change. Asking why it is even important to emphasize a more

thoroughly materialized body, I consider Giorgio Agamben's worry concerning bare life. This notion of bare life becomes important in showing that the ability for bodies to be laid bare and reduced to an ability to be killed can be understood as a factor that makes political formations possible at all. The body's materiality, while not itself bare life, allows a body to take on the meaning of bare life, and this possibility influences the various political meanings that the body does take on. That the body can be killed makes it malleable and therefore susceptible to embodying orders and worlds that are not its own. Yet, in a more distinctly Nietzschean style, I claim that bodies are also not thoroughly the orders they embody, but they retain something of their own in the possibility for events of resistance, and I understand the role of a genealogical politics in light of this possibility of bodies. The genealogical philosopher articulates the structure of a world in its violence and non-necessity, but these articulations can do nothing if bodies have not already begun the process of change that would make the words comprehensible. I therefore suggest that the genealogical philosopher shares the Socratic task of midwifery. Finally, returning to Agamben's worry that bare life has come to dominate the space of politics and is present even in humanitarian efforts, I show that such humanitarian efforts are an example of the limits faced by a genealogical politics because of its temporality of the future. Bodies in their materiality give the time of a genealogical politics, but they also live in the meantime—in the not yet—and are subjected to the time and the orders (together with their violence) of the present, thus exposing the limits faced by a genealogical politics.

PART I: LOCATING NIETZSCHEAN DYNAMITE WITHIN THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

Chapter One: Bringing Something Home

I know my fate. One day my name will be associated with the memory of something tremendous—a crisis without equal on earth, the most profound collision of conscience, a decision that was conjured up *against* everything that had been believed, demanded, hallowed so far. I am no man, I am dynamite (EH, Destiny 1).

What can be said today of Herr Nietzsche's fate?

We must begin by noting that the “something tremendous” with which his name is associated is remembered in a plurality of ways. I recently found in my mailbox a publication entitled “America, Return to God,” in which Nietzsche is remembered for his utterance of the three words “God is dead”—an utterance whose calamitous effects include everything from increased rates of pregnancy in American teenagers to the nihilist fog of relativism in which those teenagers wander. Thus, Nietzsche's name finds itself linked to “a crisis without equal on earth.”

Shortly thereafter, in a conversation with a repairman in my home, I said that I studied Nietzsche, and the man told me that he had just heard a piece on NPR about Nietzsche's influence on the Nazis. Yet another association with immeasurable crisis.

I, like most philosophers or students of Nietzsche, am inclined to interpret the “something tremendous” that he heralds neither as a birth of relativism leading to a shallow hedonism nor as the emergence of the race consciousness that reached its culmination in National Socialism. Instead, it seems much more likely that is speaking of the overturning of 2,000 years of Platonism or of Christian morality. And yet, the interpretations of Nietzsche's legacy in terms of profound nihilism and fascism, however exasperating, are enabled by the very way in which this overturning happens. For Nietzsche's overturning of Christian morality does not happen as an event in the

traditional sense. There is no great historical moment, no Nietzschean Revolution, no birth of Nietzscheanism,¹ in which a decisive shift in history is marked, never to turn back; nor is there even a more modest event, such as a gathering of students in the street whose decidability remains fuzzy. Still Nietzsche speaks of something tremendous.

It is no wonder, then, that Nietzsche is misunderstood. He names himself dynamite, yet we are hard pressed to find an explosion. The life of the historical Nietzsche is notable for its *un*-eventfulness, for its seclusion and the peacefulness of its surroundings in the Swiss Alps and Italian Riviera. It is Nietzsche as thinker, and only as thinker, who can claim to be dynamite, and only his written thought is explosive. The something tremendous, the explosion, the event, must be left in his writing; perhaps it is just that writing. The event of overturning is announced in the silent non-explosion of texts that respond to 2,000 years of texts that go before them. The texts are multiple and dispersed simply by virtue of being written and being written over a series of years, and that character of dispersal is arguably increased by the fragmentary nature of the texts themselves.² We cannot yet venture as far as Heidegger and say that Nietzsche names the matter (*Sache*) of his thought, as if it were a unity.³ Indeed, a unity—a tremendous something (*etwas Ungeheure*)—has been named; but at the moment, we are left with the dispersal of written thoughts, searching for the event of overcoming named in those texts, finding it localized nowhere, but left scattered in written words.

¹ Nietzsche makes clear that he does not understand the event in this way in the next line of the passage: “Yet for all that, there is nothing in me of a founder of a religion” (*EH*, *Destiny* 1).

² The idea that Nietzsche’s work does not come together into a whole, but rather has a fragmentary style that marks a “limit to the will to mean, which, much as a necessarily differential will to power, is forever divided, folded and manifolded” (133) is developed in Jacques Derrida’s *Spurs: Nietzsche’s Styles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978. For an introduction to the conversation between this fragmented, deconstructive approach and a Heideggerian hermeneutic see: Ernst Behler. *Confrontations: Derrida/Heidegger/Nietzsche*, trans. Taubeneck. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.

³ Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche Volume I: The Will to Power as Art*, trans. Krell. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1979, pg. xv.

In order to understand the event of overcoming announced in Nietzsche's texts, we will have to localize and concretize this event, all the while resisting the will to localization and concretization. For surely a will to concretize and pin down what is not itself fully able to be localized has led to the hasty readings that, with a few swift strokes of the hammer of certainty, nail down specific passages to specific worldly events, attaching Nietzsche's name to what is perhaps not his. And so we must localize the event of overcoming in Nietzsche's thought—we must localize in dispersal. This is not the same as localizing something *within* a dispersal, a game of Where's Waldo? played on a whole field of Nietzsche's books. Rather, we must try to understand the occurrence of an event that does not appear in one place.

Clearly, we will go to Nietzsche's work in order to understand this event. But what a curious set of work, for in reading it, we are directed toward a kind of locality within the work. Nietzsche has written himself into his work as the site of an event. Indeed, he says that he, himself, is dynamite in the passage above. And again, in considering his third *Untimely Meditation*, he says:

How I understand the philosopher—as a terrible explosive, endangering everything—how my concept of the philosopher is worlds removed from any concept that would include even a Kant, not to speak of academic “ruminants” and other professors of philosophy—this essay gives inestimable information about that, although at bottom it is admittedly not “Schopenhauer as Educator” that speaks here, but his opposite, “Nietzsche as Educator” (*EH*, *UM*, 3).

If Nietzsche himself is the locality of this event, we still do not escape the problem of diffusion of texts, but rather, we regress right back into it. For we have only the locality of Nietzsche's writing of himself, and that proves to pull us even deeper into a hermeneutic problem when we ask what is meant by “himself” and the “writing of

himself.”⁴ In localizing this writing of Nietzsche by himself, we come to the issue of physiology because the site that Nietzsche refers to in speaking of himself is marked by a very distinct physicality:

The following winter, my first one in Genoa, that sweetening and spiritualization which is almost inseparably connected with an extreme poverty of blood and muscle, produced *The Dawn*. The perfect brightness and cheerfulness, even exuberance of the spirit, reflected in this work, is compatible in my case not only with the most profound physiological weakness, but even with an excess of pain. In the midst of the torments that go with an uninterrupted three-day migraine, accompanied by laborious vomiting of phlegm, I possessed the dialectician’s clarity *par excellence* and thought through with very cold blood matters for which under healthier circumstances I am not mountain-climber, not subtle, not *cold* enough (*EH*, Clever 1).

This is only one of many examples of Nietzsche’s descriptions of his thought in terms of his physiology. In fact, the first two sections of *Ecce Homo* speak of little else, and they include even the details of Nietzsche’s diet.⁵ This complicates the localization of Nietzsche’s thought in Nietzsche himself, for while he does understand himself in his physiological being as the site of thinking,⁶ the site is only instructive or useful insofar as we consider Nietzsche’s thinking, which, as we have said, is the diffusion of written thoughts. To bring them to the site of Nietzsche’s physiological being does not anchor them because his physiology itself is dispersed in that writing. We are left, therefore,

⁴ Sarah Kofman, in her work on *Ecce Homo*, notes the problem of saying “Nietzsche himself,” given the unusual nature of his autobiography, in its failure to “tell of himself” in a straightforward way. Kofman writes: “First, he does not tell the story of an ‘I,’ a subject always readily there which in its singularity might be distinguished from all others. It is the autobiographical ‘story’ itself which constitutes the ‘I’ and the subject of which it is supposed to be simply telling the story” (57). Sarah Kofman. “Explosion I: Of Nietzsche’s *Ecce Homo*,” trans. Duncan Large. *Diacritics* 24(4), Winter 1994, 50-70. This problematic of the proper name leads her to be critical of Heidegger, for what she takes to be an attempt to reduce Nietzsche’s multiplicity to a single name (68). Jacques Derrida has made a similar critique of Heidegger in regard to the proper name in “Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions” *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*, ed. Michelfelder & Palmer. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.

⁵ *EH*, Clever, 1.

⁶ That Nietzsche understands himself, and philosophy in general this way, is further made clear in the Preface to *The Gay Science*, when he relates the book’s spirit of gratitude to his convalescence: “‘Gay Science’: that signifies the saturnalia of a spirit who has patiently resisted a terrible, long pressure—patiently, severely, coldly, without submitting, but also without hope—and who is now all at once attacked by hope, the hope for health, and the *intoxication* of convalescence” (GS, P, 1). The following section is also instructive, when Nietzsche explains the relation between health and philosophy (GS P 2), as is a passage from *Ecce Homo*: “Only my sickness brought me to reason” (*EH*, Clever, 2).

with a play of references. The texts refer us to Nietzsche's physiology, which is itself only at work in writing, and which needs what we might hesitantly call Nietzsche's thought as a whole in order to be illuminated itself. This means that we have no foundation upon which to base a reading of Nietzsche's texts, but we do have a direction.

But why chatter on somewhere between the hermeneutic circle that Gadamer has already illuminated so clearly and the problems of absence in writing to which Derrida has already lent superior articulation? Why rehash the problems of the twentieth century insofar as they concern Nietzsche? First of all, we need to specify the problems of Nietzsche interpretation anew simply because the texts themselves, in their strange mix of philosophy and autobiography, the emphasis on physiology within autobiography, and the emphasis on physiology's importance for philosophy, demand an articulation of the various factors at play. Secondly, and most important, it is essential to remember that this question of hermeneutics has announced itself as we inquired into the meaning of philosophy and philosopher as event—the meaning of something tremendous, the meaning of Nietzsche as dynamite. This little sketch of Nietzsche hermeneutics has, first and foremost, shown that the idea of philosophy as an event, of a philosopher as dynamite, needs further clarification and scrutiny.

If it is a bit of megalomania that causes Nietzsche to say that he is no man, but dynamite, it is not merely that. Rather, this articulation of self-understanding marks a certain culmination of philosophy's understanding of itself throughout the history of Western philosophical thinking in regard to the kind of action it is. This self-understanding of philosophical thinking can, in some sense, be characterized as the *theoria* that must precede all *praxis*, and thus would be understood within the opposition

of *theoria* and *praxis*. Nietzsche's utterance expresses that a merging and non-distinction of the two is taking place in his thought. This non-distinction between theory and practice, or thinking as action, and the importance of Nietzsche's work for the emergence of this kind of thought, is recognized in the twentieth century in the dramatic language of Foucault:

For modern thought, no morality is possible. Thought had already 'left' itself in its own being as early as the nineteenth century; it is no longer theoretical. As soon as it functions it offends or reconciles, attracts or repels, breaks, dissociates, unites, or reunites; it cannot help but liberate and enslave. Even before prescribing, suggesting a future, saying what must be done, even before exhorting or merely sounding an alarm, thought, at the level of its existence, in its very dawning, is in itself an action—a perilous act.⁷

Heidegger also comments on the action of thought in his Nietzsche lectures:

No matter how often appearances may suggest the contrary, these reports were the most difficult things for him, inasmuch as they pertain to the utter uniqueness of his mission, a mission that was his and his alone. Part of that mission consisted in telling his own story, a telling that makes palpable the fact that in a time of decline, a time when all is counterfeit and pointless activity, *thinking in the grand style* is genuine *action*, indeed, action in its most powerful—though most *silent*—form.⁸

Heidegger relates thinking as action to times of decline in general, but Foucault names the “perilous action” of thought as a genuine change in the way that thinking happens, occurring in the nineteenth century. I will not take on *The Order of Things* here; but Foucault's suggestion that something new has happened around the time of Nietzsche, and indeed in Nietzsche's work, directs this inquiry concerning thinking as action back into the history of philosophy. In this way, we may evaluate the nature of this change. We will therefore need to linger a bit longer in parts of this history to do justice to the

⁷ Michel Foucault. *The Order of Things*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994, pg. 328. The lines that follow are significant as well: “Sade, Nietzsche, Artaud, and Bataille have understood this on behalf of those who tried to ignore it; but it is also certain that Hegel, Marx, and Freud knew it. Can we say that it is not known by those who, in their profound stupidity, assert that there is no philosophy without political choice, that all thought is either ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’? Their foolishness is to believe that all thought ‘expresses’ the ideology of a class; their involuntary profundity is that they point directly at the modern mode of being of thought.”

⁸ Martin Heidegger. *Nietzsche, Volume II: The Eternal Recurrence of the Same*, trans. Krell. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. pp. 10-11.

complexity of philosophy's various understandings of itself in regard to action, as the sketch of the divide between theory and practice is certainly inadequate.

In addition to taking on a historical dimension, this question has also quickly become a social-political matter. When we inquire into a gap between theory and practice and a merging together of the two into one, it is always a question of what philosophy *does* in the world, and this means the social world, the world of human interactions—what can loosely be called the social-political world. Therefore, we must first develop an account of how philosophy has historically understood itself in regard to the world of human interactions.

How can such an account be approached? In asking what the historical relationship between philosophy and politics is, we are immediately overwhelmed. What kind of philosophy? Political philosophy? Non-political philosophy? Does such a distinction even exist, and if so, how are we to draw the line? When a question is too large, when the histories are more prolific than can be grasped in a single account, it is both risky and presumptuous to put forth an answer. Yet we cannot proceed without saying something definitive about the historical relationship between philosophy and politics. Given such a problem, we would do well to consider the practice of Nietzschean genealogy and to embrace the actively creative element involved in the tracing of historical connections, rather than fretting over the impossible task of connecting every historical dot for some illusion of an objectively true representation of the past.

Therefore, the approach to the question of Nietzsche's explosive self-understanding against the background of the relationship of philosophy and politics throughout history must be a playful one. The account of philosophy that follows will

play with history in a Nietzschean spirit by selecting fragments of philosophical history in order to piece together a story about the Nietzsche who has provoked us here. That Nietzsche is the one who claims to be dynamite, and the story pieced together will combine strands of the history of philosophy most fruitful for developing a lineage that sheds light on this Nietzsche and the question that he has provoked.

Section One: The Life and Death of Socrates and the Historical Decision of Philosophy

Plato must be the starting point for this investigation for several reasons. First, it is clear that Plato's work marks a beginning that is important for Nietzsche's own thought. Nietzsche's genealogical work relies upon a conception of the history of the West as nihilism, and its nihilistic tendency is found in an idea articulated for the first time by Plato:

But you will have gathered what I am driving at, namely, that it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests—that even we seekers after knowledge today, we godless anti-metaphysicians still take our fire, too, from the flame lit by a faith that is thousands of years old, that Christian faith which was also the faith of Plato, that God is the truth, that truth is divine (*GS* 344, *GM* III.24)

Plato is also a beginning for Nietzsche because he creates a written version of Socrates and gives a voice to this philosopher who might have otherwise fallen silent for the ages. Plato's Socrates is, for Nietzsche, the beginning of a decline which runs such a long course that Nietzsche understands his own work, centuries later, to still be directed against its effects.⁹ Aside from representing a beginning for the set of problems that Nietzsche takes on in his own work, Plato also marks a thematic beginning for the question we are asking because his dialogues offer such vivid images of the philosopher in his relation to the polis and to fellow human beings. We find in the dialogues a variety

⁹ Nietzsche explains this beginning in *The Birth of Tragedy*. We will revisit this issue of Socrates as a decadent type and the beginning of decline later in the chapter.

of examples of philosophy being practiced in the polis. We also find in the death of Plato's Socrates a decisive tension between the polis and the philosopher that has much to offer a discussion of philosophy and politics. In what follows, we will consider some relevant images of the philosopher in order to mark the political space in which Western philosophy makes at least one of its important beginnings. This will include a reflection on the erotic Socrates of the *Symposium*, and will offer a point of departure for our consideration of Nietzschean dynamite.

While Plato's images of the philosopher are certainly vivid, they are not, however, straightforward. While Socrates is generally considered to be the quintessential philosopher, Socrates himself also gives an image of the quintessential philosopher in the *Theaetetus*—an image quite distinct from those of himself in the dialogues.¹⁰ The image put forth by Socrates removes the philosopher entirely from anything having to do with the city, in both its social and political realms:

It's surely those who since their youth, first of all, don't know the way to the marketplace, or where's a court, councilhouse, or anything else that's a common assembly of the city. And laws and decrees, spoken or written, they neither see nor hear, and the serious business of clubs for gaining office, and meetings, banquets, and revelries with flute girls—it doesn't even occur to them to do them in their dreams. And whether someone has been well-born or base-born in the city, or whether someone has incurred some evil from his ancestors, on the men's or the women's side—he's less aware of it than of the proverbial pitchers of the sea. And he doesn't even know that he does not know all these things, for he's not abstaining from them for the sake of good repute, but in truth his body alone is situated in the city and resides there, but his thought, convinced all these things are small and nothing, dishonors them in every way and flies, as Pindar puts it, 'deep down under the earth' and geometricizes the planes, 'and above heaven,' star gazing, and in exploring everywhere every nature of each whole of the things which are and letting itself down to not one of the things nearby.¹¹

The philosopher described here by Socrates, of which Thales is the prime example, is utterly unaware of the city in which his body is situated. His social and political world

¹⁰ The importance of this description of philosopher was brought to my attention by John Sallis in his outstanding lecture course, *On Φῶσις in Greek Philosophy*. Penn State University, Fall 2003. Following points made by Benardete in his Introduction to the dialogue, Sallis suggested that the internal chronology and thematic links of the *Theaetetus* to the *Sophist* and *Statesman* indicate that the *Theaetetus* could be the missing discourse on the philosopher preceding those on the sophist and the statesman.

¹¹ Seth Benardete. *Plato's Theaetetus*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 173c-174a.

seems to be of no consequence to him because, regardless of where he is situated, he cannot think where his body is. His thoughts fly off beyond anything in proximity to him. The gulf here between thinking and action is too great to even speak of a distinction between *theoria* and *praxis*, for the former in no way aims at the latter. Instead, the philosopher is drawn into a circle of contemplation that he is unable to take back to his fellow men in any meaningful way. Philosophy would be a mere flight off to the heavens that would leave the philosopher unequipped for life on the earth. If the Greek soul is the life of the body,¹² then this kind of philosophy is nothing more than the enactment of a mind/body division. Philosophy as pure contemplation would be the (non) practice of vivisectioning the soul and the body.

This account of philosophy's practice of separating the soul from the body—a practice that refuses social and political practice—is found beyond the image of Thales in Plato's work. In the *Phaedo*, Socrates comforts the friends around his death bed with a similar logos on the philosopher:

It is only those who practice philosophy in the right way, we say, who always most want to free the soul; and this release and separation of the soul from the body is the preoccupation of the philosophers?¹³

Simmius answers with an affirmative “so it appears,” but we would do well to heed Socrates' question mark, as well as the series of question marks in the passages following the one above, when Socrates establishes the famous link between philosophy and death by way of interrogation. These question marks might direct us to the events preceding this conversation, the events that bring Socrates to his death bed. We must ask whether the images of Socrates in the dialogues—the images that show us the life of a

¹² Plato. *Phaedo* 105d.

¹³ *Phaedo* 67d.

philosopher—match the description that Socrates puts forth (questioningly) in the *Phaedo*.

While it would be impossible here to analyze all the images of Socrates in the dialogues, a few relevant ones come to mind. In the *Symposium*, a dialogue recounting a banquet at Agathon’s Athens home attended by only Athenian guests,¹⁴ Socrates claims to know nothing other than τα ερωτικά, and his encomium to Eros contains an image of Eros that looks quite like himself:

“In the first place, he’s always poor, and he’s far from being delicate and beautiful (as ordinary people think he is); instead, he is tough and shriveled and shoeless and homeless, always lying on the dirt without a bed, sleeping at people’s doorsteps and in roadsides under the sky, having his mother’s nature, always living with Need. But on his father’s side he is a schemer after the beautiful and good; he is brave, impetuous, and intense, an awesome hunter, always weaving snares, resourceful in his pursuit of intelligence, a lover of wisdom through all his life, a genius with enchantments, potions, and clever pleadings” (203d).¹⁵

Alcibiades confirms this account of the erotic Socrates when he crashes Agathon’s party, as he describes Socrates’ enchanting effects on him—enchantments that cause Alcibiades’ soul to be “struck and bitten by philosophy” (218a). He also says that Socrates is “crazy about beautiful boys; he constantly follows them around in a perpetual daze” (216d), though he refuses to allow his relationships with even the most beautiful of them to become sexual.

The erotic Socrates, lying on the couch with Agathon, engaging in praise to Eros, this Socrates—revealed by Alcibiades as a maddening speaker, and finally even as a courageous soldier (220d-e)—is at least a far cry, and perhaps even the complete opposite, of the Thales of the *Theaetetus*. In Socrates we see a philosopher utterly rooted in the city, chasing its young boys around, attending its festivals and “revelries with flute

¹⁴ Leo Strauss emphasizes this point in his lecture course: *On Plato’s Symposium*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001 pp. 24-25.

¹⁵ *Symposium*, trans. Nehamas and Woodruff in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

girls,” and even serving in its army with courage and competence. And while Alcibiades does say that Socrates could care less whether someone is “beautiful, rich, or famous,” it is not because he has no awareness of these distinctions, but because “he considers all these possessions beneath contempt” (216e).

In moving to Diotima’s speech on eros and beauty in the dialogue, we will be able to better understand what exactly the philosopher is doing in the city. Diotima’s *logos* on eros can be divided into four smaller *logoi*. She tells, first of all, who Eros the god is as the offspring of Poros and Penia (203b-204b). Secondly, she speaks of love in a way that eventually leads to its definition as “wanting to possess the good forever” (206a). Third, she explains that the purpose of eros is “giving birth in beauty” (206b); and finally, she discusses “the purpose of these rites when they are done correctly—the final and highest mystery” (210a). We have already found in the image of the god Eros an image of Socrates. The second *logos* of Diotima refutes Aristophanes’ claim that love is toward one’s own, and says instead that what is desired is that the good become one’s own. We will return to this. The third is centered around human pregnancy, the pregnancy of both body and soul. This third *logos* and its prioritization of the pregnancy of the soul, is a description of how eros leads mortals to poetry. That Diotima’s discussion of pregnancy is properly understood in regard to poetry is confirmed in the final few sentences of the third *logos*:

“Everyone would rather have such children [conceived in the soul] than human ones, and would look up to Homer, Hesiod, and the other good poets with envy and admiration for the offspring they have left behind—offspring, which, because they are immortal themselves, provide their parents with immortal glory and remembrance (209d).

The lines that follow suggest that the poetic is closely aligned with the political, since Diotima slides without distinction from one to the other, and since figures such as Solon clearly cannot be placed in one category to the exclusion of the other:

“For example,” she said, “those are the sort of children of Lycurgus left behind in Sparta as the saviors of Sparta and virtually all of Greece. Among you the honor goes to Solon for his creation of your laws. Other men in other places everywhere Greek or barbarian, have brought a host of beautiful deeds into the light and begotten every kind of virtue. Already many shrines have sprung up to honor them for their immortal children, which hasn’t happened yet to anyone for human offspring” (209d-e).

We do not find Socrates in these images of pregnant poets and poet-statesmen. Socrates insists in the *Theaetetus* that he is a barren midwife,¹⁶ and we have no reason to think otherwise in the *Symposium*; he is the only one of the six speakers at Agathon’s party to offer someone else’s speech in place of his own. However, Socrates is not altogether absent from this third *logos*. The person pregnant in soul seeks another who is not necessarily pregnant:

Since he is pregnant, then, he is much more drawn to bodies that are beautiful than those that are ugly; and if he also has the luck to find a soul that is beautiful and noble and well-formed, he is even more drawn to this combination; such a man makes him instantly teem with ideas and arguments about virtue—the qualities a virtuous man should have and the customary activities in which he should engage; and so he tries to educate him (209b-c).

This other sought by the pregnant person no doubt introduces confusion; Diotima’s description of this person gives somewhat contradictory notions of what he might be like. Nehamas and Woodruff are correct to use the word “man” to describe him—the word used is *άνθρωπον*—but the fact that this person is a man leaves matters all the more confusing. This man is not only beautiful, but has a beautiful, noble, well-formed soul; he is the *συναμφοότερον*; we are no longer dealing with the lover and his *παιδικός*. Why, then, would the pregnant man try to educate this grown man with a noble and well-

¹⁶ *Theaetetus* 150d.

formed soul? The word παιδεύειν in its relation to παις suggests the immaturity of the one being educated, but this man seems to be mature.

There is, however, another way to understand this passage. The Greek reads only “και επιχειρει παιδεύειν” (“and he attempts to educate”), and while we might reasonably assume that παιδεύειν is a transitive taking on the only likely direct object in the sentence, it remains the case that neither αὐτόν nor τον άνθρωπον is present in the clause. What if, in his excited pregnant state, he simply tries to educate? Is this not what giving birth to beautiful ideas and images is all about in the first place—educating whomever will read and be educated, countless people with whom the poet himself will have no contact? If this is the case, then this mysterious man does not need to be educated by the poet; he simply encourages and attends the birth of the offspring. He is a midwife:

“In my view, you see, when he makes contact with someone beautiful and keeps company with him, he conceives and gives birth to what he has been carrying inside him for ages” (209c).

We have found Socrates’ place in Diotima’s third *logos* on eros, and now a return to the second part of her speech will be helpful in understanding this midwifery. Diotima explicitly rejects Aristophanes’ idea that love is of one’s own because, she says, ““a lover does not seek the half or the whole, unless, my friend, it turns out to be good as well”” (205e). Yet the pregnant man needs this midwife precisely because love does not work this way for the poet and poet-statesman; Diotima herself says so:

“So don’t be surprised if everything naturally values its own offspring, because it is for the sake of immortality that everything shows this zeal, which is Love” (208b).

This tension between Diotima’s ridicule of the idea of loving one’s own and her admission that the desire for immortality leads precisely to this honoring of what is one’s

own, regardless of quality, points to the need for the poet's love to be presided over by someone whose love is higher, or oriented toward the good—the philosopher.¹⁷

The fourth *logos* describes this love, the highest mystery of eros, as a ladder one is led to climb for the sake of beauty. A person climbs the ladder to ever purer beauty in a process that begins with attraction to young boys bodies and becomes ascensional¹⁸ as he learns to love boys “correctly.” Diotima describes the ladder thus:

“from one body to two and from two to all beautiful bodies, then from beautiful bodies to beautiful customs, and from customs to learning beautiful things, and from these lessons he arrives in the end at this lesson, which is learning of this very Beauty, so that in the end he comes to know what it is to be beautiful” (211c-d).

In combining Diotima's and Alcibiades' speeches, we begin to get a fuller picture of the erotic midwife Socrates. As we have already noted, Alcibiades claims that Socrates is crazy about young boys; Alcibiades himself is pursued by Socrates. It seems that Socrates begins at the bottom of the ladder and chases after young boys, perhaps in order that he might “honor the rights of Love” himself “and practice them with special diligence” (212b). But Diotima's fourth *logos* does not show the lover pursuing another so that he may give birth;¹⁹ instead, he should pursue them only until they boost him to the next rung of ladder. The final goal of this climb is not birth, but a glimpse; he wants to see and know what beauty is. We might, therefore, call the fourth *logos* the properly philosophical part of Diotima's speech. This ladder-climbing is the philosopher's orientation.

¹⁷ Perhaps Aristophanes wants to point out that his own explicitly rejected speech has been brought in through the back door, when he is interrupted by Alcibiades at 212c.

¹⁸ My spell check is telling me that neither ascensional nor descensional (used later) is a real word, so I should say that my most recent memory of these words is from David Farrell Krell's *Infectious Nietzsche*, though I do not know whether they are Krell's own neologisms. I am also using the words differently than Krell uses them, but I will discuss Krell later in this paper and use these words the way he uses them also.

¹⁹ The verb *τίκτω*, to give birth, appears three times in this fourth section of Diotima's speech, but there is no mention of pregnancy. The absence of pregnancy indicates that the emphasis of the speech has now shifted decidedly toward climbing the ladder rather than bringing forth offspring.

However, as has been widely noted, the philosopher's ascensional orientation is aimed toward a descensional task.²⁰ In the *Symposium*, the descensional task is not explicitly referred to, but it is shown with subtlety. The reward that the upward climber can expect for his climb is not a glimpse for the sake of a glimpse, but rather a desirable way of life—a life of virtue:

“Or haven't you remembered,” she said, “that in that life alone, when he looks at Beauty in the only way that Beauty can be seen—only then will it become possible for him to give birth not to images of virtue (because he's in touch with no images), but to true virtue (because he is in touch with the true Beauty)” (212a).

True virtue must be lived; it cannot simply be contemplated in a purely ascensional fashion. It must be incorporated and lived among others. True virtue is lived out in the city. The combination of images from Alcibiades' and Diotima's speeches and other Platonic dialogues shows the path of this lived virtue. Socrates pursues the beautiful boys of the city, but as Alcibiades' complaint makes manifest, Socrates' interest in their physical beauty quickly changes form—so quickly that people like Alcibiades become confused and enraged by his deviation from what Athenian culture (as opposed to the woman from Mantinea) calls the rites of love. Socrates ascends. But the ascension itself begins to involve the seeds of lived virtue, namely, he must begin to care for the beautiful souls that attract him. This means that Socrates' conversations with the young men of the city are not incidental to his upward movement, but are an integral part of it; his care for souls leads him ever upward in the rites of love.

But Alcibiades recounts a reverse, or at least a shift, in the movement of Socrates, for Socrates himself becomes the object of pursuit. What could be happening? Diotima

²⁰ Such commentary is found in discussions of the *Republic*. Strauss, for instance, says, “The *Republic* presents philosophy as transcending the polis and descent to the polis” (On Plato's *Symposium* 244). John Sallis also highlights the importance of the first word of the *Republic*, κατέβην, in its relation to the education of Glaucon as the central deed of the dialogue in *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pg. 446).

seems to have skipped this part in her love manual. The first objects of pursuit for any lover are supposed to be beautiful *bodies*, something Socrates decidedly lacks. However, Alcibiades says that Socrates, like a statue of Silenus, is full of beautiful statues of the gods, despite his ugly exterior. Could it be that these statues, held inside, are the memory of a glimpse of beauty? Alcibiades, having the occasion to come across Socrates one day when he was “open,” is now hooked on Socrates. The beauty of Socrates’ soul, nourished by the true beauty viewed in his climb, is dazzling enough to overcome his physical ugliness; the true beauty radiating from his soul acts as a magnetic power on the smitten Alcibiades. According to Alcibiades, Socrates says to him:

“If I really have in me the power to make you a better man, then you can see in me a beauty that is really beyond description and makes your own remarkable good looks pale in comparison” (218e).

If these beautiful statues are indeed an impression gained by ascending the ladder, then Socrates’ involvement with beautiful young men such as Alcibiades must be understood as a repetition of the rites of love. And having climbed the ladder before, the meaning of the rites of love is now different. We see this altered meaning in the reversal of attraction between Socrates and Alcibiades—does Socrates not want Alcibiades to catch him “open” so that he will turn around and pursue a beauty superior to that of his own good looks? Does Socrates not pursue with the hope of being pursued?

Let us consider what we know about Alcibiades as we decide upon an answer to this question. Alcibiades was a leading proponent of the disastrous Sicilian expedition.²¹

Strauss writes:

This was a terrific gamble, but Alcibiades was such a genius that it might very well have been successful. The Athenians committed the folly, politically speaking, of calling back Alcibiades

²¹ This biographical fact is very important to the dialogue as a whole because, as Strauss explains, the banquet at Agathon’s house takes place very shortly before the expedition sails.

almost immediately after the expedition had sailed. Alcibiades didn't like it and fled to Sparta. He ruined Athens. He contributed more to the ruin of Athens than any other man.²²

A great genius with the potential for great destruction—is it mere coincidence that Socrates has made himself available enough to Alcibiades to cause Alcibiades to think that Socrates wants him (217a)? If we consider Socrates' task of erotic midwifery, then the answer is clearly no. Socrates pursues beautiful boys who appear to be pregnant in soul, in order that they, being pregnant, might turn to him and “instantly teem with ideas,” as we see in Diotima's third *logos*. Neither naivete nor an enjoyment of cattiness and scorn toward Alcibiades' enormous attraction to him is the cause of Socrates frequently ending up in intimate situations with Alcibiades. Instead, it seems more probable that Socrates the midwife is worried over Alcibiades' extreme pregnancy—a pregnancy of wind-eggs that, mixed with Alcibiades' love of himself and his own, will give way to disastrous offspring that will bring ruin to Athens. Socrates opens himself to Alcibiades so that Alcibiades may turn away from himself, toward a beauty more worthy of loving than his own.²³ If Socrates can secure this attraction, then Alcibiades can give birth in the presence of Socrates, who can then judge the potentially dangerous wind-eggs for what they are and help Alcibiades to also see them for what they are:

“You're right about that,” he [Socrates] answered. “In the future, let's consider things together. We'll always do what seems best to the two of us” (219b).

But the plan fails. There are glimmers of hope, certainly; Alcibiades recognizes a beauty more substantial than his own good looks in Socrates, and, as mentioned above,

²² Strauss 14.

²³ This distinction between love of one's own (associated with Aristophanes' speech) and love of the beautiful (associated with Agathon's speech) is found in Strauss (244); Strauss also adds a third kind of love—the love of the good—which is the philosopher's love. I do not see a sharp distinction between the love of the beautiful and the love of the good in the *Symposium*, but rather a ranking of beauty such that the highest beauty is also the good. However, this issue is obviously worthy of more treatment than I am able to give it here.

he even claims that his heart, or soul, “or whatever you want to call it,” has been “struck and bitten by philosophy” (218a). Ultimately, however, this beauty turns out to be a mere distraction for Alcibiades; his focus remains fixed on securing Socrates for himself and possessing him²⁴:

“I beg you, Agathon,” Socrates said, “protect me from this man! You can’t imagine what it’s like to be in love with him: from the very first moment he realized how I felt about him, he hasn’t allowed me to say two words to anybody else—what am I saying, I can’t so much as look at an attractive man but he flies into a fit of jealous rage. He yells; he threatens; he can hardly keep from slapping me around!” (213d).

Alcibiades’ love, as desire for possession, returns to himself. As already mentioned, this love of self and of one’s own is what makes a midwife necessary in the first place. In the *Theaetetus*, Socrates even says that some of his patients are “ready to bite” when he removes their nonsense, so difficult is it to find that one’s own offspring is no good.²⁵ One can imagine Alcibiades ready to bite, but perhaps he was much too clever even to get himself into such a charged situation. He says that Socrates is the only person who makes him feel shame, but as soon as he is away from him, he goes back to his old ways. This has become such a problem that Alcibiades’ life “has become one constant effort to escape from him and keep away” (216b-c). As clever as Alcibiades is, he likely runs off and gives birth to his disastrous idea behind some bush, with no one attending him.

Let us now return to the question of philosophical action, since it is becoming clear that there is such a thing for Plato. Philosophy is not merely the upward journey of contemplation in which one comes to know what beauty itself and the good itself are. The motion of philosophy is that of Eros, who shuttles back and forth in between gods and mortals (202e). The philosopher’s orientation may be toward pure ideas, unmixed

²⁴ Possession is no doubt very close to “wanting to hold the good forever,” but seems to be a bastardized form of this eros.

²⁵ 151c.

with any contingency, but his life refuses to sustain this orientation. For the Socratic philosopher, unlike Thales, it is no mean thing that his body resides in the city. It is his embodiment that keeps his thoughts from flying off into the heavens. Socratic philosophy just is ascension descending. Insofar as the philosopher ascends erotically, the words of the *Phaedo* are true; he practices death by enacting what cannot be the case in life—he separates his soul from his body. But insofar as he descends, insofar as he concerns himself with the birth of ideas that will give substance to the life of the citizenry, he is bound to life in his city. The task of practicing death is rooted and grounded in the specificity of life in the city, and the task of life in the city requires the guidance of this spectral figure in the city, the philosopher, who tries to keep one foot in the world beyond. In him, death and life merge in a point of indistinction. He is a dead man walking.

Socrates says in the *Apology* that, as a man of justice, he has led a private rather than a public life.²⁶ But we see from his fate that this distinction could not be maintained; he is rather the disruption of the public by the private, once again, the point of disturbance and indistinction. Socrates himself, in the same speech where he describes his avoidance of all but the necessary public tasks, notes his antagonistic relationship with the city, prescribed by the god:

I was attached to the city by the god—though it seems a ridiculous thing to say—as upon a great and noble horse which was somewhat sluggish because of its size and needed to be stirred up by a kind of gadfly. It is to fulfill some such function that I believe the god has placed me in the city. I never cease to rouse each and every one of you, to persuade and reproach you all day long and everywhere I find myself in your company.²⁷

²⁶ Plato, *Apology*, trans. G.M.A. Grube, in *Plato: Complete Works*, 32a.

²⁷ 30e-31a.

As the figure of death, Socrates stands for that which is most private. As Heidegger puts it, “Insofar as it ‘is,’ death is always essentially my own.”²⁸ Embodied as the practice of death, Socrates is the perfect midwife in life. Diotima says that reproduction is the way that human beings make themselves immortal. Who better than the philosopher, then, to inspire those who are pregnant to bring forth what they are carrying inside of them? With a reminder of death before them, the need to reproduce gains heightened importance. Yet there is more to Socrates’ art of midwifery than just safely delivering the offspring—he must also judge them. How frustrating it must be to have just labored over an idea and given birth to it, and then to see one’s offspring held up by this figure of death, as if in comparison—as if to say, “Is this offspring really strong enough to withstand death and make you immortal? And if so, do you really *want* it to speak for you after you can no longer speak for yourself? How does your offspring look to you in the light of death?” He provokes people to speak, and then he causes their labored-over words to appear ridiculous to them. This living reminder of death, demanding and duplicitous, is the ultimate gadfly. But what happens once the horse is stirred up is quite beyond the gadfly’s control. The philosopher can rouse the people and try to point their gaze past what sits immediately in front of them, but he is impotent to ensure that the arousal will amount to anything more than a young man’s jealous rage, impotent to keep an Alcibiades from running off behind a bush and giving birth, and impotent to ensure that the city will be able to tolerate the gadfly’s bites without snapping and sending the gadfly off to death by hemlock. Socratic philosophy is political action, but it is an action that amounts to stirring the city up by way of an exposure to what it necessarily excludes;²⁹

²⁸ Martin Heidegger. *Being and Time*, trans. Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.

²⁹ That is, the *eros* of the philosopher, which is an enactment of *thanatos*.

simply (and perhaps obviously) put, philosophy as political action lacks the force of politics.

Except one time. When Athens decides to put Socrates to death, he is permitted a moment of decision unlike any in the course of his long life. Philosophy, at this moment, experiences a decisive shift in its temporality and mode of operation. Socrates' life until this point has been marked by leisure; anyone with a more rigid schedule would doubtless find other ways to occupy himself than harassing the citizens and helping them find truth. At his leisure, Socrates presents the people with their opinions, and in that way tries to steer the decisions that will be made in the city. When his accusers indict him, though, Socrates' leisure comes to an end.³⁰ Of course, the philosopher, like all mortals, must die, and Socrates claims as a mortal to have been practicing for death his entire life; but the difference between knowing that I will die on some unknown day and knowing that death is certainly at the door is a difference between leisure and non-leisure. The fact that Socrates has made it to 70 suggests that this practice of death is something of a charade. In other words, the philosopher can practice death for 70 years only if he is not dying, only if his body is being cared for in certain crucial ways. Philosophy certainly has something to do with this care of the body, as it gives way to the virtue of moderation; but in order to practice moderation, one must be in a land of plenty—Socrates spends minimal effort to get his daily bread and water.

When Crito presents Socrates with the opportunity to escape to Thessaly, Socrates cannot defer his decision, for either death or escape is absolutely necessary; the only way to avoid one is to embrace the other. Plato's writing of this decision presents Socrates in

³⁰ Benardete notes that Socrates' enigmatic response of "It looks as if we are," to Theodorus's question, "Are we not at leisure, Socrates?" indicates that Socrates is thinking of his own loss of leisure due to the indictment that he must go and meet at the end of the *Theaetetus* (Benardete I.129).

his usual leisurely mode, chatting it up with Crito in the jailhouse about laws and justice, but the context makes Socrates' words distinctly different from any that he can utter at other places in the dialogues. While it would be untrue to say that this is the only time that Socrates puts forth his own *logos* in the dialogues, it is true that this is the only time Socrates puts forth a *logos* of his own and what he says *matters*, in the sense of bringing about or stopping important events. For instance, in Book V of the *Republic*, Socrates puts forth his own argument about the ideal city, rather than merely questioning and leading based on what an interlocutor has said. The ideal city ends up looking preposterous and anything but ideal, but it does not matter.³¹ Socrates can talk all day about ideal cities without for that reason being in a position to build them; and putting his ideal city into words does not move a single brick toward building this city. Very little is at stake in the play of this man at leisure. But when the leisure ends, Socrates is presented with a decision of ultimate consequence—his decision is not just the decision of the philosopher of Athens, but of philosophy itself.

Pressed by a new experience of temporality, Socrates has, as a philosopher, a potency not granted to him in the regular course of his life. For in deciding for death, he plays out philosophy as the practice of death to its completion. Choosing to die in the way the city has ordered can only immortalize Socrates, and even the barren Socrates cannot resist the luster of immortality. In a manner resembling Diotima's speech, he shuns human offspring,³² not so that he can give birth, but so that he can become

³¹ I am persuaded by John Sallis's reading of Book V as the comedy of a city that incorporates and politicizes *eros*. Sallis says that the philosopher-king is a paradox, *Being and Logos*, 378-379.

³² Socrates is completely unimpressed by Crito's argument that he should escape so that he can raise and educate his sons.

immortal as a mythical figure brought to life by some philosophical poet's imagination.³³ He is correct when he tells his accusers that another man such as him will not easily come to be in the city again,³⁴ yet in allowing his life to take on the drama of a martyr, he will preserve some form of philosophy for the ages. Appropriately, if a little ironically, the philosopher finds, after a life of practicing some charade of death, that it is only in dying a certain kind of death that he gains a power over history not available to him in his daily enactment of ascensional descent. If Socrates' ascensional descent is the properly philosophical political action, his death is what constitutes philosophy as a political event.

Philosophy attains a great momentum in this decision for death. Certainly, philosophy had been practiced in the city before the time of Socrates, but Socrates' death re-founds philosophy. Yet this foundation in his death will prove to give philosophy a different character from Socrates' own life as philosopher. Philosophy as a political event inaugurates, paradoxically, its flight from the polis. Socrates' death occurs as the death of philosophy in the city; it is not just a temporary banishment, but an absolute refusal of philosophy by the city. In this event, it would be incorrect to say that a natural incompatibility between philosophy and politics comes to light. Plato's Socrates is shown in many dialogues not facing death, but at his leisure in the marketplace. Socratic philosophy is not incompatible with politics, but rather, it exists in a productive tension with politics. Therefore, the event of Socrates' death is better understood as a historically decisive point for philosophy, a point at which something that made sense only within the city now founds itself anew outside the city walls. The philosopher is put to death by the

³³ The words of Plato's *Second Letter* are appropriate here: "There is no writing of Plato's, nor will there ever be; those that are now called so come from an idealized and youthful Socrates." (314c).

³⁴ *Apology* 31a.

polis; Socrates, in dying, re-founds philosophy in an absolute scission with politics, and thus in a new form.

Philosophy's new form is defined essentially by the new spaces carved out for it by this inaugural death—the space of the Academy and the space of writing. Plato founds his Academy in the countryside outside of Athens; philosophy has lost its space in the marketplace and now becomes institutionalized.³⁵ The interlocutors in philosophical conversation will now be those who seek such conversation out explicitly—philosophy is no longer likely to run into the likes of a Thrasymachus at the festival. In leaving the city walls and surrounding itself only with its own sound rather than the shouts of the marketplace, philosophy takes on a character of delocalization. In its removal from the city, there is nothing to pull its ascensional practice of death downward, no pregnant Alcibiades for it to fret over. Philosophy can now attend full-time to the things that are. This is not to say that philosophers now lose all interest in politics—quite the contrary. Nor is it the case that the specific polis in which they live ceases to have meaning for their thinking; indeed the city in which they live will color their writings in all kinds of obvious ways, from the characters in their dialogues to the cultural references for which translators today must provide footnotes. The delocalization of philosophy does not mean that the philosopher can sit in the clouds all day contemplating Being, but something more subtle than that. It means that the polis takes on the character of something to be observed and commented on rather than something in which philosophy involves itself as part of its essential task. The distinctive feature of philosophy in its

³⁵ I do not intend this word in the pejorative sense, as if to contrast the authentic marketplace philosophy of Socrates with an inauthentic, more structured way of doing philosophy seen in the tradition following Socrates. I am simply trying to describe the new space opened in the closure effected by Socrates' political death.

newly founded form is a step back, the initiation of a bit of distance. The writing of philosophy, indispensable for its institutional form, carries out this movement of delocalization because writing is the form in which philosophy can be disseminated widely to both places and ages far removed from one's own. Furthermore, the act of writing is itself a stepping back and distancing of oneself from the marketplace. The writing of great dialogues, for instance, requires that one converse with oneself and not the people of the marketplace. Writing requires a kind of distance that Socrates, even in leading his private life of virtue, did not keep.

Aristotle gives us an idea both of this distance and of the complexity involved in identifying it. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he distinguishes between the philosophical, the practical, and the political in a way that echoes Socrates' description of the philosopher in the *Theaetetus*—a description brought very much into question by Plato's presentations of Socrates himself. Aristotle says that *sophia* is the highest form of knowledge:

It is, therefore, clear, that wisdom must be the most precise and perfect form of knowledge. Consequently, a wise man must not only know what follows from fundamental principles, but he must also have knowledge of the fundamental principles themselves. Accordingly, theoretical wisdom (*sophia*) must comprise both intelligence (*nous*) and scientific knowledge (*episteme*). It is science in its consummation, as it were, the science of the things that are valued most highly.³⁶

Aristotle's examples of the thoroughly wise man, the philosopher, are Anaxagoras and Thales:

That is why it is said that men like Anaxagoras and Thales have theoretical but not practical wisdom: when we see that they do not know what is advantageous to them, we admit that they know extraordinary, wonderful, difficult, and superhuman things, but call their knowledge useless because the good they are seeking is not human (1141b 4-7).

³⁶ Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Ostwald. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1962, 1141a 16-21.

The philosopher described by Aristotle here does not exist in a productive strife with the city and its human affairs, but instead, his activity is completely irrelevant to the polis, as the polis is completely irrelevant to him. The removal of philosophy from the polis means that the highest goods and human goods do not mix. What is highest is useless, and pursuing the highest is the most leisurely pursuit. The hustle and bustle of human affairs is undisturbed by this useless leisure; likewise, the leisurely pursuit of what is highest cannot trouble itself with human affairs. Aristotle's articulation of philosophy is, therefore, decidedly un-Socratic.

Wisdom and excellence in human affairs can be broken into two categories for Aristotle: political wisdom (*politike*) and practical wisdom (*phronesis*). Political wisdom is the excellence both of legislation and specific political action, while practical wisdom concerns the individual. That *sophia* has no connection to either means that philosophy proper not only has no role in the polis, but also that it has no connection with the way one handles one's private life:

Theoretical wisdom, (as we have described it), will study none of the things that make a man happy, for it is not at all concerned with the sphere of coming to be (but only with unchanging realities) (1143b 18-21).

Of course, this division might seem to be complicated by Aristotle's own professed motive for inquiry in the *Nicomachean Ethics*:

The purpose of the present study is not, as it is in other inquiries, the attainment of theoretical knowledge (*theoria*): we are not conducting this inquiry in order to know what virtue is, but in order to become good, else there would be no advantage in studying it (1103b 25-30).

We see here that Aristotle's status as a philosopher does not keep him from caring about human goods; however, this passage does not contradict the distinctions that Aristotle has made in Book VI regarding the philosophical and the practical/political, the unchanging and the human. Instead, it helps to emphasize the distinction. Pay attention here, he

seems to say, for we have moved into another realm when we inquire into human action. Though our task be noble, we have strayed from our properly philosophical task of *theoria*, and insofar as we try to make ourselves good, we are engaging in a kind of *praxis*. Aristotle cares about human goods because he is a human, but he recognizes a higher kind of inquiry that in no way involves human goods. Again, we see here that philosophy inhabits a new space outside of both the polis and the realm of private human goods. But Aristotle's movement outside of the new philosophical space for inquiry suggests that a Socratic memory helps to shape his various intellectual and moral projects.

* * *

We have, therefore, identified a beginning of the Western philosophical tradition as a shifting and designation of space in which a discipline is able to emerge. We cannot think of this beginning as an absolute origin by any means, but rather as point of reference singled out due to the shifting of spaces in which what is called philosophy takes place. Because the polis—a space of political action—has been the primary space in reference to which philosophy's space has been defined, the spatial terrain of philosophy has opened for us the senses in which we can and cannot think of philosophy as an action. The three major points from the previous inquiry are as follows:

1) Philosophy in its Socratic form is a practice of specific locality—it takes place as the active art of erotic midwifery in the heart of the polis, in the marketplace. Although Socrates says that philosophy is the practice of death, his practice of death is not the de-contextualized practice of lifting soul from body, but rather a contextualized

practice that aims specifically at making the citizens better by harassing them like a gadfly. Philosophy is ascensional descent located in the polis.

2) Though philosophy is practiced at the heart of the polis, for the sake of the polis, it is, in the end, impotent to direct the course the polis will take. The polis retains a power over philosophy, in that it can sentence the philosopher to death.

3) The death of Socrates is the great moment of decision for the practice of philosophy, in that it re-founds and re-organizes a discipline of philosophy outside of the polis. The power in this decision rests mainly with the polis, but philosophy decides too. The polis decides to kill philosophy, but Socrates' own choice to die rather than flee is the choice for philosophy in a new form, outside the polis. There are three main characteristics of philosophy re-founded on the death of Socrates. A) Philosophy is an organized discipline practiced in an academy by interested parties with sufficient leisure time. B) This discipline organizes itself in writing. Rather than dialogue with others, philosophy now steps back and observes, and its thinking is the silent conversation of the soul with itself described in Plato's *Theaetetus*. This silence continues as words written on a page. C) The third is brought about by the first two—that is, the character of delocalization. Not only does the discipline of philosophy have its space outside of the polis, but it is attached to no place at all. Its task, as described by Aristotle, is to absorb itself fully in things that do not change; thus it removes itself from the contingencies and human concerns of any place in its specificity. Philosophy's new written character demands the privacy of the philosopher, and it ensures the ability of dissemination and proliferation, which means that philosophy is in no way attached to a specific time and place, but is rather the written tradition that can make its way to any time and place.

However, this ability for dissemination and proliferation also works the other way around: philosophy is in no place, and yet it is potentially in any place. The written word opens the possibility that philosophy might, in the form of a text, make its way back down into the polis. In this way, philosophy's written form carries with it the memory of philosophy's human and political task. As with Aristotle's engagement in the practice of ethical inquiry, despite an understanding of philosophy's proper task that does not include this task, the Socratic memory does not leave philosophy. In this way, the movement into philosophy's new space does not occur in an absolute way; philosophical thinking is removed from the polis, and no longer engages the polis as its very activity, but it retains certain mechanisms that give it the potential to trouble the polis from afar.

Section Two: Relocating Philosophy

The previous analysis suggests that the distinction between *theoria* and *praxis* occurs in philosophy's exodus from the human affairs of the polis and its closure into a written discipline. Nietzsche does not explicitly concern himself with this distinction, but insofar as he describes himself, as philosopher, as an explosive, we must keep this historical decision and spatiality of philosophy close by as we work through Nietzsche's own understanding of himself as an explosive event in the history of the West.

We have already taken into consideration the difficulty of locating a physiological event dispersed in writing, and as we begin to consider Nietzsche's understanding of himself as an event, we must also think about *how* Nietzsche writes himself as a philosophical event, of how his physiology writes itself. The first of what might be many answers is that Nietzsche goes behind himself to write himself. Nietzsche retells the history of Western philosophy and culture leading up to himself, in the forms of both

systematic genealogy and aphoristic commentary on the spirit of the ages before him. Going behind himself is necessary because Nietzsche understands explosive people to be concentrations of history's conserved forces:

My idea of genius.—Great human beings are like the dynamite of great ages, representing the accumulation of enormous force; they always presuppose, historically and physiologically, that extensive protection, collection, accumulation, and storage procedures have taken place on their behalf,—that an explosion has not taken place for a long time (*TI* 44).³⁷

If we look to *The Birth of Tragedy*, we see that Greek tragedy is, in a purely chronological sense, the starting point for Nietzsche's writing of this history and physiology, since it is his first book. But tragedy and, more precisely, its death as an ethos, is the starting point for Nietzsche in more than just a chronological sense. The loss of tragedy haunts Nietzsche's writings from his first book to his letter written as Dionysus to Cosima Wagner in 1889.

For Nietzsche, the presence of Socrates in Athens and the space occupied by Socratic philosophy kills tragedy:

Consider the consequences of the Socratic maxims: "Virtue is knowledge; man sins only from ignorance; he who is virtuous is happy." In these three basic forms of optimism lies the death of tragedy (*BT* 14).

In the person of Socrates, Nietzsche says, the faith that thought can both *know* being and *correct* it appears in the world for the first time (*BT* 15). Insofar as Socrates enacts the kind of thinking that will perform this correction in the city—that is, insofar as he tries to make the men of the city better—we have already noted a certain resistance to the philosophical action that has led us to call Socrates, in the end, impotent. Nietzsche does not share Socrates' philosophical faith; he calls it a "profound illusion," but Nietzsche

³⁷ Sarah Kofman notes that this "economic hypothesis" allows Nietzsche to understand "Julius Caesar or Alexander (Dionysus) as a father" (49) and to throw off the kinship with his mother and sister and the German people to which he is tied by a biological or racial genealogy. Sarah Kofman. "A Fantastical Genealogy: Nietzsche's Family Romance." *Nietzsche and the Feminine*, ed. Burgard. Charlottesville: UVA Press, 1994, pp. 35-52.

ascribes a certain insidious potency to Socrates. Socrates lacks the power to make the city virtuous; he lacks the power to make the statesmen take the noble path; he lacks the power to declare just wars and he lacks every other ability to actively create the city in his own image. But Nietzsche's account of the death of tragedy by Socratism shows us a Socrates who has the potency of a disease. That this potent Socrates is able to kill tragedy means that the city has a certain susceptibility to the disease. In this way, the city's infection by Socrates is a sign of its weakening constitution:

And again: that of which tragedy died, the Socratism of morality, the dialectics, the frugality, and cheerfulness of the theoretical man—how now? might not this very Socratism be a sign of decline, of weariness, of infection, of the anarchical dissolution of the instincts? (*BT*, Attempt 1).

The weakened and now sickened city kills Socrates, the main carrier, but it has already succumbed to the disease. And the dead body of Socrates does nothing but contaminate the city further:

The dying Socrates became the new ideal, never seen before, of noble Greek youths: above all, the typical Hellenic youth, Plato, prostrated himself before this image with all the ardent devotion of his enthusiastic soul (*BT* 13).

We might think of the new space of philosophy in the Academy, outside the city walls, as a containment that comes too late. Tragedy is already dead as an ethos, and the new ethos, left by philosophy in its exodus, is marked by contamination and decadence.

The task of the philosopher in what we have called ascensional descent is, in Nietzsche's words, the act of correction. Yet, according to Nietzsche, Socrates contributes to the decadence of the city both in life and death. He does not find Socrates to be of a particularly calculating and scheming variety in carrying out this deed, but instead finds him to be in the grip of illusion and error. Indeed, he says that Socrates does not even understand tragedy (*BT* 12). Nietzsche's account of Socrates' effect on the weakened city portrays a Socrates unable to fulfill the Delphic maxim to know himself,

in that he cannot see in himself a decadent instinct. For the nature of his decadence turns any attempt at the Delphic maxim into a snake biting its own tail. Socrates' engagement with his daimon exposes this decadence as a monstrous reversal:

This voice, whenever it comes, always *dissuades*. In this utterly abnormal nature, instinctive wisdom appears only in order to *hinder* conscious knowledge occasionally. While in all productive men it is instinct that is the creative-affirmative force, and consciousness acts critically and dissuasively, in Socrates it is instinct that becomes the critic, and consciousness that becomes the creator—truly a monstrosity *per defectum!* (BT 13).

This reversal of consciousness and instinct complicates and damages the self-reflexive function, which is so straightforward in the healthy Greek. In this healthy and candid creative person, consciousness is that faculty that allows for something like reflection, by providing a lens separate from one's instincts to view those instincts. Of course, we might speculate that in the healthy Greek, this consciousness is still the “weakest and most fallible organ” (GM II.16), and that the quest for self knowledge goes no further than an evaluation of his superior instinct, expressing itself in a pathos of distance (GM I.2). It is when self-knowledge becomes most important that it also becomes most subterranean and most self-defeating. In the case of Socrates, consciousness now takes the place of the instincts, and insofar as life is lived, it is examined. In this inversion, examination is the stuff of life. But is consciousness now to examine—itself? How will this dominating consciousness recognize its manner of living as degenerate? Since consciousness dominates the instincts, its attempt at reflection brings everything to light except the tyrannical instinct driving its will to bring to light. As long as Socrates' driving instinct is intact, he cannot achieve a position from which to reflect on the instinct underlying his self-evident quest for virtue; he is thus removed from any awareness of his toxicity.

We now see the action of Socratic philosophy in a different light, and the action has changed for us because we have moved from the political space of philosophy to the more concentrated space of Socrates' physiology. Essentially, Nietzsche has exposed a layer of activity running deeper than the act of ascensional descent within that very act. Insofar as Nietzsche's various genealogies and histories will come to tell the story of himself (even if to show striking contrasts between himself and parts of these histories), he must translate them to inhabit instinctual, physiological space. In doing this, Nietzsche, as Deleuze suggests, asks a philosophical question in a new and non-metaphysical way; rather than asking τί ἐστὶ; he asks "which one?" Deleuze writes:

According to Nietzsche the question "which one?" (*qui*) means this: what are the forces which take hold of a given thing, what is the will that possesses it? Which one is expressed, manifested, and even hidden in it?³⁸

We have, therefore, begun to analyze two distinct spaces of philosophy: the broader political space in which philosophy is born, which allows us to begin to approach the question of philosophical action, and the space of the philosopher's physiology—the question of which one—which force—manifests itself in the practice of philosophy. It is only in working between these two spaces that we will begin to understand the meaning of Nietzsche's articulation of himself, as philosopher, as an explosive event.

Philosophy as a discipline in the Academy, though in a new space politically speaking, carries with it its founding Socratic memory. We have seen that writing can be understood as an organization of philosophy's new space in which Socrates' care for human affairs is preserved; furthermore, the philosopher's frequent ventures into the realm of human affairs, despite a profession that philosophy's proper task is with eternal

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, pp. 76-77.

things (as in the case of Aristotle), also suggests the memory of the Socratic. More to the point, however, is that Socrates' memory is preserved in the ascensional task; and with the descensional element of philosophy preserved in a merely ancillary way, philosophical thinking lacks a specificity of place. Yet, if Nietzsche is correct, there is something pathological in this Socratic memory. Philosophy carries it as one carries a disease; and indeed, a disease, in order to survive, needs these carriers. Athens might have killed Socrates, but it does not go down the road and blow up Akademeia; instead, it goes so far as to send some of its young men there. Philosophy in its delocalized form has inherited the political impotence of its founder; it does not know how to assert itself in the face of hostility. Its strength now lies in its mobility—it can survive anywhere so long as it can find a willing host nearby.

Imagine, then, the scrambling philosophy must have done when such a thing came into existence as “the Christian world”—not a mere Christian polis or area, but a whole world. The beginning of the Church as a political structure is an absolute abolishment of free or politically neutral space, for now all of human life is organized under One Good outside of life, and the Church sets itself the task of bringing human affairs into line with that Good. This political structure founds itself in an absolute gulf between God and man, and the people fall under its sway because they, like the late fifth century Athenians, embody a certain decadence of instinct. In the case of the Christian world, this decadence is the most extreme form of the bad conscience in history. Nietzsche explains that the “stroke of genius on the part of Christianity” is a manipulation of the ancient consciousness of being in debt. When God, the creditor, sacrifices himself out of love for the debtor, an inseparable gulf emerges between creditor and debtor—the debtor can

never possibly be worthy of such magnanimity (*GM* II.21). Such an act means that unworthiness—guilty indebtedness—is the definitive characteristic of the human being; such an act means that nothing is one’s own anymore. According to Nietzsche, a pathological will to self-torment is behind this event that leaves the individual’s psychic space ever open to the penetrating gaze of a God to whom it can never stop being in debt. The brutality of this gaze is expressed by God’s murderer, the ugliest man, in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*:

He saw with eyes that saw everything; he saw man’s depths and ultimate grounds, all his concealed disgrace and ugliness. His pity knew no shame: he crawled into my dirtiest nooks (*Z* 266).

Christianity means, in this way, that what is most private is not, in fact, private at all.

The Christian world is the mapping of this inward space onto political terrain. The Church speaks for a God who sits fully apart from human life, yet all the while remains utterly concerned about all human thoughts and actions. The crucial factor is that all space—intellectual, social, moral—is political space, and it all belongs to the Church.³⁹ These debtors have nothing of their own, but the Church, in its benevolence, has kindly arranged all space to the glory of God. If they will believe and submit to their loving creditor, all areas of life will be taken care of. Where will philosophy now find a host? In what space can philosophy exist? A space slightly outside the city walls is out of the question now—that space has been bought up by the Church to be used for its own ends.

³⁹ While this overtaking of all space by the Church was taking place throughout early medieval times, the process gains solidity with the crowning of Charlemagne. Eric O. Hanson explains that Leo III’s crowning of Charlemagne established the new political-religious relationship of Christendom in the West, a relationship rooted in Augustine’s vision in *City of God*: “He [Augustine] thus emphasized the reality of the church as an organized institution with a universal mandate. The church’s universal mandate to include all humanity within its scope imposed rights and duties on the heads of the spiritual and political institutions of Christendom. All matters affected salvation, and thus concerned the church even though different functions belonged to the pope and the emperor.” Hanson, Eric O. *The Catholic Church in World Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1987, pg. 24.

In order for philosophy to exist in the Church's territory, it will have to take on a form that serves the Church's framework. Nietzsche's account of the philosopher suggests that this malleability should not be a great challenge for philosophy, but is rather the very condition for philosophy's existence at all. Philosophy has always assimilated itself to pre-existing forms—most notably, to that of the ascetic priest:

Let us compress the facts into a few brief formulas: to begin with, the philosophic spirit always had to use as a mask and a cocoon the *previously established* types of the contemplative man—priest, sorcerer, soothsayer, and in any case a religious type—in order to be able to *exist at all*: the *ascetic ideal* for a long time served the philosopher as a form in which to appear, as a precondition of existence—he had to *represent* it so as to be able to be a philosopher; he had to *believe* it in order to be able to represent it. The peculiar, withdrawn attitude of the philosopher, world-denying, hostile to life, suspicious of the senses, freed from sensuality, which has been maintained down to the most modern times and has become virtually the *philosopher's pose par excellence*—it is above all a result of the emergency conditions under which philosophy arose and survived at all; for the longest time philosophy would not have been *possible at all* on earth without ascetic wraps and cloak, without an ascetic self-misunderstanding. To put it vividly: the *ascetic priest* provided until the most modern times the repulsive and gloomy caterpillar form in which alone the philosopher could live and creep about (*GM III.10*).

We have already encountered what might be considered emergency conditions after the death of Socrates; these conditions cause philosophy to gather itself up into a new space. But now a true emergency arises, in that there is no new space to inhabit. Under these emergency conditions, philosophy hides under the ascetic cloak—it moves to the monastery. It thus subordinates itself to theology and devotes itself to writing in ways that reaffirm the authority of the Church. Of course, philosophy does not choose this particular cloak arbitrarily; the ascetic cloak is the obvious one for philosophy to wear because of the space it had already begun to occupy before this emergency. Philosophy after Socrates had already begun to dissociate itself from the polis and to pull away from human affairs in general, confining itself instead to things that do not change. The monastery is a place for the contemplation of the being who does not change, and so this place of quiet and contemplation set apart from the world must have seemed an obvious place for philosophy to hide out.

Yet according to Nietzsche, it is a matter of more than just hiding out. In taking up the ascetic cloak, Nietzsche says that the philosopher must represent the ascetic ideal, but he must *believe* it in order to represent it. For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal is inimical to life, but it preserves life in a sickened form (*GM* III.13). If Socrates is, indeed, a decadent type, then the tradition carrying the Socratic memory does well to take up this ascetic ideal. However, moving under the protection of the ascetic priest's cloak means representing and believing this ideal. Thus in the world of Christendom, philosophy does more than hide in the ascetic ideal; it imbeds itself in it. This changes the political space of philosophy. Philosophy is able to move to the monastery in the first place because its task has become entirely ascensional and thus delocalized. The monastery, in its asceticism, contributes to this delocalization—God is everywhere, so one can shut oneself in to pray anywhere. The local sights and smells do not contribute to the monk's task. The place can thus be anywhere, but the space always belongs to the Church. In this unspecific location belonging to the Church, philosophy neither questions the city from inside nor observes it from outside, but instead sits apart from political affairs in a way that bolsters and justifies the existing structure of political power. The monastery offers a place for philosophy to immerse itself completely in the contemplation of eternal things, yet this space of pure contemplation is in no way politically neutral. As a space belonging to the Church and not to itself, the monastery exists as a part of the elaborate framework representing that thing outside of life that gives human life its order and meaning. Philosophy in the monastery is engaged in pure contemplation, but in performing this task, it testifies to the beyond that gives authority its right.

In modernity, philosophy begins to wiggle its way free of the Church and theology. Does it therefore find its own space? Is there now sufficient freedom for philosophy to colonize itself on its own terms? Christianity in the modern age begins to lose its power, but Nietzsche says that the dominating ethos that replaces it—marked by modern morality and its chief expressions: modern science and the rise of the liberal state—fails to break from the ascetic ideal:

No! Don't come to me with science when I ask for the natural antagonist of the ascetic ideal, when I demand: "where is the opposing will expressing the *opposing ideal*?" Science is not nearly self-reliant enough to be that; it first requires in every respect an ideal of value, a value-creating power, in the *service* of which it could *believe* in itself—it never creates values. Its relation to the ascetic ideal is by no means essentially antagonistic; it might even be said to represent the driving force in the latter's inner development (*GM III.25*).

The Church now faces opposition, but rather than inaugurating a new ideal, science takes over the very ideal that was upheld by Christianity. Science's appropriation of the ascetic ideal expresses a moral faith in the divinity of truth (*GM III.24*). Philosophy continues to support the dominant bulwark of the ascetic ideal in the modern period, devoting itself to foundations for morality and science. Nietzsche's problem with modern philosophers seems to be that they do not find their own space, but rather slide right back underneath the ascetic cloak, taking a backseat to modern science. Nietzsche notes what seems to be a straightforward reversal in the relationship between philosophy and science in an aphorism in *Beyond Good Evil*:

The scholar's declaration of independence, his emancipation from philosophy, is one of the more refined effects of the democratic order—and disorder: the self-glorification and self-exaltation of scholars now stand in full bloom, in their finest spring, everywhere—which is not meant to imply that in this case self-praise smells pleasant. "Freedom from all masters" that is what the instinct of the rabble wants in this case, too; and after science has most happily rid itself of theology whose "handmaid" it was too long, it now aims with an excess of high spirits and lack of understanding to lay down laws for philosophy and to play the "master" herself—what am I saying? the *philosopher* (*BGE 204*).

Science has been the handmaid to philosophy in its theological form throughout Christendom; thus Nietzsche speaks of philosophy here as the master from whom science

(*Wissenschaft*) breaks free and now seeks to turn around and rule. But we must remember that philosophy has been wearing the ascetic cloak for its survival; born in impotence and forced from its space, it does not know how to be entirely its own. Philosophy too has been the handmaid to theology. Even when it has appeared to rule, it has only ruled with a mask, behind a cloak; now it slips behind science, grounding it with its theories. Thus Nietzsche finishes the aphorism about the science that was once handmaid by describing a pathetic handmaiden philosophy:

Science is flourishing today and her good conscience is written all over her face, while the level to which all modern philosophy has gradually sunk, this rest of philosophy today, invites mistrust and displeasure, if not mockery and pity. Philosophy reduced to “theory of knowledge,” in fact no more than a timid epochism and doctrine of abstinence—a philosophy that never gets beyond the threshold and takes pains to *deny* itself the right to enter—that is philosophy in its last throes, an end, an agony, something inspiring pity. How could such a philosophy—*dominate!* (*BGE* 204).

The morality that expresses itself in science also takes on another form, that of the liberal state:

Indeed, with the help of a religion which indulged and flattered the most sublime herd-animal desires, we have reached the point where we find even in political and social institutions an ever more visible expression of this morality: the *democratic* movement is the heir of the Christian movement (*BGE* 202).

If the democratic movement, and with it the rise of the modern state, is yet another expression of ascetic morality, then the philosopher’s shirking behind the ascetic ideal continues, in the modern era, to be a supportive standing behind the political structure of the times. Modern states, grounded in the reason of the individual’s subjectivity, are in some sense propped up by modern philosophers. This is why, for Nietzsche, the decay represented by the democratic movement must be addressed by looking “toward *new philosophers*” (*BGE* 203).

The problem, it seems, is that philosophy, attached to no particular location and in need of hosts, has become accustomed moving about and wearing cloaks, to sliding

underneath and supporting the ethos of the age. Nietzsche accepts that it might be necessary for the philosopher to come from a lineage of this propping up, but ultimately, the philosopher has a task that must break from this:

It may be necessary for the education of a genuine philosopher that he himself has also once stood on all these steps on which his servants, the scientific laborers of philosophy, remain standing—*have to remain standing*. Perhaps he himself must have been critic and skeptic and dogmatist and historian and also poet and collector and traveler and solver of riddles and moralist and seer and “free spirit” and almost everything in order to pass through the whole range of human values and value feelings and to be *able* to see with many different eyes and consciences, from a height and into every distance, from the depths into every height, from a nook into every expanse. But all these are merely preconditions of his task: this task itself demands something different—it demands that he *create values* (*BGE* 211).

When the philosopher ceases to stand behind the cloak of some other ideal, he comes forward to create his own.⁴⁰ But this creation of values is not simply a given for philosophy’s future; it is a question. Nietzsche’s vision of the philosopher is not entirely without precedent, for he speaks often of the great spirits of the ages before him. But this vision is also not secure—there are a great deal of unknowns when a cloak that has covered something for a long time is removed. Nietzsche is uncertain as to whether philosophy is strong enough to move out from under the ascetic cloak:

Is there sufficient pride, daring, courage, self-confidence available today, sufficient will of the spirit, will to responsibility, *freedom of will*, for “the philosopher” to be henceforth—*possible* on earth?— (*GM* III.10).

Are there such philosophers today? Have there been such philosophers yet? *Must* there not be such philosophers?— (*BGE* 211).

To create values—what does this task of the new philosopher mean? It would mean, first of all, that the philosopher has moved out from behind the powers that form the life of a people and that he has ceased to be their supportive apparatus. In creating

⁴⁰ Pierre Klossowski suggests that the philosopher’s break with his own society is an essential part of his task: “For what are the thoughts and experiences of a philosopher worth if they serve merely to *guarantee* the society from which he comes? A society believes itself to be morally justified through its scientists and artists. Yet the very fact that they exist – is evidence of the disintegrating malaise of the society; and it is by no means clear that they will be the ones to reintegrate the society, at least if they take their activity seriously” (5). Pierre Klossowski. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997.

values, the philosopher himself would become the birthplace of an ethos. Shall we assume that this simply means that the philosopher sets himself apart from the world, and in creating his own values demonstrates his superiority over the herd? There are certainly passages in Nietzsche that would lead us to believe that this creation is simply a project of existential personal improvement. His descriptions of the free spirit and new philosopher often emphasize his solitude; for instance:

Every choice human being strives instinctively for a citadel and a secrecy where he is saved from the crowd, the many, the great majority—where he may forget “men who are the rule,” being their exception— (*BGE* 26).

Yet what comes after the dash is important:

excepting only the one case in which he is pushed straight to such men by a higher instinct, as a seeker after knowledge in the great and exceptional sense (*BGE* 26).

Nietzsche then suggests that these choice human beings must “go down,” as Zarathustra does. However, this downward movement is not quite Socratic; one does not go down in order to make the young men better, but in order to *study* them. Still, in the same passage, Nietzsche claims that cynicism is the route taken by the most base of those who go down in order to study the crowd. This indicates that one who creates values will keep a distance from, but not scorn for, the crowd. Many more passages emphasize the solitude and singularity of this new free spirit, but the declarations of singularity are punctuated by hints of community. We see, for instance, a very individualistic creation of value when Nietzsche writes:

‘My judgment is *my* judgment’: no one else is easily entitled to it—that is what such a philosopher of the future may perhaps say of himself (*BGE* 43).

Yet despite the individualism of this maxim, Nietzsche expresses it specifically with the *future* in mind. The same is true at the end of the next aphorism, when directly after affirming the solitude of the free spirit, Nietzsche addresses these people of the future:

“And perhaps *you* have something of this, too, you that are coming? You *new* philosophers?— (BGE 44).

Whereas Nietzsche’s emphasis on the solitude of the free and creative spirit and the distance such a person keeps from the crowd might lead us to believe that creating values means living in a way that one affirms without giving a thought to “the others,” “the mob,” “the crowd,” Nietzsche’s constant orientation toward the future shows that the creation of values has to do with more than existential self-improvement. But what is the scope of such an orientation? Might it merely be a concern for the very few coming philosophers who will follow in Nietzsche’s lineage—could the goal be the simple establishing of a legacy, the love of immortality? While Nietzsche’s insistence that his name will be remembered in the future with a “something tremendous” reveals a definite concern with projecting his own name into the future, we would do well to also remember Zarathustra’s “I love man.” For we find throughout Nietzsche’s work not a simple preoccupation with a single free spirit or overman, but rather, with the entire *age* in which this person might come:

But some day, in a stronger age than this decaying, self-doubting present, he must yet come to us, the *redeeming* man of great love and contempt, the creative spirit whose compelling strength will not let him rest in any aloofness or any beyond whose isolation is misunderstood by the people as if it were flight *from* reality—while it is only his absorption, immersion, penetration *into* reality, so that, when he one day emerges again into the light, he may bring home the *redemption* of this reality: its redemption from the curse that the hitherto reigning ideal has laid upon it (GM II.24).

Nietzsche expects this new philosopher to be nothing less than the *redeemer* of an age, and while he clearly understands this person to be someone other than himself, he understands himself to be the explosive event that clears a way into this age. He is the “condition of the possibility” for the coming of this age and new free spirit. Nietzsche’s re-telling of the histories behind what is held sacred in the present are explosive events because they think unexplored lineages behind the idols of the age. Genealogy is not a

theory to be applied, but is instead the very practice of tearing down these idols by forcing them to confess their enmeshment with the human, all too human. We can think of the whole of Nietzsche's philosophical writing as preparation for an age. Nietzsche does not theorize toward some goal, but his aphorisms hit modernity with sharp blows. Philosophy with a hammer brings the descensional element back to philosophy. It now sits in its own space at the heart of human affairs.

We must not forget, however, that Nietzsche's genealogies do not just tell the stories behind idols and ideals—we noted earlier that Nietzsche is telling the story of himself, the story of how he has become what he is through the conservation of forces of the past. The creation of a new space for philosophy in relation to human affairs is enabled by and inseparable from philosophy's event in another space—Nietzsche's own body. In other words, philosophical thinking finds its own space by way of a concrete physical localization. Philosophy's ascensional orientation delocalized it in the world of intelligible things, and thus aligned it with the ascetic ideal, which is a "longing to get away from all appearance, change, becoming, death, wishing, from longing itself" (*GM* III.28). Philosophy in its theoretical space props up the ascetic ideal by enacting it, by ascending above the contingencies of the human world to think being, subject, God. It enacts the ascetic ideal by submitting all life to examining consciousness. Philosophy does not cause the ascetic ideal, but recognizes in its aversion to life a hospitable environment for growth; it is wedded to it by its own pathology. How is it possible for philosophical thinking to then break away from this ideal? If philosophy proposes theories against asceticism, it will think in the same ascetic space. A thinking that will create a new ideal can only do so by the carving of a new space at the heart of where this

ideal is lived. Not a theory of a new ideal, but life itself in its new ideal, must act against the ascetic ideal. Thinking has to be the enactment of life toward its own ideal. Treatises and theories are delocalized, idealized forms of argument, and thinking as the very opening of a new ideal has to happen as a localized physiological event of a life that wills itself.

Nietzsche experiences life in his own skin as a point at which multiple lineages meet; he writes this experience of history's lineages in a way that twists philosophy free from the shadowy space behind the ascetic ideal. Nietzsche tells his readers in *Ecce Homo* that he is "at the same time a decadent and a beginning" (*EH*, Wise 1), both a decadent and the opposite (*EH*, Wise 2). He experiences the profound pain associated with chronic illness, but also says that as a sick man looking toward health he turns his will to health into a philosophy (*EH*, Wise 2). His texts bear witness to the convergence of these opposite instincts. We find in them the Socratic lineage of one whose penetrating gaze wants to examine life, but those examinations bear witness to a voice of instincts that refuse consciousness and have their own life. We find the ascetic posture of one stealing away to his mountain retreat to write, but the writing itself celebrates sensuality. We find a critique of history for its disadvantages for life, but the telling of a forgotten life through history. When all of these opposing forces meet in one place, they become something almost oxymoronic: a philosophy of, by, and for the instincts; the philosophical liberation of the body; the physiological liberation of philosophy.

We have moved toward a better understanding of the way in which Nietzschean thinking can be understood as action and event, for we have seen the distinction between theory and practice fade in the meeting of the two lineages we have identified—

philosophy's relation to human affairs and the physiology of the philosopher. Our initial hermeneutic problem, though, refuses to be solved, for the localization of Nietzsche's dynamite is only so within these new narratives, which are still more written texts. Insofar as this analysis has added a layer to the narrative of Nietzsche's physiology, it has, in locating Nietzsche's thinking, only further dispersed him. Nietzsche, too, must have experienced this in the multiplicity of his own being. Thus we find in Nietzsche's texts scattered and multiple lineages, but the speaking of these scattered and distant voices comes together in a concentrated action; genealogy "brings something home" (*GM* P, 1).

This narrative has been performed in order to re-create the explosion of which Nietzsche speaks. We have, essentially, told a story that has made Nietzsche explode for us. With Nietzschean dynamite as our "final destination," we too have been led home. But if we become too cozy by the hearth of the suggestive words we have used—liberation, localization, home—we will miss the way in which this narrative is already recoiling against these words, even mocking them.⁴¹ The depth and multiplicity of the supposed home at which we have arrived in Nietzsche's physiology undermines the very notion of home in its stability. A genealogical narrative in the Nietzschean spirit cannot look away while words recoil in order to believe in some culminating event for philosophy. Indeed, the event, for genealogical practice, is never a culminating

⁴¹ I am using one of Charles Scott's notions of recoil here. In his description of "recoil as falling back under the impact of a force," Scott describes how Nietzsche's genealogies cause his leading ideas to fall back from their initially authoritative force. A recoil of this type happens in this story about Nietzsche, in that the very method of carefully developing a narrative explaining and localizing Nietzschean dynamite exposes this explanation and localization to a new kind of suspicion. In other words, the very act of developing a narrative, while illuminating Nietzsche's meaning, still spins us further into the problem of dispersal. Charles Scott. *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990.

Aufhebung, but is instead another location for suspicion and descent.⁴² In understanding Nietzsche's body as the site of a philosophical event, we have gained a certain amount of clarity about Nietzsche as dynamite, but this clarity only leads us into further suspicion. Our narrative begins to recoil on itself because of the elusive nature of the event that it has located. Furthermore, we might be led to suspicion concerning the claim that a physical localization in Nietzsche's person merges with philosophy's return to human affairs, since Nietzsche's physical body kept a decided distance from human affairs, opting instead to write this physical event "6,000 feet beyond man and time." Therefore, suspicion will be our guide as we proceed to a deeper inquiry concerning this localized physical event.

PART II: THE LOCUS

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari attribute to Nietzsche's thinking a character of localization different from and yet related to the understanding of locality that we have begun to describe in the preceding chapter. According to Deleuze and Guattari, Nietzsche's practice of determining the national characteristics of the various countries' philosophies founded "geophilosophy." Geography, they explain, opposes a conception of a history unfolding from an origin, wresting it from its own necessity and insisting upon the irreducibility of contingency.⁴³ To understand thinking as a localized event, tied to the earth, is to radically undermine the notion of a concept that unfolds according to its

⁴² Now I am using descent in the sense described by Krell, not to be confused with Socratic descent. Krell uses the term descensional to describe the tragic nature of Nietzsche's thought, "to the effect that in tragedy the one who promotes a certain value or takes a particular stand is destroyed by that very value or stand. This in fact is precisely what I have meant in using the term descensional reflection in order to describe the fundamental directionality of genealogical critique, which marks the downgoing of both critique and critic" (40-41). Later in the text, Krell also uses the word to denote the earthbound quality, which he contrasts with the ascensional quality of Hegelian thought (78). These two senses of the word do not compete, but work together to describe the constantly critical mode of genealogy. David Farrell Krell. *Infectious Nietzsche*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

own logic, for here the concept in its purity is exposed to the influence of a people's climate, diet, language, and daily rituals. It is forced to mingle with the material of the soil. We have determined that philosophical thinking takes on a localization in Nietzsche's body, and this localization coincides with a new sense of political spatiality for philosophy—such that philosophy takes on the status of a hammer. Biography marks a more determinate localization than geography, but it carries with it the same resistance to the history of the idea. “Biophilosophy” would be the exposure of thinking to the contingencies of geography twice over, insofar as it would mean the manifestation of a certain place's nuances within an individually nuanced body.

Localization, then, is the operation by which history dissolves into genealogy;⁴⁴ that is to say, in localization, the illusion of the delocalized idea's purely necessary historical unfolding explodes into the multiplicity and contingency of genealogy. This multiple and contingent character of genealogy is described by Foucault:

Genealogy does not pretend to go back in time to restore an unbroken continuity that operates beyond the dispersion of forgotten things; its duty is not to demonstrate that the past actively exists in the present, that it continues secretly to animate the present, having imposed a predetermined form to all its vicissitudes. Genealogy does not resemble the evolution of a species and does not map the destiny of a people. On the contrary, to follow the complex course of descent is to maintain passing events in their proper dispersion; it is to identify the accidents, the minute deviations—or conversely, the complete reversals—the errors, the false appraisals, and the faulty calculations that gave birth to those things that continue to exist and have value for us; it is to discover that truth or being do not lie at the root of what we know and what we are, but the exteriority of accidents.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Foucault is the one to make the distinction between genealogy, which Nietzsche sometimes refers to as 'wirkliche Historie,' and traditional history the most rigorously. “From these observations, we can grasp the particular traits of historical meaning as Nietzsche understood it—the sense which opposes 'wirkliche Historie' to traditional history. The former transposes the relationship ordinarily established between the eruption of an event and necessary continuity. An entire historical tradition (theological or rationalistic) aims at dissolving the singular event into an ideal continuity—as a teleological movement or a natural process. 'Effective' history, however, deals with events in terms of their most unique characteristics, their most acute manifestations. . . The forces operating in history are not controlled by destiny or regulative mechanisms, but respond to haphazard conflicts” (154). Michel Foucault. “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History.” *Language, Counter-memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews by Michel Foucault*, ed. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

Genealogy would then be a non-unified gathering of dispersed events and accidents; it would occur as a remembering of these accidents in the body and a metamorphosis of this bodily remembering into written words.⁴⁶ This bodily memory is genealogy's auto-inauguration; it occurs as an event that breaks what appears in metaphysical discourses as the unity of the concept. If localization occurs as history's dispersal into genealogical contingency, likewise, the operation of genealogy at the locus is always revealing the contingency of that very locus; the body is a grounding term in a limited way, but it is not a foundational one. In other words, Nietzschean genealogy opens the body beyond the scope of a material mechanism operating under the force of a single mechanistic logic.⁴⁷ A localized philosophy thus thinks in the contingency produced by the body's pressure on history and history's pressure on the body.

This brings bodily localization, contingency, and genealogy together as terms that describe the way that forces meet as a self-referential event. Genealogy is enacted as the localization in a unique body of instincts as the contingency of that meeting, and localization takes place as the very setting into motion of the genealogical remembrance of contingent forces. We have, therefore, moved closer to understanding in what way Nietzsche's thought has the character of action and event; we have developed this understanding in a genealogico-historical fashion by discussing how Nietzsche's thought moves into a space distinct from philosophical thinking of various ages before him. We are, however, still far from understanding two important related issues:

⁴⁶ I am using 'metamorphosis' in the sense articulated by Sarah Kofman in *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. Duncan Large. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.

⁴⁷ Foucault describes how a knowledge of history breaks unities, including the body: "We believe, in any event, that the body obeys the exclusive laws of physiology and that it escapes the influence of history, but this too is false. The body is molded by a great many distinct regimes; it is broken down by the rhythms of work, rest, and holidays; it is poisoned by food or values, through eating habits or moral laws; it constructs resistances" ("Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," 153).

1) We suggested previously that Nietzsche's genealogical thinking moves philosophy back into the realm of human affairs because its tracing of the origins⁴⁸ of the prevailing ethos is immediately a destabilization of that ethos, since genealogy's exposure of forgotten origins causes the ethos to lose its claim to authority. While asceticism might persist in myriad ways and even continue to assert the authority that has been pulled away from it, genealogy nonetheless exposes asceticism as lacking the transcendental ground that such an ethos assumes wherever it establishes itself. Such an exposure opens possibilities for a future ethos. Yet we have not adequately considered the political character of this space that gives philosophy a new ability to act by attending to what these new possibilities mean concretely. What does such a destabilization mean socially and politically, and in what ways are the destruction of the foundation of an ethos in thought translated into the collapse of that ethos in the polis? How, exactly, does genealogy's enactment insert Nietzsche into the realm of human affairs?

2) We also suggested previously that the bodily localization that marks the event of Nietzsche's thought is truly still a collection of texts. Our only access to Nietzsche's body is Nietzsche's writing of his own body, which we have described as a physiological event dispersed in writing. This means that it is dispersed even as it is localized. This dispersal is more than a mere scattering though. It also marks a gap with no bridge, a removal from the very event that is written. For in being written, the event pointed to becomes something other. Jacques Derrida observes that the "borderline between the 'work' and the 'life'" is crucial for thinking about the biographies of philosophers.

⁴⁸ Foucault notes that by the time of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche's search for origins has become a search for *Herkunft* rather than *Ursprung*—of origin in the sense of stock or descent rather than origin as the absolute source or beginning. In inquiring after *Herkunft* instead of *Ursprung*, genealogy discovers multiple events of a chaotic and accidental nature in the lineage of concepts and values, as the quotation above suggests. *Ibid.*, 141.

Derrida claims that this borderline “traverses two ‘bodies,’ the corpus and the body.”⁴⁹ We can think of Nietzsche’s work happening at this borderline, as a play between these two bodies. But what does this “between” mean for philosophy as an event? What does the removal from the physical location of the event and its transposition into written space mean for the localized and active character of Nietzsche’s thinking?

These two questions must be asked together because the first is a question of the political content of Nietzsche’s thought, while the second demands a more precise elucidation of the space in which that thought occurs and asks what bearing the challenge of finding an exact location, even after the locus has been named, might have on the content of thought. We have seen that the character of philosophical thinking—its creativity or cloaked compliance—is indeed an issue of the space in which it can be said to occur. Although the locus of Nietzsche’s thinking remains in question, we will begin with the locus that has been identified (though not isolated) as a way into our question; we will begin with the body of the thinker himself, fully accepting the complications involved in speaking of this locus so straightforwardly.

A hypothesis has already been put forth concerning the political meaning of Nietzsche’s localized thinking in saying that the meeting of forces that constitutes Nietzsche’s thought amounts to the philosophical liberation of the body and a physiological liberation of philosophy. This formula emerged in watching philosophy from a distance, as it were, meaning that we only glimpsed this political meaning in following the practice of philosophical thinking over a genealogico-historical plane concerned with identifying philosophy’s various (dis)locations within larger structures

⁴⁹ Jacques Derrida. “Otobiographies: The Teaching of Nietzsche and the Politics of the Proper Name.” *The Ear of the Other*, ed. Ronell and Kamuf. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1988. (5-6).

and events. Moving to Nietzsche's body as location is the shift of perspective now needed for a more rigorous explanation of such a formula. This shift in perspective will be an attempt to understand the action of Nietzsche's thought on Nietzschean terms.

Chapter Two: Circles

A thinker is now that being in whom the impulse for truth and those life-preserving errors clash for their first fight, after the impulse for truth has proved also to be a life-preserving power. Compared to the significance of this fight, everything else is a matter of indifference: the ultimate question about the conditions of life has been posed here, and we confront the first attempt to answer this question by experiment. To what extent can truth endure incorporation? That is the question; that is the experiment (*GS* 110).

* * *

Derrida and Kofman, among others, have correctly pointed out that Heidegger's attempt to make a sharp distinction between Nietzsche's thought and his biography is misguided.⁵⁰ *Ecce Homo* and the autobiographical prefaces to his various works frame philosophical work within Nietzsche's own life in its multiplicity, thus disturbing the assumed clear distinction between the two. These autobiographical pieces are indispensable to thinking Nietzsche's work as a whole, but not merely, as Heidegger suggests, because they bear the destiny of the West and of Being. In fact, it is not at all clear what Heidegger could possibly mean when he suggests that *Ecce Homo* is a matter of the destiny of the West. Nietzsche speaks quite explicitly of his diet, his family, his

⁵⁰ Heidegger writes: "What we must do is to grasp the forward thrust and the uniqueness, what is decisive and ultimate, behind this ambiguity. The precondition for this is that we look away from the 'man' and also from the 'work' insofar as it is viewed as the expression of his humanity, that is, in the light of the man. For even the work as work closes itself off to us as long as we squint somehow after the 'life' of the man who created the work instead of asking about Being and the world, which first ground the work. Neither the person of Nietzsche nor even his work concern us when we make both in their connection the object of a historiological and psychological report" (*Nietzsche III*, 4). While Heidegger is correct to suggest that we cannot simply squint after the life of Nietzsche and reduce his work to a biographical or psychological report, his implication that the only other option is to ask about Being and the world seems unfair as well. Nietzsche's inclusion of his own life and body within his work demand that we conceive new ways of reading that do justice to the ways that body, life, and thought come together for Nietzsche. The Derrida and Kofman texts to which I refer are Kofman's "Explosion I: Of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*" and Derrida's "Interpreting Signatures (Nietzsche/Heidegger): Two Questions." Daniel Breazeale also argues that we must care about Nietzsche's life and the meaning (as opposed to the cause) of his madness because he himself insisted on the connection between the philosopher and his life (Daniel Breazeale. "Ecce Psycho: Remarks on the Case of Nietzsche." *International Studies in Philosophy* 25(2), 1993, 19-33.

valetudinary states, and the relation of those states to his writing in *Ecce Homo*. If all this is, indeed, a matter of the destiny of the West, then serious interpretation would be necessary to show why. However, Heidegger simply makes the claim and moves on to a discussion of Nietzsche's "single thought." It becomes clear at that point that Heidegger is not interested in putting forth a new reading of *Ecce Homo*, but rather in dismissing the fragmenting force of such a text in order to move on to a reading that concerns itself with Nietzsche's thought in the context of the history of metaphysics. One might wonder whether giving into the fragmenting pull of *Ecce Homo* would sidetrack Heidegger's unified reading of Nietzsche beyond recognition.⁵¹

Nietzsche's turn toward "himself" is not a mere explanation to be read alongside his "real" texts as an interpretive guide, and is certainly not an element of his writings that we can quickly dismiss, but is rather an integral part of the self-overcoming in Nietzsche's thought. There are three major ways in which this is true: 1) The telling of himself is a completion of philosophy's movement into the new space carved for it in the asking of that new philosophical question identified by Deleuze: Which one? By putting the question of which one to himself, Nietzsche's genealogical project reveals the absence of its own ground. This is because the location from which a genealogy is delivered is not a stable point, but is itself a perspective to which genealogy must circle back and inquire into the lineage from which it is uttered. Nietzsche's autobiographical work accomplishes the localization of philosophical thinking by making the place where

⁵¹ Plenty of commentators have already wondered this in print, though not necessarily in regard to this particular question about *Ecce Homo*. Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, for instance, suggests that Nietzsche represents for Heidegger the menace of madness in "Obliteration." (*The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise. Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993). Krell defends Heidegger from Lacoue-Labarthe's caricature of him, but does so in a way that also defends Nietzsche from a Heideggerian reading when he asks whether it is possible that the fragmentary nature of the later Heidegger could be the result of a "contamination" by an infectious Nietzsche (Krell, 145).

thinking happens a philosophical issue. Thus, in speaking of himself, Nietzsche also speaks locality into philosophy. Having moved away from the delocalized space in which an effacement of place makes objectivity possible, philosophy is now bound to the contingency of its location.

2) In binding philosophy to the contingency of its location and in subjecting this location to the question of its descent, Nietzsche's autobiographical texts also break up the steady rational subjectivity that has for so long belonged to the philosopher. Sarah Kofman explains that Nietzsche's autobiographical story does not so much tell the story of a subject as constitute that subject; in other words, the "I" comes together in the story. But this self-composition exposes its own operation, such that self-composition is also the deconstruction of a stable self:

Saying *who* he is means showing how he has become who he is, in other words how he has attained not his most profound self, but the one which was situated way above "him," at "his" highest point; now if he is so afraid of being taken for someone else, it is because he "himself" took himself for "others" at first, went via many "others."⁵²

The self becomes what it is by going through others. The question of descent exposes the subject to a becoming in which it is other to itself, and in this story of a becoming, the subject is fragmented. The permanency of the subject is a philosophical contribution to the ethos of the age, and its unraveling is an important part of the overcoming movement in Nietzsche's thought.

3) The final way that autobiography serves as an important force for the self-overcoming in Nietzsche's thought is by performing methodologically the claims that the body is a great intelligence (Z 34) and that this intelligence must be recovered from the subordinate status to which metaphysics relegates it. In *On the Genealogy of Morals*,

⁵² "Explosion I," 57.

Nietzsche's project, in a self-overcoming movement, takes aim against the self-cruelty of the ascetic ideal in its prejudice against the changing, ephemeral, and physical. The most shocking thing about ascetic forms of life is that they mean "life against life," that life has turned against itself (*GM* III.13). What exactly is meant by life? Nietzsche's meaning becomes clear when we look to what has been turned against, to what has taken the brunt of ascetic cruelty:

For an ascetic life is a self-contradiction: here rules a *ressentiment* without equal, that of an insatiable instinct and power-will that wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful, and basic conditions; here an attempt is made to employ force to block up the wells of force; here physiological well-being itself is viewed askance, and especially the outward expression of this well-being, beauty, and joy; while pleasure is felt and *sought* in ill-constitutedness, decay, pain, mischance, ugliness, voluntary deprivation, self-mortification, self-sacrifice (*GM* III.11).

Both *physiological* well-being and its manifestation become the victims of this strange and self-contradictory drive of life. Physiological well-being manifests itself as the beauty and joy of a living body. In asceticism, the beauty and joy of the body are met with suspicion and overtaken by the drive to self-cruelty, which is taken out explicitly on the body in the form of physical pain. But this pain is felt as pleasure. This means that a competing drive within the body wants the body's pain; it is no surprise, then, that Nietzsche associates asceticism with a madness of the will (*GM* II.22).

The contradiction of life turning against itself illustrates the complexity of what is meant by life. Life is, on the one hand, the play of forces that constitutes the living body. Nietzsche says that life "is a will to the accumulation of force" and "a special case of the will to power" (*WP* 689, 692). The will to power interprets variations in force, and in doing so, it commands and orders forces (*WP* 643, 668).⁵³ Life, as a special case of the

⁵³ Deleuze's elaborations on Nietzsche's posthumously published fragments regarding the will to power are helpful. "Now, difference in quantity, understood in this way, necessarily reflects a differential element of related forces—which is also the genetic element of the qualities of these forces. This is what will to power

will to power, is the principle of forces that interact at the level of an organic being, and as a case of will to power, life is the will to accumulate that being's force. However, in the case of asceticism, it would seem that forces have become mobilized so as to debilitate the body and crush its drives. Nietzsche has called asceticism "*life against life*," which indicates that a principle of the body's accumulating force is at work in its own undoing. Yet if this principle can be said to be *opposed* to life, then it does not act in a way that can properly be called life. If asceticism is an illness, then clearly the second "life" in the formula is life in the more proper sense. It is as if a principle of force foreign to the body has taken hold of its physiology, becoming its physiology and its life while remaining markedly other to the life that has fallen silent within the body.

This foreign principle of force takes hold in the manner of autoimmunity, in that it is the will of a consciousness that has become too strong in a way that jeopardizes the body's health. Consciousness, according to Nietzsche, is an organ of the body, albeit its "weakest and most fallible" one, and when the human being finds himself in certain social conditions, consciousness breaks with its service to the body's will to power and creates a rival principle within that body (*GM* II.16). This rival principle, however, remains a physiological expression of will to power, for it is a physiological expression that wants to become master. For this reason, it can be called "life." Yet it wants to become master over the physiological forces that maintain and accumulate the strength of the body whose principle it has now become. Thus, the task of Nietzschean thinking is the overcoming of the principle of dominating consciousness and the reversal of the

is; the genealogical element of force, both differential and genetic. *The will to power is the element from which derive both the quantitative difference of related forces and the quality that devolves into each force in this relation.* The will to power here reveals its nature as the principle of the synthesis of forces (*Nietzsche and Philosophy*, 50).

priority given to the body's various forces. This would mean the liberation of life from the madness of will currently ruling in the body and subjecting the body to suffer under a dominating consciousness.

Although this task is a project for thinking, the thinking that accomplishes it cannot be understood in any conventional sense. It was shown earlier that a thinking that would overcome asceticism would have to be an enactment of life toward its own value and not an abstraction of a consciousness. Indeed, this is the only way that thinking can achieve its own space at the heart of human affairs rather than remain in the delocalized space of a philosophy that supports the ethos of the age. Now we see that this physiological enactment is necessary to the overcoming of asceticism for another reason: The problem of asceticism is a physiological problem and a response to it has to be physiological. In other words, because a monstrous⁵⁴ principle has taken over a physiology and has thwarted and enervated its stronger instincts, it is the dispossessed instincts alone who can overcome the ascetic ideal. Such an overcoming, then, requires a body. This is the third way in which Nietzsche's autobiographical texts are crucial to the overall project of his thought; in bringing himself into his thought, Nietzsche's body is the physiological site where the instincts make themselves heard in an act of rebellion and assertion. This rebellion constitutes the active content of his thinking.

There are numerous challenges and complications facing a thinking that would propose a liberation of the life suppressed beneath the weight of the ascetic ideal. Many of these complications concern the difficulty of understanding the body's silent instincts, or impulses, intelligibly, since such an understanding requires a conversion of form. A

⁵⁴ I use the word monstrous here to highlight the way in which a physiology turns against itself. The principle that has dispossessed the instincts at once belongs to a being in its physicality while at the same time exceeding and tyrannizing the being. Again, this is what Nietzsche means by "life against life."

passage in Nietzsche's unpublished fragments will help to begin our exploration of these problems:

Our intellect (*Intellekt*) is completely incapable of grasping the diversity of an intelligent (*klugen*) synthetic interaction, not to mention producing one, like the digestive process. It is the synthetic interaction of *several intellects*! Wherever I find life, I find this synthetic interaction! And there is also a sovereign in these numerous intellects! – But as soon as we seek to comprehend organic actions that would be executed with the assistance of several intellects, they become completely incomprehensible. We should rather conceive of the intellect itself as a final consequence of the organic (KSA 10, 12[37]).⁵⁵

Here Nietzsche provides a more thorough account of the kind of problem with which we were dealing in the case of Socratic decadence. This passage, on the one hand, helps to support and illustrate the account we have put forth of asceticism as a problem to be overcome physiologically. Consciousness, or the conscious intellect,⁵⁶ does not merely oppose itself to a “body” by existing over against it. The problem of Socrates is the problem of a consciousness that has become too strong and has established its own principle within the body in opposition to the physiology that has nourished and given rise to it. On the other hand, the extreme difficulties involved in a liberating principle for the body begin to present themselves in this passage. The body's intelligence can in no way be grasped by the conscious intellect, which itself grows out of the intelligent synthetic interaction, almost as an afterthought of that interaction. In this passage, we see a move toward the liberation of the body, in that Nietzsche is giving voice to what our

⁵⁵ I am using the English translation of this fragment that appears in Klossowski's *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*.

⁵⁶ Although Nietzsche only uses variations of *Intellekt* in this fragment, the distinction between the interaction of several intellects, including the digestive process, and the intellect that is merely a final *consequence* of the organic is clearly a distinction between the intelligence that remains beneath consciousness and the intelligence which 1) is present to us consciously and 2) which is itself the very enactment of consciousness as a linguistic occurrence. This second kind of intelligence is only the smallest and most inferior fragment left over from those subterranean syntheses of life (GS 354). Furthermore, a number of fragments preceding this one (12[37]) use *Bewußtsein*, indicating that Nietzsche is thinking about the problem of consciousness in this section of his journals. One in particular illustrates the link well: “But all conscious practice itself is not what man believes it is. Most movements in practice are attempts, and the intellect approves them to succeed, but it does not produce them” (KSA 10, 12[28]). From this we can gather that the word intellect, while used sometimes to refer to the interactions of which we cannot become conscious, refers here to the linguistic and conscious manifestations of organic life.

intellect cannot know. But the very expression of this necessary ignorance suggests that possibilities for liberation become exhausted by the intelligibility of the discourse into which the intelligent impulses are translated. Therefore, having explained why the nature of Nietzsche's thought makes his body as it is described in his autobiographical writings an appropriate and indispensable site for understanding his work, we may now turn to this site and attend to the semiotic challenges that have begun to emerge.

In *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, Pierre Klossowski develops a reading of Nietzsche's work rooted in the flux of Nietzsche's physiology:

It may seem absurd to read Nietzsche's successive texts as so many 'migraines' inverted in words. Given the way Nietzsche was compelled to describe the various phases of his conscious states, however, he was unable to avoid the mechanism of such an inversion.⁵⁷

The description of such conscious states is itself the inversion, for Nietzsche's effort of liberation is the effort of giving voice to the body in its intelligence. Klossowski identifies two senses of the word 'body' in Nietzsche's work. The first sense of body is what we might loosely call the 'real' body; that is, the body that exists only insofar as consciousness, that foreign principle, brings the physiology of the being it overtakes into a unity subordinate to consciousness's leadership:

The cerebral activity, thanks to which the human body adopts the upright position, winds up reducing the body's presence to an automatism. The body as body is no longer synonymous with itself; strictly speaking, as an *instrument* of consciousness, it becomes the homonym of the 'person.'⁵⁸

The body as the instrument of consciousness is the body that walks when I tell it to walk, that controls itself in social situations because I will it thus. But in the second sense of body, Nietzsche tells a story of the life whose space has been usurped by the domination of the intellect. According to Klossowski, this is the body that matters to Nietzsche:

⁵⁷ Klossowski, 16.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 27.

From this point on, Nietzsche would no longer be concerned with the body as a *property of the self*, but with the body as the locus of impulses, the locus of their confrontation. Since it is a product of the impulses, the body becomes *fortuitous*; it is neither irreversible nor reversible, because its history is that of the impulses.⁵⁹

For Klossowski, Nietzsche's description of his own states of shifting health offers the signs of the confrontation taking place in the locus of Nietzsche's body and giving shape to the content of his thought.

In his account of the valetudinary states, Klossowski observes that Nietzsche's illness "periodically struck [him] in the cerebral organ,"⁶⁰ and he uses the location of Nietzsche's pain to develop a semiotics based on a tension between the controlling intellect and the impulses trying to break from its grip. The pain suffered by the cerebral organ indicates the following conflict of impulses:

The agonizing migraines, which Nietzsche experienced periodically as *an aggression that suspended his thought*, were not an external aggression; the root of the evil was in himself, in his own organism: his own physical self was *attacking* in order to *defend* itself against a dissolution. But *what* was being threatened with dissolution? Nietzsche's own brain. Whenever his migraines subsided, Nietzsche would put his state of respite in the service of this dissolution. For the dissolution was judged to be such only by the brain, for whom the physical self and the moral self apparently coincide.⁶¹

Nietzsche no doubt assumes the posture of a conscious subject, like the rest of the Modern world. In addition to this, though, he has inherited the critical examining eye of the philosopher, which means that this philosopher in whom the impulses seek to overthrow the subject is, in a certain sense, the most recalcitrant to the upheaval. This recalcitrance is perhaps at its most extreme points when Nietzsche is working in the

⁵⁹ Ibid., 30. Klossowski's translator Daniel W. Smith discusses the word "impulse" in his preface to *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*. Since I will use Klossowski's language of impulses throughout the chapter, I will quote Smith's important comment in full: "*Impulsion* has been rendered throughout as 'impulse,' and its cognate *impulsionnel* as 'impulsive.' The term is related to the French *pulsion*, which translates the Freudian term *Triebe* ('drive'), but which Klossowski uses only in rare instances. Nietzsche himself had recourse to a varied vocabulary to describe what Klossowski summarizes in the term 'impulse': 'drive' (*Triebe*), 'desire' (*Begierden*), 'instinct' (*Instinkte*), 'power' (*Mächte*), 'force' (*Kräfte*), 'impulse' (*Reize, Impulse*), 'passion' (*Leidenschaften*), 'feeling' (*Gefühlen*), 'affect' (*Affekte*), 'pathos' (*Pathos*), and so on. The essential point for Klossowski is that these terms refer to *intensive* states of the soul that are in constant fluctuation (x).

⁶⁰ Klossowski, 22.

⁶¹ Ibid., 24.

service of the upheaval because Nietzsche's labor on behalf of the impulses is the effort of translating what refuses to be intelligible into the language instituted by the principle that silences those impulses in the first place. He insists that "those who know that they are profound strive for clarity" (*GS* 173), and in so striving, Nietzsche employs the intellect in the service of its own disruption and destabilization. This clarifying translation is a physical process whereby the impulses create an experience in the body making themselves available to language, though this linguistically available form is, precisely, a translation. As with any translation, an insurmountable difference remains between impulsive life and its linguistic articulation.⁶²

The intellectual component of this dismantling is necessary if the dismantling is ever to be anything more than one man's limit experience. For Nietzsche, as we have seen, the overcoming of the ascetic ideal and the creation of values for the future is a project that concerns an entire age. If this overcoming and resultant creation are to mean anything for human affairs, they must be translated into the language of human intelligibility, even though this translation is a violation of the very nature of the impulses

⁶² The danger here is to theologize the body, making it the seat of some "original event" or "Ding an sich" of which linguistic articulation is a mere copy. Indeed, it is difficult not to think this way as long as we speak of Nietzsche's thought as a "liberation" of the body whose impulses have been dominated in an unhealthy way by consciousness. Yet a discourse about the body as the locus of thinking in which bodily impulses configure themselves in various ways is as dynamic as the body it describes, and if we continue to keep the emphasis on the play of different forces, privileged modes of bodily signification become deconstructed even as they begin to establish their privilege. The case of translation is an example of the dynamic deconstructive potential of this discourse. If, instead of thinking of the intelligible articulation of the impulses as the less real copy of something ultimately beyond our grasp, we remember that even consciousness is a configuration of forces, then the conscious articulation of the body is precisely a way in which the body's forces twist and shape themselves into a certain configuration. Yet even as this deconstructs the privilege of the body's forces over consciousness's translation, we might still worry that the forces that remain excessive to intelligibility are in some way an example of the Kantian phase of "How the True World Became a Fable," in which the true world is unattainable (*TI*, TWF). It might even be the case that Nietzsche does not consider adequately enough the way in which his account of an unknowable body might play into this problem, but he does give us adequate resources to think through the problem in his emphasis on metaphor and interpretation—thoughts that divest Nietzsche of any investment in force being something real and instead make his description of force an interpretation of life that wills life's vitality. The difficulty we have had here and will continue to have should remind us of Derrida's insight that metaphysics cannot be done away with, only interrupted.

struggling to reinstate their own principle of life. Surely the impulses have triumphed in other cases before, but their gain has been lost in the rambling madness accompanying a success too quickly won. The impulses need the endurance of the intelligibility that suppresses them. They cannot do without this intelligibility if their gains are to be projected into the future as a new principle for life, yet a submission to this intelligibility means that their form must be manipulated and changed.

As the passage above shows, this is the most strenuous route for the impulses, for it both wreaks havoc on the unified body (by undermining the subject who unifies it) and subjects the physical body to the pain unleashed by the brain's revenge, as the representative organ of the subject.⁶³ This liberation of the impulses is the very image of monstrosity and self-cruelty. The sequence of events occurs as constant struggle. Nietzsche, as a philosopher, is embodied in such a way that he takes the posture of a unified subject; this is necessary for lucid thought. His body is decidedly the body that is unified by the intellect, yet he finds within himself the traces of a more infinitely complex sense of body in the impulses that make themselves known in impulsive appearances that Klossowski calls phantasms.⁶⁴ Klossowski claims that the phantasm becomes reorganized under the authority of the subject by being translated into the subject's code of signs. The impulses are themselves unique signs, but consciousness abbreviates them, thus assimilating the impulses to the everyday code of signs that constitutes language and agency:

If they feel the effects of each other's constraint and gesticulate as a consequence, the *system of 'signs' abbreviates* the gestures of the impulsive constraint, and lead it back to the coherent *unity*

⁶³ The body that suffers the pain of this conflict seems to correspond to neither of the two senses of body described by Klossowski. We will return to this sense of body later.

⁶⁴ Klossowski, 47.

(of the agent), which forms the (grammatical) 'subject' in a series of propositions and declarations about everything that happens to it, whether from without or from within.⁶⁵

Klossowski says that "for consciousness, these *abbreviations of signs* (words) are in effect the *sole* vestiges of its continuity;"⁶⁶ therefore, "life in the upright position" depends upon the distortion of the silent life of the impulses. But in the "fortuitous case"⁶⁷ of Nietzsche, the impulses *make themselves felt* in a manner that becomes accessible to conscious thought.

Let us therefore elaborate upon Klossowski's idea of abbreviation in order to articulate a logic of Nietzsche's intelligible disruption of intelligibility. In this fortuitous case, the impulses occur as a physiological excitation, but they cannot remain at the level of mere excitation. Consciousness becomes aware of them, and this awareness is only possible through the abbreviation of signs that puts them under the control of the subject. In other words, the awareness of consciousness occurs as the becoming-abbreviated of signs. Yet in this particular case of abbreviation, the subject's control is incomplete because, whereas the abbreviating action normally leaves consciousness unaware of the sovereignty of the impulses, in this case, the impulses are thought intelligibly as forces independent of the subject. This awareness of the independence of the impulses suggests that the conscious subject has not, in the abbreviating action by which it constitutes itself, fully enacted a repression of the impulsive life from which it makes itself different. This is the fortuitous case, the point of rupture initiated by a curious kind of memory.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 49.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 48.

⁶⁷ Klossowski uses this term primarily in regard to the revelation of the eternal return, to refer to the point in the eternal return's vicious circle at which the circle is remembered consciously. However, a unique revelation must also take place in order for the suppressed impulses to gain conscious attention and draw the unifying subject into question; thus "fortuitous case" seems appropriate and not at all unrelated to the revelation of the eternal return, which also shatters the subject's identity. The fortuitous case is always the point at which a forgotten multiplicity is remembered.

Nietzsche as a conscious, thinking subject remembers a life deeper than this life of “the upright position.” From the intensity of impulses that refuse to be fully assimilated, he is faced as a conscious subject with a memory that could be “his” undoing. The memory of a life deeper than subjectivity is at once the memory of the repression of this life. This is a memorial awareness that life in the upright position is a result of a “*reversal* brought about by the organism: *the most fragile organ it has developed* comes to dominate the body, one might say, *because of its very fragility.*”⁶⁸ In the translating event that brings this memory to the light of the conscious subject, the impulses leave a trace that initially shakes the stability of an otherwise intact subjectivity. In effecting this instability, impulsive life redirects this subjectivity *against itself*. Indeed, consciousness still bends and abbreviates the impulses, bringing them into the territory of the code of signs that constitutes the intellect, but the intellect has taken a new direction. Now its articulations are spoken *on behalf of* the intelligence of which its code of signs is the trace, for as Klossowski says, Nietzsche (and this is certainly Nietzsche as the willing agent) employs every bit of respite from his migraines in the service of the dissolution of this very agency.

What a monstrous reversal! Yet here we see the clearest illustration of self-overcoming as the very law of life (*GM III.27*). The impulses have been overtaken by the weakest organ, making the human creature weaker and more decadent, but also infinitely more interesting. Now, however, impulsive resistance to this weakened form of life occurs in and through this very form of life. This impulsive resistance is in no way straightforward, precisely because the subject—this complex and interesting form of life—is involved in its own overcoming. The impulses cannot return to a state preceding

⁶⁸ Klossowski., 27.

the formation of agency and subjectivity; that form of life has been left behind. Even Nietzsche's dissolution into madness—the most extreme state of impulsive takeover—will not bring life as a whole into a state of pre-agency. Instead, Nietzsche will come to be judged by the intellect as a case of the demise and dissolution on the other side of agency. Even an account as radical and open to the impulses as Klossowski's ultimately ends up intelligible, abbreviating life's multiplicity into the code of everyday signs in order to gain the power of coherence. As Klossowski writes, for Nietzsche, "*intellectual constraint, and not freedom, is the true creative law of nature. The intellect is a constraining and selective impulse—because of its very illusions.*"⁶⁹

We should pause before this monstrous self-overcoming in order to be clear about the way that it occurs. The language of various parties (subject, agent, intellect, consciousness, impulses) engaged in an insurrection that follows a logic of self-overcoming is being used within the context of Nietzsche's physiology. As we have seen, Nietzsche conceives of consciousness in wholly organic terms,⁷⁰ and Klossowski follows this insight through his selective quoting of Nietzsche and through his emphasis on the semiotic character of agency.⁷¹ Therefore, if these words begin to sound rigid, as if an intellect over against physicality is suppressing a physicality that battles against it, we need to circle back and recall our physiological context. To say that the intellect is, at bottom, an organic occurrence is already to deconstruct the opposition between intellect

⁶⁹ Ibid., 254.

⁷⁰ In *KSA* 10, 12[37]. See also *GS* 11, *WP* 676, 707

⁷¹ "For consciousness, these *abbreviations of signs* (words) are in effect the *sole* vestiges of its continuity, that is to say, they are invented in a sphere where the 'true' and the 'false' necessitate the erroneous representation that something can *endure* or remain *identical* (and thus, that there can be an *agreement* between the *invented signs* and what they are supposed to designate). Moreover, this is why the impulses themselves must now signify a coherent 'unity', and their similarity or dissimilarity can be assessed only in relation to a *primary unity*. This unity will henceforth be the *soul* of the agent or its *conscience*, or its *intellect*" (Klossowski 48). The first sentence deconstructs this unity even as it sets it up.

and body. And to deconstruct the opposition is not to say that there is no opposition. It is rather to say that both body and intellect are expressions of the organic—they are both configurations of the will to power in an organism. The opposition may therefore be understood through various equations of the word life. Life turns against life; and then both the life turned against and the life turning against join together in an overcoming of the very form of life versus life. This very convoluted equation says simply that we are not dealing with opposing entities, but rather with life as will to power. Will to power may occur within a being as a conflict and becoming-other to itself, not in a dialectical sense, but in the sense of a struggle that creates forms arbitrarily in the quest to express ever more power.⁷² Therefore, it is essential that, when we speak of intellect and body, we understand these words in their deconstructed forms—as signs for the ways in which the will to power divides itself, resulting in a being with a certain kind of capacity as well as a certain kind of decadence.

The self overcoming within Nietzsche's physiology is not a regression back to a forgotten time. And yet, the remembering of the impulses and the overcoming of their subjection is a return. The return is not to the identical, but it is a return nonetheless—of an impulsive vitality of a life that has recognized its own suppression and possibility.⁷³

⁷² “What man wants, what every smallest part of a living organism wants, is an increase of power” (*WP* 702).

⁷³ It is worth noting that Judith Butler criticizes Foucault for making a move similar to the one I have been making here, namely maintaining a body (or impulsive life) that is somehow prior to and able to break through and resist cultural formation (in this case, the repressive form of intellectual life as it becomes privileged in the Christian world). Butler writes: “Occasionally in his analysis of Herculine, Foucault subscribes to a prediscursive multiplicity of bodily forces that break through the surface of the body to disrupt the regulating practices of cultural coherence imposed upon that body by a power regime, understood as a vicissitude of ‘history.’ If the presumption of some precategorical source of disruption is refused, is it still possible to give a genealogical account of the demarcation of the body as such a signifying practice?” (Judith Butler. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1999), pg. 166. Butler's criticism is important here because it reminds us that the returning impulses are “impure” in a double sense. First of all, they are shaped by being part of a body with a history. Second, they are shaped in the translating force of conscious life. The impulses in their

In returning from the silence imposed upon them by a structure composed of their own force, and in announcing the possibility of their re-dispersion, the impulses carry a memory of their own life as a repetition of dispersion and concentration. Thus, in bringing themselves to conscious articulation, the impulses allow the force of life to be thought under the sign of a circle. The movement of self-overcoming is circular; life becomes new only in returning. The circularity of the possibility of self-overcoming announced in and by Nietzsche's physiology reveals a continuity and even an isomorphism between the impulses of the living being and the thought of the eternal return.⁷⁴ Klossowski, looking to Nietzsche's early formulations of the weighty thought of the return, describes the thought this way:

The thought of the Eternal Return of the Same came to Nietzsche as an *abrupt awakening* in the midst of a *Stimmung*, a certain tonality of the soul. Initially confused with this *Stimmung*, it gradually emerged as a thought; nonetheless, it preserved the character of a revelation—as a *sudden unveiling*.⁷⁵

The thought of the return happens to Nietzsche as an obsessive event. It begins amorphously and inseparable from a certain state of the soul, as an intensity of the impulses, and only later separates into the lucidity of a thought. It happens, then, as an

returning motion are therefore not a return of the “real” body, but are instead the body's power to “re-turn,” to overflow, to initiate difference from the postures in which it lives, even if those differences are always shaped by the forces they resist.

⁷⁴ In rejecting the notion that the return of the impulses would be a return to the identical and then shifting into a discussion of the eternal return, I am clearly operating with a very particular understanding of the eternal return. Nietzsche certainly gives support for the idea that the eternal recurrence of the same does not mean the eternal recurrence of the identical. An example: “Were it [the world] eternally becoming new, then it would be posited as something in itself wonderful and a freely self-creating deity. Eternally becoming new presupposes: that force increases itself arbitrarily, that it has not only the intention, but the means also, to keep itself from repetition, from coming back in an old form, so that in every moment every movement controls for this avoidance – or the incompetence to come to the same situation: that would mean that the quantum of force is nothing firm and likewise the properties of force (KSA 9, II[292]). Krell comments on this passage in his chapter questioning whether eternal recurrence is, in fact, of the same (Krell, 176).

⁷⁵ Klossowski, 56.

event of the impulses: “‘life itself created this grave thought; life wants to overcome its supreme obstacle.’”⁷⁶

The supreme obstacle for life is the meaninglessness of the circular movement, and life, in making this circular movement, gives rise to a *Stimmung* in which an image of its movement comes to be thought. Thus the thought of the eternal return, which comes to Nietzsche as a challenge to will a life that would return and has returned an infinite number of times coincides with the thought of the body’s great intelligence. That is to say, the fortuitous case in which the forgotten impulses make their way to conscious articulation occurs in connection with the fortuitous case in which the forgotten infinity of life lived in a circle is remembered in the image of a circle. Once again, this circle is not about identity, but about a loss of identity, or more precisely, it expresses identity as nothing more than a circle of memory and oblivion that strings together punctuated occurrences of identity. In both instances, the circle is remembered at the edge of a precipitous slope of oblivion. To allow the intellect, in its moment of remembrance, to say yes to the impulses or to the madness of the circle itself, is to lose the moment of clarity and to be projected forth in forms not subject to the intellect’s control. As Klossowski puts it:

But to re-will oneself as a fortuitous moment is to renounce being oneself *once and for all*; for it is not ‘once and for all’ that I had renounced being myself and had to will this renunciation; and I am not even this fortuitous moment *once and for all* so long as I have to re-will this moment . . . *one more time!*⁷⁷

We have already begun to imagine what this willing renunciation means in the case of the intellect willing its own overcoming. Nietzsche comes to think of the body’s intelligence and its suppression by consciousness, but then thinks consciousness’s

⁷⁶ Ibid., 54.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 58.

creation and rise to domination as a product of the body's intelligence, that is, as a combat of the impulses in which new forms are created. The moment at which this movement thinks itself happens as yet another combative movement of the impulses, and an affirmation of this movement in the fortuitous moment would mean the dispersal of the unified intellect into moments that will act out another combat until the subject is created again, anew, and the fortuitous moment comes again. When the fortuitous moment returns, it returns in its difference, for, as Klossowski says, "re-willing has as its object a *multiple alterity* inscribed within an individual."⁷⁸ It returns only in willing the oblivion in which identity is erased by the combat of the multiplicity of forces held in submission by the intellect.

The language of willing has now entered this discourse quietly and subtly, but it is, in fact, crucial for understanding the circular motion of the impulses. When Nietzsche comes to articulate consciousness as the mere product of the body's intelligence, his entire being senses life as a circle. In other words, the life of the body grasps itself in its ability to create the intellect and then turn against that intellect, leaving a scattered multiplicity of forces to once again will their own power in the form of creating an intellect. A circle can only happen if that most resistant creation of life itself wills the circle by submitting to translating and representing that which it is in the habit of repressing. As long as the intellect maintains its power over the impulses, subverting their meaning in its code of everyday signs, there is only the tension of the subject's resistance to the body. This is life turned against itself, and only in a static half-circle that resists the motion of going around one more time. The fortuitous case, though, is the case of impulses strong enough to represent themselves through linguistic, intellectual

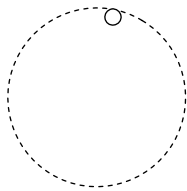
⁷⁸ Ibid., 69.

means. In representing themselves intellectually, the impulses go through the intellect, and they make a circle marked by a will to self-overcoming thought. In thinking the impulses, Nietzsche's physiology gains the periodic release of the intellect's unifying grip on life. He experiences the abyssal exhilaration that comes with thinking the meaninglessness of life as a chance expression of will to power. The fortuitous case experiments with the loss of meaning by willing an accumulation of strength that overcomes the stalemate of a subject filtering the impulses into its own gregarious language. But in order to actually articulate the organic, it must return from this impulsive Dionysian ecstasy, and it must come back as a finite, rather than eternal return. Return operates both as a sign for the finite physiology of the fortuitous case and as the thought-sign of eternal return that emerges as an excessive thought in the very play of this physiology.

The difference between finite and eternal return is a difference of the way in which punctuated moments of identity are remembered. The circular pattern of impulses that composes a thinking being must return to itself by being gathered with the other moments of identity that have occurred. This is a circle in which identity is lost to the abyss of thinking the impulses, but that returns to itself remembering previous instances of identity such that the being experiences itself as a continuity and unity. This circle is marked by its finitude—the number of configurations it can take are limited by its organic character, and the number of revolutions it gets is limited by its mortality. The character of memory in the fortuitous moment of the eternal return occurs only as a remembering of the circular character of life itself. The eternal return is marked by oblivion toward any particular identity. The fortuitous moment on the eternal circle

happens simply as the experience of the eternal return's possibility—as the thought of eternal return. The circle of self-overcoming thought thus opens onto another circle, the willing of which is fundamentally different from the willing of the circle opening the intellect to the demands of the impulses. As we have said, the loss of identity circles back to a re-membering of identity in the finite circle of self-overcoming thought, a re-membering which is also a remembering in the more conventional sense. Identity in the circle of thought is fragmented, but not renounced. Its moments are held together. This holding together allows the fortuitous case to think meaninglessness while retaining a meaningful comportment toward the world. To truly will the eternal circle would mean throwing oneself into the abyss, willing the oblivion of an eternal recurrence of a moment that could not recollect having been here before. A true submission to the eternal return would be the madness of an oblivion that would not return to itself as a moment of unity.⁷⁹

But the thought comes as precisely that—a thought—and this means that eternal return is a sign emerging in the context of an intellectual form of life. To live with the thought is to think it, not in a traditionally intellectualized way, but in the intellectualized form opened up by the transformative translation of the impulses into thought. This is a form of thinking that maintains a reflexive awareness of its volatile, semiotic, impulsive



⁷⁹

For the visual thinker, this diagram might offer a way of understanding the relation between the two circles—the dotted line indicating the element of possibility in the eternal return for the one facing the thought in a thinking marked by a circle returning a finite number of times.

character, even as it performs itself in a circle that allows the thinker to say “I.” To be overcome by the thought of eternal return would be to think no more. Fully willing the eternal return would be the overcoming of the intellectual form of life altogether, insofar as that form entails the maintenance of a thinking unity. The intellectual form of life would fall into the abyss, only to return as a forgotten moment, utterly disjointed and separated by an eternity from its other repetitions. The eternal return, then, can only be represented in a thought-sign; it cannot be experienced, for its happening would be the happening of oblivion for the thinker who says “I.” This abyssal oblivion is one meaning of the eternal return, but in order to think more completely what the thought means for life, we must consider another dimension of its meaning from the standpoint of the one faced with the thought.

How, then, would one approach this thought in a fortuitous moment? The thought, as we will see, demands both wholehearted affirmation and wholehearted destruction—it is a supremely divided and divisive thought. Deleuze’s conception of the eternal return as a double criterion for the selection of forces makes a helpful distinction for the dual notion of return we are putting in place here. Deleuze distinguishes between active forces, which will to express ever more power, and reactive forces, which “decompose” and “*separate active force from what it can do.*”⁸⁰ The eternal return, according to Deleuze, is a criterion of selection for active and reactive forces. It selects in a twofold manner, the first of which is the test of the thought of eternal recurrence, in which weak reactive forces lack the completeness of will to live up to the thought. This first criterion depends upon one’s reception of the thought itself, thus drawing on the

⁸⁰ Deleuze, 57.

existential significance of the revelation of the thought of the eternal return found in Nietzsche's first published attempt at a formulation in *The Gay Science*:

The greatest weight.—What if, some day or night a demon were to steal after you into your loneliest loneliness and say to you: “This life as you now live it and have lived it, you will have to live once more and innumerable times more; and there will be nothing new in it, but every pain and every joy and every thought and sigh and everything unutterably small or great in your life will have to return to you, all in the same succession and sequence—even this spider and this moonlight between the trees, and even this moment and I myself. The eternal hourglass of existence is turned upside down again and again, and you with it, speck of dust!”
Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment⁸¹ when you would have answered him: “You are a god and never have I heard anything more divine.” If this thought gained possession of you, it would change you as you are or perhaps crush you. The question in each and every thing, “Do you desire this once more and innumerable times more?” would lie upon your actions as the greatest weight. Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life *to crave nothing more fervently* than this ultimate confirmation and seal? (GS 341).

In this scenario, the thought itself would be the selective principle simply by identifying the will strong enough to desire and love a life with no meaning beyond its own event. Only the life that has known this “tremendous moment” will return on Deleuze's account.

The second criterion, however, eliminates the possibility of return for stronger, more thoroughly nihilistic forces, either by making “*negation a negation of reactive forces themselves,*” or through the becoming active of reactive forces.⁸² In this scenario, rather than selecting on the basis of a will's desire in the face of the thought of the eternal return, the idea of the eternal return serves as a model of motion into which a force can be inserted and its activity may be judged. The will to self-overcoming would follow this second logic of the second criterion, in that the reactive force of the subject wills past its reactivity by actively joining in its own dissolution. Deleuze describes this logic thus:

⁸¹ The “tremendous moment” of this passage is “*ungeheuren Augenblick,*” which shows us that this moment of tremendous affirmation is a monstrous one. The person who lives this moment finds himself in a terrifying excess of his own nature, and is thus changed in a way that is perhaps crushing. Reading the passage this way, we find that the second moment of the return is perhaps already contained in the first. Affirmation contains destruction; the tremendous draws you outside of yourself in a terrifying way. Yet destruction and affirmation cannot simply be reduced to a single logic, for the last sentence shows that despite the monstrousness of the moment, the passage holds the possibility of a moment distinctly characterized by affirmation. The one well enough disposed to her own life would truly crave its return eternally—a craving that wants to change nothing and destroy nothing.

⁸² Deleuze, 70.

Active negation or active destruction is the state of strong spirits which destroy the reactive in themselves, submitting it to the test of the eternal return and submitting themselves to this test even if it entails willing their own decline; “it is the condition of strong spirits and wills, and these do not find it possible to stop with the negative of ‘judgment’; their nature demands *active negation*.”⁸³

The question, in this case, is not whether the force is strong enough to *desire and affirm* a return that will happen, but whether in fact its very direction is one of return, whether when subjected to the motion of a circle, it *will* return. The thought of the eternal return *as a thought* is *not* in this case the test, as in the case of the demon’s revelation, but rather, in the second scenario, the thought provides a model for selection that demands the removal of reactive forces from being.⁸⁴ Deleuze insists that “it is no longer a question of selective thought but of selective being; for the eternal return is being and being is selection.”⁸⁵ That is to say, active forces are the very motion of the eternal return, or, the eternal return as selection just means that return occurs only as active force. The thought of eternal return, as it occurs in the memory of life as a circular movement of impulses, opens the possibility for an active overhaul of the reactive intellect. This thought is the opening of a path wherein an actively destructive physiology is made possible. This means that while eternal return is the principle of selection for active forces, it also opens a way for a physiology to become active in a destructive sense. Out of the physiology of finite return springs the possibility for this physiology engage in a purely active destruction—this is the oblivion of eternal return. Insofar as the fortuitous case thinks, however, its physiology is a circling tension of active and reactive forces, and is neither exclusively active nor exclusively reactive.

⁸³ Ibid., 70. Deleuze quotes from Nietzsche, *WP* 24.

⁸⁴ We will see that Deleuze’s broad application of this criterion, resulting in this idea that the eternal return will eliminate reactive forces from being, is problematic, but it is helpful when applied in a narrow sense as a model for understanding the circularity of physiology.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 71.

The physiology of the fortuitous case in which the eternal return comes to be thought is itself a triumph of the impulses achieving the awareness of their own circularity and the momentum to overthrow the intellect in a circular gesture of “one more time.” The intellect, that creation of the impulses turned reactive, resists the body’s will to power, thwarting the potency of the body’s impulsive forces, but then even in its resistance allows them to be thought in an overcoming manner. However, as we have seen, the thought sign occurring with this circular physiology—that of the eternal return—is not fully willed so long as it is thought. The physiology of finite return is distinct from the physiology that would will eternal return. There is no initiation of the eternal return by or within the physiology of the fortuitous case until the impulses are able to undertake an active negation of the intellect in its entirety, affirming the meaninglessness and completeness of the ensuing oblivion. The thought of the eternal return is thus inextricably linked to a fortuitous physiology of return, but this thought initiates a new circle that occurs only as a sign for a possibility of a more drastic and destructive overcoming. As long as the eternal return is thought, life occurs with attention to finitude rather than to eternity.

In identifying the circularity at the level of the impulses and the physiological circle’s relationship with the thought of eternal return, we risk oversimplifying the matter. It would be easy, at this point, to suppose that the fortuitous case is simply a straightforward sort of materiality that reproduces itself in thought – a simple case of a wholly material phenomenon transferring itself to a wholly psychic one. But in fact, the “inextricable link” between the thought of the eternal return and the physiology of return is one that effaces the distinction between material and psychic. Indeed, we have already

seen the way in which Nietzsche effaces the distinction in the claim that the intellect is a mere consequence of the organic. But even as we think this priority of the organic, we must resist thinking it as a metaphysically real starting point that can be relied upon for making sense of all other phenomena. The physiological circle is not a transcendental signifier, but simply a sign that plays with the thought-sign of the eternal return.

What is the nature of this play? The first issue that presents itself in answering this question is that neither the finite nor the eternal return are ever present. In the case of the eternal return, this is because its occurrence can never be assumed. The eternal return, both as a sign describing a particular possibility of a physiology and as a sign for being as a whole, is the sign of a possibility in motion, never present in its completion.⁸⁶ This circle, because of its very meaning, can never be presented, and is thus always necessarily re-presented, or signified. It is a sign that lacks an adequate object behind it. The simple reason for this unrepresentability is that the circle signifies oblivion; therefore, insofar as the circle is thinkable in an image, it does not come to pass. To think the circle, to articulate it in a form that can be preserved for the ages, is not yet to live it. The numerous attempts to articulate the return as a thought-image can only be made by refusing the oblivion of the return. Nietzsche's various postulations concerning the eternal return are ways of playing at the limits of subjectivity and its accompanying lucidity – what we have called the edge of the precipitous slope of oblivion. Thinking

⁸⁶ Heidegger is helpful on the importance of possibility in the thought of the eternal return: “The possibility in question—which indeed has to be interrogated thoroughly—is mightier as a possibility than anything actual or factual. One possible thing generates other possibilities, inherently and necessarily bringing them to the fore along with itself. What is possible in a given thought transposes us to a number of possibilities: we may think in this or that way, assume a stance within it in this or that fashion. To think through a possibility truly—that is to say, with all its consequences—means to decide something for ourselves, even if the decision calls for nothing more than a retreat from and exclusion of the possibility” (*Nietzsche II*, 130). Although I am emphasizing a semiotic point here, the notion of possibility is crucial for this analysis, since the eternal return as a possibility that does not come to pass is a stimulant to material volatility.

about the return in a communicable way is only possible so long as its oblivion is staved off. Both the impulses and the very thought of the eternal return pass through the intellect's everyday code of signs in order to make themselves understood. The play of these signs, because it is dominated by the intellect through which the signs have meaning, is a deferral of the possibility of any circle's completion. And yet, the play is not entirely marked by deferral, for the interaction of the two circular signs stimulates the impulses and the intellect to collaborate to overthrow the intellect.

Certainly, fortuitous materiality is a condition for the fortuitous thought of the eternal return, but in turn, the thought of the eternal return in its several articulations heightens Nietzsche's experience of his material volatility. This is illustrated in a letter written in August 1881 to Gast in the wake of the first thought of the eternal return:

The August sun is overhead, the year is slipping away, the mountains and forests are becoming more quiet and peaceful. On my horizon, thoughts have arisen such as I have never seen before – I will not speak of them, but will maintain my unshakeable calm. I suppose now I'll have to live a few years longer! Ah, my friend, sometimes the idea runs through my head that I am living an extremely dangerous life, for *I am one of those machines which can EXPLODE*. The intensity of my feelings (*Gefühls*) makes me shudder and laugh (*WDB III, 1172*).⁸⁷

We know from Nietzsche's notebooks that the most significant thought making itself felt here is that of the eternal return.⁸⁸ The magnitude of this thought carries with it an intensity of feeling (*Gefühl*) that causes Nietzsche to experience himself as an explosive machine. Looking at this earlier articulation of his own explosiveness in the light of the thought of return, we are now able to make a more substantive commentary on explosion that will also inform later articulations, such as the one cited previously from *Ecce Homo*.

It is clear from the M III.1 notebook containing the first utterances of eternal return and from publications such as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* which explore the return in

⁸⁷ This translation is from Klossowski, 55.

⁸⁸ The notebook containing Nietzsche's first notes on the return is the M III.1 from Spring through Fall of 1881, *KSA* 9, 11[1] – 11[348].

a more public presentation that the thought is always bound up with the thoughts of the body's intelligence and of consciousness's subordination to the organic. M III.1 is full of notes on the organic, the drives (*Trieben*), the passions (*Leidenschaften*), the affects (*Affekten*), and the impulses (*Reizen*). Furthermore, the letter to Gast helps us to piece together the intimate connection between the intensity of feelings in his own organism and the thoughts in the notebooks. We can therefore put forth a hypothesis concerning the relationship of the experiences of the physiological circle and of the eternal return. Nietzsche's intensity of feeling, itself abyssal and unknowable, leaves the trace of a sign formulated by the intellect. This is the sign of organic, impulsive activity in its intelligence as the life of the body and the source of the conscious intellect. Nietzsche himself does not articulate this physiological sign as a circle, but as we have repeated it, we see that the sign is, in fact, a circular one. The circularity latent in the forming physiological sign expresses itself in the thought-sign of the eternal return. This expression, however, does not occur as a sublimating release, but rather as a physiological stimulant heightening the intensity of Nietzsche's feelings to the verge of explosion.

This brings us back to the interaction of the two senses of the eternal return in the fortuitous case. On the one hand, the eternal return is thought as the challenge of pure affirmation, an affirmation of life in the oblivion and meaninglessness of its return; on the other hand, the thought heightens the impulses to the point of explosion, stimulating the intellect as it begins to work in the service of its own overcoming. As we have seen, these two senses are expressed in Deleuze's understanding of the eternal return as the two ways in which the single and unified thought of return selects – as the challenge to the

will to affirm the possibility of infinite return and as the becoming-active of the will in a destruction of all within it that is reactive. For Deleuze, this second selection is straightforward. In what follows, I will engage the critical passages in Deleuze's text where he presents the two aspects of the eternal return in a unified form, and, suggesting that these passages fail, I will present an understanding of the divided character of this thought.

According to Deleuze, by submitting to the test of the eternal return, reactive forces negate themselves and become active and affirmative. There is, for him, a simple and necessary relationship between the two criteria:

This is why affirmation is twofold: the being of becoming cannot be fully affirmed without also affirming the existence of becoming-active. The eternal return thus has a double aspect: it is the universal being of becoming, but the universal being of becoming ought to belong to a single becoming. Only becoming-active has a being which is the being of the whole of becoming.⁸⁹

Deleuze's logic in this passage is clear, and it certainly works within his systematic formulation of the eternal return. However, an examination of Nietzsche as a fortuitous case will raise the possibility that this dual aspect of the return is in fact a duplicitous one. If we take Nietzsche as an example, it might become difficult, even impossible, to hold these two aspects together in a single, life-affirming meaning. For even as they play together, the two signs of return—eternal and finite—combat one another in the life of the fortuitous case who lives with the force of their commands.

The contradiction to be avoided in thinking about the return, according to Deleuze, would be for “the being of becoming to be affirmed of a becoming-reactive, of a becoming that is itself nihilistic.”⁹⁰ But his account is insensitive to the contradictions arising from the ambiguity of force, an ambiguity immediately effaced in the inventory of

⁸⁹ Deleuze, 72.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 72.

forces, categorized as either active or reactive.⁹¹ The negation of reactive forces, even to the point of willing one's own decline, is unproblematic for this account, which explains such negation as the way in which forces are "transmuted," making negation an expression of "affirmation and becoming-active as the power of affirming."⁹² The assumption of such a transmutation is faithful to Nietzsche's goals for his tragic, Dionysian philosophy, in its emphasis on the need for joy in destruction:

Saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems; the will to life in rejoicing over its own inexhaustibility even in the very sacrifice of its highest types—that is what I called Dionysian, that is what I understood as the bridge to the psychology of the tragic poet. Not in order to get rid of terror and pity, not in order to purge oneself of a dangerous affect by its vehement discharge—Aristotle misunderstood it that way—but in order to be oneself the eternal joy of becoming, beyond all terror and pity—that joy (Lust) which includes even joy (Lust) in destroying (*TI*, Ancients 5; *EH*, BT, 3).

The question, however, is not so much whether Deleuze interprets Nietzsche's goals rightly as it is whether he assumes their unity too hastily. The problem is that the will is pulled in two entirely different directions by the two aspects of the return. To affirm life without the veils of metaphysics as the joy of becoming and destruction is not the same as undertaking a project that will destroy the reactive in oneself, and perhaps the 'oneself' altogether. The will to a life with no transcendental meaning is not the same as a will to destroy the (non-transcendental) condition for the possibility of meaning. The eternal return as a selective thought is the unconditional 'yes' to all being, both as an affirmation of the past and as a forward projection of both the past and present into the future. This includes the return of what is base and petty:

⁹¹ Krell is also critical of inventories, particularly those of Granier and Deleuze, in the chapter "Critica Genealogica II: The Decadence of Inventories" of *Infectious Nietzsche*: "The hyperactive Deleuzean genealogist does concede that 'Nietzsche is expecting many things from this conception of genealogy,' among them 'a new organization of the sciences, a new organization of philosophy, a determination of the values of the future' (Dz 3); yet there is no hint that such great expectations are unrealistic or that the forces driving them may well be reactive. By the end of the chapter, however, the relation of genealogical critique to reactive forces that an active mode of existence is seeking to overcome has become somewhat more problematic, whether Deleuze desires this complication or not" (Krell, 27).

⁹² Deleuze, 70.

“My sighing sat on all human tombs and could no longer get up; my sighing and questioning croaked and gagged and gnawed and wailed by day and night: ‘Alas, man recurs eternally! The small man recurs eternally!’ Naked I had once seen both, the greatest man and the smallest man: all-too-similar to each other, even the greatest all-too-human. All-too-small, the greatest!—that was my disgust with man. And the eternal recurrence even of the smallest—that was my disgust with all existence. Alas! Nausea! Nausea! Nausea!” (Z, III, Convalescent).

Deleuze attempts to explain away the possibility of the return of the reactive and all-too-human, claiming that the such a return makes the thought itself unbearable (as demonstrated by Zarathustra’s nausea) and impossible because of the contradiction (previously explained) that it introduces into the return. The effects of the passage above are cancelled for Deleuze by an image following a communication of the return earlier in the book, when Zarathustra comes to a gateway named ‘Moment’:

“Behold,” I continued, “this moment! From this gateway, Moment, a long eternal lane leads *backward*: behind us lies an eternity. Must not whatever *can* walk have walked on this lane before? Must not whatever *can* happen have happened, have been done, have passed by before? And if everything has been there before—what do you think, dwarf, of this moment? Must not this gateway too have been there before? And are not all things knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come? Therefore—itsself too? For whatever *can* walk—in this long lane out *there* too, it *must* walk once more (Z, III, Vision & Riddle).

Immediately following this moment, Zarathustra hears a dog howling and finds himself somewhere else, and the gateway and the dwarf are nowhere to be found. He then comes upon a man:

A young shepherd I saw, writhing, gagging, in spasms, his face distorted, and a heavy black snake hung out of his mouth. Had I ever seen so much nausea and pale dread on one face? He seemed to have been asleep when the snake crawled into his throat, and there bit itself fast. My hand tore at the snake and tore in vain; it did not tear the snake out of his throat. Then it cried out of me: “Bite! Bite its head off! Bite!” (Z, III, Vision & Riddle).

Deleuze, using the image of the shepherd biting off the snake’s head, claims that the snake is an animal of the eternal return, but that its head, symbolizing reactive forces, must be bitten off if it is to be affirmed. In so doing, he takes the image out of the context in which it is presented—that of Zarathustra’s first expression of the eternal return—and relocates it as a surpassing of what Deleuze finds to be contradictory and impossible in a later expression. The context, however, is important because the image

of the shepherd biting off the snake's head has more immediate relevance for the expression of the return after which it appears. The thought of the eternal return has just been uttered for the first time, and reactive forces need be nowhere near the radar screen in order for this thought to appear nihilistic. Even if only active, healthy, types recur, the very fact of eternal recurrence would mean that all goals, everything that is important to us, are simply an illusion covering over the profound and (scornfully) laughable meaninglessness of our lives. This *orientation* toward the return is what must be overcome; this is what must be bitten off by its head. It is the ability to *will through* nihilism that is at stake here.

Hence, Heidegger's interpretation of this passage is much truer to this image. Zarathustra pulls at the snake in vain because nihilism is a condition that each must overcome for herself:

Nihilism will be overcome only from the ground up, only if we grapple with the very head of it; only if the ideals which it posits and from which it derives fall prey to "*criticism*," that is, to enclosure and overcoming. Yet such overcoming transpires only in the following way: everyone who is affected—and that means each of us—must bite into the matter for himself or herself; for if we leave it to another to tug at the darkling need that is our own, all will be futile.⁹³

Deleuze offers nothing further from Nietzsche's work to suggest that the eternal return will eliminate reactive types, and to suggest that the return completes such a task risks overlooking Nietzsche's caution against ascribing a goal to the return:

We must guard against ascribing any aspiration or any goal to this circular process: Likewise we must not, from the point of view of our own needs, regard it as either monotonous or foolish, &c. We may grant that the greatest possible irrationality, as also its reverse, may be an essential feature of it: but we must not value it according to this hypothesis. Rationality or irrationality cannot stand as attributes of the universe.—We must not think of the law of this circular process as a thing evolved, by drawing false analogies with the circular motions occurring *within* the circle. There was no primitive chaos followed by a more harmonious and finally definite circular motion of all forces: On the contrary everything is eternal and unevolved. If there ever was a chaos of forces, then that chaos itself was eternal and was repeated at its particular moment of time in the turn of the world wheel. The circular process is not the outcome of evolution, it is a primitive principle like the quantum of energy, and allows of no exception or violation. All Becoming takes place within the circular process and the quantum of energy which constitutes it: therefore

⁹³ Nietzsche II, 180.

we must not apply ephemeral processes like those for instance of heavenly bodies, of the ebb and flow of tides, of day and night, of the seasons, to the drawing of analogies for characterizing the eternal circular process (KSA 9 11[157]).⁹⁴

While it would be unfair to Deleuze to suggest that his account of the elimination of reactive forces turns the eternal recurrence into a thought ordered in the manner of tides or celestial bodies, it is true that Deleuze introduces a goal into the circle in order to make it into something more palatable for the will when he claims that it is impossible to affirm the return of reactive forces. Furthermore, Deleuze grounds the notion that reactive forces cannot return in a logic of return. A judgment concerning the *impossibility of contradiction* in the circle causes him to dismiss the most nauseating element of Zarathustra's thought. Therefore, let us say that the "tremendous moment," the moment of affirmation of the eternal return, is not an affirmation of a truncated or abridged thought of the return. It must instead be the affirmation of the entire thought, including its most nauseating aspect.

And yet this is not all that the return demands. The dual aspect of the thought does indeed demand that the one who thinks the thought and affirms it will be changed (and this is why we have found the Deleuzian model so helpful, despite the distance that we are also gaining from Deleuze's particular way of conceiving it). In the fortuitous moment, the thought of the return demands of the will both absolute affirmation and a setting of its own conditions for return. In this more limited sense, Deleuze's idea of the selection of forces is correct. The fortuitous case both cannot decide and still must decide the terms on which the eternal return will occur; it must *affirm* unconditionally while *making of itself* a condition. The thought of the eternal return initiates a new principle of

⁹⁴ I am using the translation that appears in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Volume XVI*, pg. 248.

force, or will to power, within the physiology of the one who thinks it. As we have seen, the principle of force initiated in the thought of the return is a will to the life of a circle in a narrower sense – that of the circle in which conscious subjectivity’s static hold over life is overcome. Deleuze is correct to say that this will, the second selective principle of the eternal return, is a will to destruction, and even to self-destruction. Yet at this point, it becomes impossible to maintain the unity of the thought of the eternal return. Deleuze’s account fails in the effort to demonstrate the unity of the thought. Instead, the eternal return has become a thought that causes the will to power to part company with itself. The active instigation of oblivion overhauls the pure affirmation of a life that would include eventual oblivion and return. The active negation of what holds together the life experienced as a fortuitous moment cannot help but also negate that moment.

Perhaps the point seems banal and fatuous in the extreme. Are we not essentially saying that in order to affirm the occurrence of life over which we have no control that we must abandon all negative willing, all willing that might introduce change into life? If this is the case, then we are simply combating Nietzsche’s nihilistic and destructive tendencies with a nihilistic boredom posing as a pure and untainted affirmation. But the point is not quite so simplistic. The disparity between the two criteria of selection does not arise from the fact that negation is involved in the second criterion. The problem is that the singular life called upon to love and affirm life must, in the self-destruction of its dominant reactive principle (that of consciousness), negate *this life*, the one that it is now living, into oblivion. It is no longer a question of willing in this life for this life, but rather one of willing outside of this life altogether for the sake of something called “life.”

It might be tempting to argue, along Deleuzean lines, that this hypothesis of the

division of the thought misinterprets the positive and affirming character taken on by the destructive will to power, a character that would make an unrestricted affirmation of life identical with the will to the oblivion of the physiological circle. Yet there is no way to make such an argument without covering over the first principle of return, in its absolute esteem for *this life*. We could argue against the divisiveness of the thought by calling what is organic the real and the consciousness produced by the organic false. In this way, we would affirm the right of the impulses to take over and lead the fortuitous case into oblivion, and we could say, thereby, that whatever restores this order to life is the active, affirmative, counter-nihilist force (and perhaps also the good and the true?). In fact, though, the very intelligibility of our account of the impulses and their life has frustrated our ability to believe in their true worth or meaning. As we have seen, the impulses make themselves heard only through the mediating function of consciousness and its gregarious code of signs. The thought of the impulses is a physiological experience delivered to the intellect as a mediated sign. The sign of the physiological circle is accompanied by the sign of the eternal return, which, as we have seen, comes to be articulated in a manner that complicates the meaning of the impulses driving to overcome consciousness. The complication is simply that the completion of the physiological circle would be the negation of *this life*, the affirmation of which is commanded by the eternal return. We cannot say, therefore, that this negation is unproblematically affirmative of life and counteractive toward nihilism.

The dual and duplicitous aspect of the thought of the eternal return shows us that this thought does not merely stimulate the intellect in carrying out its own overcoming. Rather, it occurs as a sign reproduced by circular physiology both as a stimulant to the

impulses and as a force of resistance to the impulses faced with the moment of decisive willing of the eternal return. The thought of the eternal return in its stimulating resistance toward the impulses thus allows for the productive tension that will give physiology, force, and their abyssal meaninglessness and circularity a chance to be thought. The chance to be thought, to be articulated, is indeed what is at stake here, for the same impulses making themselves known to consciousness and giving rise to the thought of the eternal return are also conspiring to lead the intellect that can decipher such signs in an intelligible form down the road of oblivion. The dual aspect of the return occurs as a tension that produces a space of heightened intensity, where the thinking of return occurs as the finite circle between impulses and intellect. This circle is held in tension by the divided thought of eternal return; the finite circle and the divided thought of the eternal circle thus constitute and produce one another. But in maintaining the tension that allows a divided thought to occur in one unified sign, the divided thought of eternal return also acts out its division in the fortuitous case.

We have begun to describe the way in which the thought of eternal return is a supremely divided thought, in that its content demands both a pure affirmation and the destruction of self-overcoming, but it remains the case that despite its lack of unity, the thought is articulated under a single sign. Furthermore, one can easily understand how these thoughts, however divided, belong together, for Nietzsche shows us genealogically that self-overcoming is necessary for a true affirmation of life. But the truly divisive nature of this thought shows itself in its performance. We have seen that the division happens between this life and a future life, as the will simultaneously to affirm life as it occurs, in the present, and to affirm something called “life,” something still to come

when the degenerate life of the present has been overcome. This division plays itself out in the performance of Nietzsche's thought as a bodily event. Nietzsche's thought happens in the middle of the exhilaration and pure joy of a liberation experienced by the body in thinking and the pain and suffering of his body in its most basic physical sense. As Klossowski has shown, thinking and suffering were intimately connected for Nietzsche, but thinking and exhilaration were equally linked. This double experience of thinking demonstrates the way in which the duplicitous character of Nietzsche's thinking is embodied by Nietzsche as the fortuitous case. Nietzsche writes in a letter to Malwida von Meysenbug, dated January 14, 1880:

Although writing for me, is forbidden fruit, you, whom I love and cherish like an older sister, shall nevertheless have a letter from me. It is probably going to be the last one! For the terrific and nearly incessant torture of my life makes me thirst for its end. There have been a few indications that the cerebral stroke which will release me is close enough on hand to entertain hopes. As far as agony and renunciation are concerned, I can compare my life in recent years with that of any ascetic of any period. Nevertheless, I have gathered much during these years toward the purification and burnishing of the soul, and need neither religion nor art (*UL 26*).

This juxtaposition of physical agony with a purification and strengthening of the soul is representative of a theme developed through many of Nietzsche's writings, particularly in his letters, that insists on a great health in the midst of the most crushing pain. A July 1881 letter to his mother expresses this theme even more dramatically:

I reproach myself for stupidity in having written you only brief notes concerning my health and nothing more. In this way you must have received a wrong impression about myself. There never was a man to whom the expression "depressed" applied less. Those who can discern a little more of my purpose in life and how it must be unceasingly promoted are of the opinion that I am, if not the *happiest*, at least the most daring of men. More weighty things rest upon me than mere considerations of health, and I shall manage to square myself with them also. My appearance, by the way, is excellent, my musculature is almost like that of a soldier because I am taking prolonged walks. Everything is in order with my stomach and abdomen. My nervous system is splendid in view of the immense work it has to do; it is quite sensitive but very strong, a source of astonishment to me. Even the long and severe maladies, an occupation which did not suit me, and a dead wrong treatment have not harmed it basically. Indeed, within the past year it has become stronger and owing to it I have produced one of the most daring, the sublimest and deepest of books ever spawned by human brain and heart. Even had I committed suicide in Recoaro, a man would have died who was the most indomitable, and absolutely superior, not one who had given up in despair (*UL 29*).

In a letter to his sister from Recoaro a month earlier, we get a glimpse of what Nietzsche might have meant about committing suicide there. Giving his sister his new St. Moritz address, Nietzsche writes, “This is, once again, a *last* experiment. Since February I had to suffer extraordinarily, and only few locations are favorable.—(UL 27). Nietzsche finds himself in such extraordinary physical pain that suicide becomes a tempting option, and yet he insists repeatedly that he is “indomitable,” that his “soul” has been refined beyond the common needs of religion and art.

We may therefore put forward a hypothesis concerning the performance of a divided thought within Nietzsche’s physiology. Within Nietzsche’s thought, we find a living, willing organism, a body-soul, a materiality fused with life. But subtle passages on the margins of his work, and even passages in his work,⁹⁵ show Nietzsche’s lively matter pulling apart into a spiritual body on the one hand, and a frustrating, weighty material body on the other. They are not the same body, but rather become distinct as an enactment of Nietzsche’s thought that pulls his very being in opposite directions. Thus, while Nietzsche’s thought liberates the body from its secondary status by presenting bodily materiality as both the root and the goal of all thinking, the performance of his thought pulls his body into material and spiritual provinces, and the material is continually pushed aside in favor of the spiritual. Is this fissuring pull perhaps the very way in which a divisive thought performs itself? In order to think the supremely divisive thought of the eternal return, must Nietzsche’s body, as the locus of his thinking, undergo a splitting that is at once utterly exhilarating and utterly destructive? And if Nietzsche’s body is divided in thinking, does it not resist the very goal of thought, even as it makes such thought possible?

⁹⁵ For instance, *EH*, *HH*, 4. I will treat this section later.

We are not speaking here of cause and effect. To inquire into a divisive performance of thought is not the same as saying that the eternal return causes Nietzsche to perform a re-division of the body that he thinks in a lively and liberated way. Instead, we are simply noting a homology between the eternal return and the locus in which this thought performs itself. The suggestion is that while this division is held together in the singularity of the thought itself (for, as anyone can see, a true affirmation of eternal return would also require a destruction of an ethos that demands transcendental meaning), the thinking of the thought does not hold together the body that performs it, but instead makes its divisiveness felt. This means that in considering the locus of the thought we have only discovered its difference and distance from the thought as it is articulated. In examining the locus of thinking, we have now found a way in which thought is a dislocated and dislocating event. We will keep this dislocation in mind as we proceed once again, looking at this divided locus in greater depth.

Chapter Three: Explosion? Nietzsche's Dispersal and the Social-Political Space

In chapter two, we saw that Nietzsche's body performs a division homologous to the divided thought of eternal return. The articulation enabled by the gap between the two directions in which Nietzsche was being pulled can be understood as an articulation of the physiological struggle that he sensed within his being. But Nietzsche tells this struggle in the manner of a story – a story in which the stakes are higher than the fate of an individual man's struggle between thinking and madness. The story, or stories, that get told in Nietzsche's work are genealogies that reach back into the past and down into the depths of phenomena to diagnose and overcome the decadence of the modern age. These genealogies are intimately connected with the genealogies in which Nietzsche tells

his readers who he is. When Nietzsche says, “I turned my will to health, to *life*, into a philosophy” (*EH*, Wise 2), he indicates the way in which his properly “philosophical” texts are the symptomatic expressions of the will to power operating at a physiological level. In this way, the interaction of the narratives of genealogy and autobiography both reflects and constitutes the locus of thinking. That is to say, these narratives point to the locus as if to reveal an already existing space, but because the space would be one of silence without this translation into narratives, the interaction of narratives is in fact what gives such a locus the kind of shape that allows it to be the center of a discourse. In saying this, our understanding of the locality of Nietzsche’s thought becomes ever richer and more complex. We come closer to the locale without for that reason arriving at a fixed point. Thought as physiological expression is at the same time the opening of physiological spaces that give rise to new articulations. The chasm opening in the will to power between the affirmation and the destruction incited by the eternal return gives space for Nietzsche’s work, and the character of Nietzsche’s thought reflects the tension between the two as well as the division in will to power.

Commentators such as Kofman have problematized the description of *Ecce Homo* as autobiographical because of the way the text undermines both the *autos* and the *bios*. For Kofman, the genealogical element of autobiography brings the subject into question because *Ecce Homo* tells a story of how Nietzsche *becomes* himself, and the telling itself is what initially brings the scattered “I” together into a unity. Furthermore, Kofman calls *Ecce Homo* a “thanatography” because in this text “Nietzsche buries himself several

times over so as to be able to be reborn to himself and to reappropriate himself.”⁹⁶ Thus, she concludes:

So one can no longer say, without at least putting it in quotation marks, that *Ecce homo* is an autobiography, for what the text “recounts” is rather the death of the *autos* as a stable and substantial subject, as conceived by metaphysics; it is also the death of the “*bios*,” if one takes this to mean that the “life” of a living person has its origin in his two parents to whom he is bound by his “blood.”⁹⁷

Ecce Homo directs us to Nietzsche himself as the locus of Nietzsche’s thought, only to deconstruct the very notion of “Nietzsche himself.” As Kofman argues, *Ecce Homo* is written in such a way that the impermanence of Nietzsche the subject becomes manifest. However, the locus at which *bios* and *autos* are being deconstructed and converted into a language of *thanatos* remains a locus nonetheless. While this locus lacks the stability of a subject and refuses to be an absolute point of reference, it is a point from which we can depart and to which we can circle back repeatedly for the interpretation of Nietzsche’s texts. Nietzsche’s use of the word “I,” no matter how fragmented, continues to bring Nietzsche interpretation back to that question identified by Deleuze of ‘Which one?’.

This question of ‘which one?’ is the genealogical question par excellence. Nietzsche subjects the history of morality and values to the scrutiny of this question, but the gesture of saying ‘I’ in *Ecce Homo* indicates that the question can always be asked again, a layer deeper. In bringing the reader to his own life as the locus of his thinking, Nietzsche opens the door for a questioning that will have the power to deconstruct his own genealogy. Indeed, if the performance of Nietzsche’s thought at the locus is at odds with what is learned in his genealogy, then there will be a question concerning the sense in which we can understand his thinking as a bodily liberation. The dislocating division that we noted previously has already introduced such a questionability. Therefore, we

⁹⁶ “Explosion I,” 58.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 60.

must be attentive to the dynamics at the locus of “Nietzsche himself” in order to ask ‘which one’ or ‘what type’ constitutes the soil on which the eternal return, the liberation of instinctive life, and the will to power are born. We will find that the dynamics of Nietzsche’s attempt to construct himself in *Ecce Homo* mirror those of the duplicitous eternal return, for in this text Nietzsche maintains a tension between the pure celebration of himself in the ostensible meaning of the work and the complete deconstruction of himself noted by Kofman in her more subtle reading.

Therefore we must ask, which one is Nietzsche? Or more precisely, which impulses dominate at this locus where thought emerges from a divided will, supporting the intellect long enough for it to think the thought that it will not withstand? We have already made progress on this question by looking at the Nietzschean locus through the perspective of the impulses as the stimulants of the thought of the eternal return. But now we will examine the character of the dynamics of this locus genealogically, asking whether and to what extent this locus is marked primarily by strength, weakness, decadence, health, joy, suffering, gregariousness, singularity, resentment, pity, or some combination of these. Having explored one element of Nietzsche as locus, namely, in the way the thought of eternal return divides the will to power in a productive tension (which itself constitutes a locus for thinking), we will now look at this locus from a different angle in order to ask about the character of thought arising in this tension; that is, understanding Nietzsche’s genealogical writings both as diagnoses of the prevailing physiological conditions as well as accounts of how one becomes fortuitous in the midst of such conditions, we will now turn to his genealogical work as expressions of the multi-layered locus of thinking. First, by looking at contrasting genealogies of the origins of

morality and other human institutions and the shifting methods of knowing employed in them, we will discover Nietzsche's perspectivism as the work of a physiology working through nihilism. This will show us in a more concrete way how to understand genealogy as a physiological operation. Then, having completed our analysis of Nietzsche's thought in its physiological aspect, we will relate the bodily locus to the political locus and return to our guiding question of what Nietzsche's thought means for social and political life.

Section I: Which One? Articulating the Multiplicity

Nietzsche's genealogical reflections on the origins of morality enact a curious sort of memory, and the memory is far from consistent. In early texts such as *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche's genealogical memory takes the tone of a cold scientific sort of thinker in the style of Herbert Spencer. For instance, in a passage entitled '*The Fable of Intelligible Freedom*,' Nietzsche writes:

The principal stages in the history of the sensations by virtue of which we make anyone accountable for his actions, that is to say, of the moral sensations, are as follows. First of all, one calls individual actions good or bad irrespective of their motives but solely on account of their useful or harmful consequences. Soon, however, one forgets the origin of these designations and believes that the quality 'good' and 'evil' is inherent in the actions themselves, irrespective of their consequences: thus committing the same error as that by which language designates the stone itself as hard, the tree itself as green – that is to say, by taking for cause that which is effect. Then one consigns the being of good or being evil to the motives and regards the deeds in themselves as morally ambiguous. One goes further and accords the predicate good or evil no longer to the individual motive but to the whole nature of a man out of whom the motive grows as the plant does from the soil. Thus one successively makes men accountable for the effects they produce, then for their actions, then for their motives, and finally for their nature. Now one finally discovers that this nature, too, cannot be accountable, inasmuch as it is altogether a necessary consequence and assembled from the elements and influence of things past and present: that is to say, that man can be made accountable for nothing, not for his nature, nor for his motives, nor for his actions, nor for the effects he produces. One has thereby attained to the knowledge that the history of the moral sensations is the history of an error, the error of accountability, which rests on the error of freedom of will (*HH* 39).

In this passage and throughout *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche takes care to disabuse himself and his readers of any metaphysical notions we might entertain concerning a metaphysical origin of morality. Yet a transcendent metaphysical origin of morality is

replaced with another metaphysics – one that attributes all of humanity’s “higher” sensibilities to utility. Likewise, he claims that “every religion was born out of fear and need” (*HH* 110), that justice has its origins in simple exchange (*HH* 92), and that all that interests organic beings when we are in our primary condition is a thing’s “relationship to us in respect of pleasure and pain” (*HH* 18). Each of these assessments contributes to an understanding of the human being as science’s adaptable, scheming, surviving creature. In this early effort to think genealogically about the sources of moral behavior, Nietzsche fails to truly move past a metaphysical thinking of origin. In focusing on scientific correctness, he replaces one “true story” of morality with another, disabusing us of the certainty of morality’s rightness and righteousness by exchanging for this notion the certainty of morality’s human, all too human origins. Rather than springing from the necessity of a hallowed origin such as God or reason, morality according to Nietzsche is merely the product of a base psychological need, as are the imagined sources of morality. Such a reversal does not merely disabuse, but also strips us of the beneficial optimism of such illusions.

The sort of scientific pronouncement of the psychological origins of all gods and values seen here is described later by Nietzsche as the nihilism that necessarily follows from the history of Christianity. In a fragment from November 1887 to March 1888, Nietzsche describes three conditions indicating that nihilism as a psychological state has been reached: 1) when we realize that existence is not directed toward some higher meaning; this is “the recognition of the long *waste* of strength, the agony of the ‘in vain’ insecurity, the lack of any opportunity to recover and to regain composure” (*WP* 12), 2) when we cease to believe in something of everlasting value, and, in losing a relation to

something of infinite value, cease to believe in our own value, and 3) when, having realized that the 'true world' is fashioned entirely from psychological needs, we come to a nihilism that "includes disbelief in any metaphysical world and forbids itself any belief in a *true* world" (WP 12). Such recognition becomes immediately nihilistic because it occurs against a background of Christian values that demand an ultimate meaning to existence. Thus, Nietzsche concludes:

What has happened at bottom? The feeling of valuelessness was reached with the realization that the overall character of existence may not be interpreted by means of the concept of "aim," the concept of "unity," or the concept of "truth." Existence has no goal or end; any comprehensive unity in the plurality of events is lacking: the character of existence is not "true," is *false*. One simply lacks any reason for convincing oneself that there is a *true* world. Briefly: the categories "aim," "unity," "being" which we used to project some value into the world—we *pull out* again; so the world looks *valueless* (WP 12).

There are certainly passages in Nietzsche's work, most notably those quoted above, that pull the meaning out from under the world without performing the revaluation that would make the affirmation of a meaningless world possible. While he does not explicitly "pull out" the words 'aim', 'unity,' and 'being' again, the failure to imagine how one affirms a world lacking these things leaves their force intact. His scientist's concern for truth at all costs has not yet in *Human, All Too Human* found the cheerful revaluating question that comes in *Beyond Good and Evil*, when he asks: "Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance? (BGE 1). Until he puts forth this question, his scientific coldness leaves him in nihilism as the "logical result of decadence" (WP 43). The Christian world has been built around a physiological decadence that cannot affirm an existence with no meaning. Nihilism results from the dismantling of the Christian world that is brought about by Christianity's own will to truth because as the Christian world crumbles, what remains is judged by the Christian world's standards. Thus, the

world with no meaning becomes the nihilism of a world without value. This is the world robbed of Christian truths but still under the sway of Christian modes of evaluation.

According to Nietzsche, “the nihilistic movement is merely the expression of physiological decadence” (*WP* 38). Such decadence, he says, is not to be abolished, for it is a product of the growth of life:

Waste, decay, elimination need not be condemned: they are necessary consequences of life, of the growth of life. The phenomenon of decadence is as necessary as any increase and advance of life: one is in no position to abolish it. Reason demands, on the contrary, that we do justice to it (*WP* 40).

Nietzsche writes the above passage in 1888, and it is, in many ways, a reflection that expresses a major effort of the narratives he puts together from the time of *Human, All Too Human* up through his late writings. As we have seen from Nietzsche’s descriptions of the three conditions that indicate nihilism, his early attempts to disabuse us of the ideas of a unified and goal-oriented existence are examples of the nihilism that comes from pulling away the world’s conventionally understood value without rigorously engaging in a project of reevaluation. Nietzsche thus comes to be the mouthpiece for the sensibility waiting at the end of the logical course of Christian decadence. But the majority of Nietzsche’s work reflects a concerted effort to overcome such a sensibility. The effort to overcome the nihilism in which Christian decadence ends is not, however, an eradication; rather, it is the continuous application of an energy that converts and translates the tenor of thought. Conversion and translation⁹⁸ are physiological operations that give new

⁹⁸ Scott’s account of translation in Nietzsche in *The Lives of Things* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002] is close to the meaning I have in mind here. Scott performs a genealogy of immanence to which the idea of translation is crucial. Beginning with an account of Schleiermacher’s and Schelling’s understandings of immanence as translations of divine or absolute presence into feeling and human creativity, he shows the ways of thinking cut off by the insistence on the absolute. He then shows how Nietzsche’s will to power is itself a translation of immanence, from its insistence on an absolute to the body as a site of translation outside the force of axiomatic absolutes: “The physical site of translation is thus one for Nietzsche that has its singularity in the ways constellated parts contest and fuse with one another. It is neither a site of unity nor a place of absolute immanence. Fluid orders of forces are immanent in the

energy to thoughts that are nihilistic both in the sense of a loss of energy for life and in the sense of “a denial of a truthful world” that causes Nietzsche to say, in a very qualified sense, that nihilism “might be *a divine way of thinking*” (WP 15). These operations are thus a matter of “doing justice” to what is “divine” in the nihilistic tendency without allowing the exhaustion of nihilism to take over.

When Nietzsche asks the question of the will to truth, he begins to do justice to the decadent origins of human, all too human, institutions described in his earlier texts. The question of the meaning of the will to truth allows such institutions and the physiological decadence of which they are expressions to be re-membered in a different sort of narrative of nihilism – that is, in a narrative that announces the possibility of an overcoming of nihilism. In asking “Why truth?”, he cannot help but put both himself and the surety of decadent origins into question, for his own writings have, in places, indulged in a preoccupation with getting at the truth of origins. As the passages on morality and religion from *Human, All Too Human* have demonstrated, Nietzsche exchanges the truths of metaphysics for the truths of the cold scientific psychologist; all metaphysical truths become matters of adaptation and utility. Nietzsche appears to be relatively satisfied with the superiority of such truths at the time when he is writing them, as suggested by his high estimation of science and his attempts to put the greatest distance between science properly so-called and philosophy:

The spirit of science rules its parts, not the whole. The separate *smallest* regions of science are treated purely objectively: the great universal sciences, on the other hand, viewed as a whole pose the question – a very unobjective question, to be sure – to what end? of what utility? On account of this regard for utility they are as a whole treated less impersonally than they are in their parts. And when it comes to philosophy, the summit of the entire scientific pyramid, we find the question as to the utility of knowledge as such involuntarily raised, and the unconscious intention

body’s activities” (167). I am focusing explicitly on the former sense of translation that refers to the way that Nietzsche’s thought translates an old concept (or knowledge, or way of knowing) in ways that give it new meanings, but I also want to insist that this translation occurs as a bodily event.

of every philosophy is to ascribe to it the *highest* utility. That is why there is in all philosophies so much high-flying metaphysics and such a dread of the explanations offered by physics, which seem so modest and insignificant; for the significance of knowledge for life *has* to appear as great as it possibly can. Here lies the antagonism between the individual regions of science and philosophy. The latter wants, as art does, to bestow on life and action the greatest possible profundity and significance; in the former one seeks knowledge and nothing further – and does in fact acquire it. There has hitherto been no philosopher in whose hands philosophy has not become an apologia for knowledge; on this point at least each of them is an optimist, inasmuch as he believes that knowledge must be in the highest degree useful. They are all tyrannized over by logic: and logic is by its nature optimism (*HH* 6).

And if philosophy is a far cry from science, religion is even farther: “In reality there exists between religion and *true science* neither affinity, nor friendship, nor even enmity: they dwell on different stars” (*HH* 110).⁹⁹ In these passages, Nietzsche designates the kind of science based in empirical observation as a purely objective enterprise. The cold, scientific descriptions of human phenomena found in *Human, All Too Human* merely reflect a commitment to the correctness and objectivity of a scientific methodology.

But when Nietzsche poses the question of the will to truth, both the belief in objectivity as well as the descriptions rooted in a mechanistic, self-preserving humanity begin to be revised and overcome by new narratives. The will to power becomes the ultimate referent for explaining not just human phenomena, but all living phenomena. And to say that will to power is the ultimate referent or ultimate principle in regard to which all life must be understood is to say that life is never fully understood, but that we are referred to an abyssal principle. For neither is will an agency nor is power a *telos*. Understanding life in terms of the will to power is an acknowledgement that life cannot be fully understood because this will to the accumulation of force designates life’s spontaneous, erratic, and irrational elements. Asking the question of the will to truth implies a recognition of a truth deeper than objective truth, which means that accounts of the will to power and the will to truth cannot be objective. The scrutiny of this question

⁹⁹ Italics mine.

causes truth to appear not as the self-evident goal of any inquiry, but as an operation in the service of life as will to power.

Nietzsche's accounts of human phenomena change drastically within the force of this question, and he dismisses ways of thinking which he clearly espoused in *Human, All Too Human*. First and foremost, he mocks any explanation that identifies utility as the origin of good and evil. Evaluation is not a matter of getting through the world in the most simple way, but is instead an act of divisive power:

Now it is plain to me, first of all, that in this theory the source of the concept "good" has been sought and established in the wrong place: the judgment "good" did *not* originate with those to whom "goodness" was shown! Rather it was "the good" themselves, that is to say, the noble, powerful, high-stationed, and high-minded, who felt and established themselves and their actions as good, that is, of the first rank, in contradistinction to all the low, low-minded, common and plebeian. It was out of this *pathos of distance* that they first seized the right to create values and to coin names for values: what had they to do with utility! (*GM I.2*)

As is well-known, Nietzsche discredits the idea that good and evil even make up the most fundamental value structure. He shows above that the very different poles of good and *bad* constituted an earlier, forcefully created evaluation scheme. Good and evil came about not because of their greater utility, but because those who fell on the "bad" side of the evaluation were brought to the boiling point of revenge by their subordination, and they overturned the evaluation that held them down by first accusing the "good" with the name "evil" and then calling themselves "good" (*GM I.10*). Thus, morality is born, not of adaptation, but of a veritable *revolt*. Other institutions receive a similar makeover in texts such as *On the Genealogy of Morals*. Justice, which was earlier dubbed a matter of simple exchange, now becomes the careful precision exercised by a nobility of soul:

Wherever justice is practiced and maintained one sees a stronger power seeking a means of putting an end to the senseless raging of *ressentiment* among the weaker powers that stand under it (whether they be groups or individuals)—partly by taking the object of *ressentiment* out of the hands of revenge, partly by substituting for revenge the struggle against the enemies of peace and order, partly by elevating certain equivalents for injuries into norms to which from then on *ressentiment* is once and for all directed (*GM II.11*).

And the stakes in the account of religion, an institution arising out of “fear and need,” are raised considerably with Nietzsche’s location of the origins of Christianity in a will to self-cruelty. While he consistently links tribal religion to a simple fear of the ancestor (*GM* II.19,20), the birth of Christianity proves to be a different beast altogether:

You will have guessed *what* has really happened here, *beneath* all this: that will to self-tormenting, that repressed cruelty of the animal-man made inward and scared back into himself, the creature imprisoned in the “state” so as to be tamed, who invented the bad conscience in order to hurt himself after the *more natural* vent for this desire to hurt had been blocked—this man of the bad conscience has seized upon the presupposition of religion so as to drive his self-torture to its most gruesome pitch of severity and rigor (*GM* II.22).

Clearly, Nietzsche’s later accounts of morality and religion in no way deny the decadence of these institutions. It is rather a matter of re-membering¹⁰⁰ them in a new way, in a way that “does justice” to them. But doing justice does not mean that Nietzsche will now tell the true story in place of a false story that he has told before. The kind of justice done to morality and religion is the product of a way of thinking that thinks beyond the truth of objective certainty. These reformulations of human institutions occur within the narrative that overturns Nietzsche’s claim that science and religion “dwell on different stars,” and with it his emphasis on the objectivity of science. When the will to truth becomes questionable, scientific precision no longer operates as the procedure that grounds inquiry, but instead it becomes a subject of an inquiry whose methodology is not made entirely explicit beyond the initial questions of the origins of morality and the will to truth. For Nietzsche, the questions of morality and will to truth should be asked together, for the high estimation of truthfulness can itself be understood as an expression of morality.

¹⁰⁰ This hyphenated spelling of re-member is used by Scott in *The Time of Memory* to signify the way in which memory (especially genealogical memory) puts things back together again differently in their loss. Charles Scott. *The Time of Memory*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999.

With these questions guiding his inquiry, Nietzsche tells a narrative of decadent asceticism that begins with the development of inwardness, runs through the history of Christianity, and takes the modern form of objective science. Therefore, this narrative situates what has been Nietzsche's own method of inquiry within the evaluative structure that his genealogy is aimed at overturning. Science is not a value-neutral methodology offering truth where philosophy promotes a series of fictions that "bestow on life and action the greatest possible profundity" (*HH* 6). Rather, science only appears objective because of the preparatory work that philosophy—with its metaphysical fictions—has done for it. Of course, while Nietzsche subjects science to the genealogical suspicion that brings recognition to these relationships, he is still, to an extent, bound by science, and he acknowledges this even as he undergoes the process of breaking away from its hold on his own inquiry:

"It is still a *metaphysical faith* that underlies our faith in science—and we men of knowledge today, we godless men and anti-metaphysicians, we, too, still derive *our* flame from the fire ignited by a faith millennia old, the Christian faith, which was also Plato's, that God is truth, that truth is *divine*.—But what if this belief is becoming more and more unbelievable, if nothing turns out to be divine any longer unless it be error, blindness, lies—if God himself turns out to be our *longest lie*?" At this point it is necessary to pause and take careful stock. Science itself henceforth *requires* justification (which is not to say that there is any such justification) (*GM* III.24).¹⁰¹

This exposure of science to the genealogical critique linking it to the asceticism that reached its pinnacle in Christianity makes it clear that genealogy does not pretend to be an objective science itself, but is rather the self-conscious employment of a perspective. Nietzsche cannot use an objective science to discredit the possibility of an objective science. Thus, as science loses its self-evident hegemony in Nietzsche's genealogy, the unavoidable perspectival character of knowledge takes its place. Once again emphasizing the role of philosophy in creating the illusion of objectivity's naturalness

¹⁰¹ The part in quotes is Nietzsche quoting himself from *The Gay Science*, 344.

and superiority, Nietzsche suggests that a multiplicity of perspectives is the closest we could ever get to objectivity:

Henceforth, my dear philosophers, let us be on guard against the dangerous old conceptual fiction that posited a “pure, will-less, painless, timeless knowing subject”; let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as “pure reason,” “absolute spirituality,” “knowledge in itself”: these always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective “knowing”; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity,” be (*GM* III.12).

We can see, then, that Nietzsche’s efforts to “do justice” to decadence coincide with the collapse of faith in modern science. It is as if Nietzsche, sitting long enough with his objective truths about human decadence, becomes tired of his truths, disgusted, nauseated by them. We might imagine him in this moment, having had enough, asking why he should value truth at all and only hearing the echoes of his question falling into an abyss from which no answer will emerge. The echo fades into silence, until the uncanniness of the silence breaks into laughter – the laughter of possibility. Why truth indeed? At this moment, he gathers the objective truths of human decadence, and, rather than throwing them away, he begins to labor over them as an artist would, painting them, coloring them in – doing justice to them. These new accounts share with Nietzsche’s objective truths a lack of transcendental grounding and the threat of abyss, but they have been refigured with the thought of the will to power. The thought of the will to power retrieves the truths of decadence that unfold logically into nihilism and converts and translates them into possibility. Decadence is no longer decadence pure and simple, for in the conversion and translation of the will to power, force and energy are uncovered in the phenomena that signaled decline.

As mentioned before, conversion and translation are physiological operations. It is not the case that Nietzsche realized that he had committed an error in texts like *Human, All Too Human* and that he spent the rest of his career correcting the error. This is supported by a couple of different pieces of evidence. First of all, Nietzsche's later texts that focus on the will to power through the question of the will to truth do not so much discover something new as they offer a new variation of themes present in very early texts. For instance, in the 1873 essay, "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," Nietzsche writes:

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions: they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force, coins which have lost their embossing and are now considered as metal and no longer as coins (*TL* 84).

It is clear in this early passage that Nietzsche is already beginning to dismantle the possibility of an objective point of view. To say that truth is an army of metaphors, a collection of illusions that we no longer remember *are* illusions, is to make impossible a look at something that can simply utter the thing as it is. Every look is already informed by this forgotten army. With this forgotten army in mind, Nietzsche speaks of science in this way, not as a pursuit of objectivity, but as a construction project:

We have seen how it is originally *language* which works on the construction of concepts, a labor taken over in later ages by *science*. Just as the bee simultaneously constructs cells and fills them with honey, so science works unceasingly on this great columbarium of concepts, the graveyard of perceptions. It is always building new, higher stories and shoring up, cleaning, and renovating the old cells; above all, it takes pains to fill up this monstrously towering framework and to arrange therein the entire empirical world, which is to say, the anthropomorphic world (*TL* 88).

"On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" thus indicates that Nietzsche is thinking the abyss of infinite play beneath the word "truth" well before he inquires genealogically into the will to truth. The beginning of the essay demonstrates just how well aware Nietzsche is of the shaky foundation upon which such thoughts are putting all

knowledge, for it begins not with a disavowal of previous knowledge and a claim to new and better truths, but instead with a playful and mythical metaphor:

Once upon a time, in some out of the way corner of that universe which is dispersed into numberless twinkling solar systems, there was a star upon which clever beasts invented knowing. That was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history,' but nevertheless, it was only a minute. After nature had drawn a few breaths, the star cooled and congealed, and the clever beasts had to die.—One might invent such a fable, and yet he still would not have adequately illustrated how miserable, how shadowy and transient, how aimless and arbitrary the human intellect looks within nature (*TL 79*).

If truth can be thought of as the metaphorical invention of a feeble intellect in an effort to grasp something in the flow of nature's "fiery liquid" (*TL 86*), then Nietzsche is surely not far from the question of "Why truth at all? Indeed, in the invention of this metaphorical genealogy, he has already cast suspicion on any reverence surrounding the word truth. Therefore, it does not seem to be the case that Nietzsche's genealogical connection of science and Christian decadence marks some sort of radical shift in his understanding of disciplined scientific methodology. Truth has been in question for him from the beginning.

Yet it cannot be denied that in previously cited passages, Nietzsche does go through a period in which his descriptions of a methodology placing him on different stars from philosophy and religion, allowing a more objective look, indicate a faith in or at least a dedication to scientific objectivity. If objective truth is questionable from the early days of Nietzsche's career, how shall we explain what seems to be devotion to it in the middle period? The second piece of evidence offers a response to this question that goes well beyond calling Nietzsche's devotion a simple lapse by instead filling out the idea of a physiological translation and conversion.

Nietzsche has given his readers a point of reference for questions about the relationship among various works in writing *Ecce Homo*. His comments about his work

in *Ecce Homo* indicate the centrality of his own body and physiology for his self-understanding of his thought. In asking the question of “which one?” we have understood Nietzsche’s body as the locus of the series of genealogies leading up to his physiological fortuitousness; this means that genealogy can be understood as the body’s re-membering of the histories that it carries with it – a re-membering that is, of course, refigured and made intelligible by the distorting work of the intellect. Now we will turn to the story that makes such an understanding legitimate – Nietzsche’s thematization of his body and its connection to his thought in *Ecce Homo*. In circling back to this story, we engage the repetition of the body’s re-membering of its history. It is this repetition that has brought us to the body as locus in the first place. Whereas, in engaging Nietzsche’s genealogies as signs indicating the physiological locus of fortuitous tension, we have looked away from the body to understand the wider context in which it occurs, our engagement with *Ecce Homo* will concern itself with the locus more explicitly. Therefore, we will add another layer of narrative to the network of signs pointing to this bodily locus: that of the body, through the mediation of the intellect, interpreting the role of its own fluctuating states in the productive re-membering of the histories that constitute it.

The “second piece of evidence” indicating that Nietzsche did not simply change his mind, then, comes from the commentary on his texts in *Ecce Homo*. In this commentary, Nietzsche calls *Human, All Too Human* “the monument of a crisis,” and, noting the book’s subtitle of “A Book for Free Spirits,” he claims that the book marks the accomplishment of liberating himself “from what in my nature did not belong to me.” Therefore, he says, “The term ‘free spirit’ here is not to be understood in any other sense;

it means a spirit that has *become free*, that has again taken possession of itself” (EH HH 1). It seems that the thing from which he had to free himself in order to take possession of himself again is the tendency toward idealism. He also refers to this worrisome tendency when speaking of *The Birth of Tragedy*, which, he says, “smells offensively Hegelian” (EH, BT, 1). The freedom from idealism accompanying the science practiced in *Human, All Too Human* is heavily tied to metaphors of chilling and coldness, both in the book itself and in Nietzsche’s later remarks on it. For instance:

This is war, but war without powder and smoke, without warlike poses, without pathos and strained limbs: all that would still be ‘idealism.’ One error after another is coolly placed on ice; the ideal is not refuted—it *freezes* to death; at the next corner, ‘the saint’; under a huge icicle, ‘the hero’; in the end, ‘faith,’ so-called ‘conviction’; ‘pity’ also cools down considerably—and almost everywhere ‘the thing in itself’ freezes to death (EH, HH, 1).

Nietzsche explains that the method of scientific chilling found in *Human, All Too Human* is made necessary by the sensibility of the times, which is decidedly overheated:

We have Christianity, the philosophers, poets, musicians to thank for an abundance of profound sensations: if these are not to stifle us we must conjure up the spirit of science, which on the whole makes one somewhat colder and more skeptical and in especial cools down the fiery stream of belief in ultimate definitive truths; it is principally through Christianity that this stream has grown so turbulent (HH 244).

Recognizing these excesses of idealism and Christianity, and diagnosing such excesses in himself, Nietzsche perceives the need to harness all available resources in a combative effort. If science appears as the way to objective truth at this phase in Nietzsche’s work, certain subtleties in the text also undermine the natural superiority of science by emphasizing its role in an apparatus that, far from being a neutral methodology, is employed as a response to the illness of the age. The complicated status of science is illustrated well in the following passage:

Science, however, knows no regard for final objectives, just as nature knows nothing of it: but, as the latter occasionally brings into existence things of the greatest appropriateness and usefulness without having willed them, so genuine science, *as the imitation of nature in concepts*, will also occasionally, indeed frequently promote the well-being of mankind and achieve what is appropriate and useful – but likewise *without having willed it*. He who finds the breath of such a

way of thinking too wintry for him perhaps has merely too little fire in him: if he cares to look around him, however, he will perceive illnesses that require icepacks, and people so 'compounded together' of fire and spirit they are hard put to find air cold and cutting enough for them. Moreover: just as individuals and nations too much given to seriousness have a need of frivolity, just as others too excitable and emotional require from time to time the pressure of a heavy burden if they are to stay healthy, ought *we*, the *more spiritual* men of an age which is visibly becoming more and more ignited, not to seize hold on every means there is of extinguishing and cooling, so that we can remain at least as steady, inoffensive and moderate as we still are, and thus perhaps one day be able to serve this age as its mirror and self-reflection? – (HH 38).

An important confrontation occurs in this passage. On the one hand, Nietzsche draws attention to the utter indifference of science to human goals. If it is useful, he insists, it is not because it is in the nature of science itself to be useful. Any advantage that can be gained from it will be gained quite by chance and apart from science's own goals. On the other hand, the subsequent discussion of the illnesses requiring icepacks indicates that science's own indifference does not mean that it cannot be employed partially – in this case, it is put to use as a treatment for an age caught up in a "fiery stream of belief." Nietzsche's suggestion that the more spiritual people of the age ought to grasp any means available for the urgent project of extinguishing and cooling shows that science is not simply a path to knowledge, but is a tool put to work in particular situations.

Science is the method of *Human, All Too Human* not because it is Nietzsche's unqualifiedly preferred method, but because it is the most appropriate method for satisfying the craving of a powerful instinct arising in Nietzsche's physiology. He notes that around the time of the first of the *Bayreuther Festspiele*, he discovers himself in a state of profound alienation, and in *Ecce Homo*, he seeks to articulate "what reached a decision in me at that time" (EH, HH, 2,3). This conclusion that had been made in him began with an instinctive and intellectual agitation and impatience with himself, in which he came to understand his being as "utterly emaciated, utterly starved" (EH, HH, 3). His emaciated state was related to an impoverishment of knowledge, as he realized that his

“‘idealities’ were not worth a damn” (*EH*, *HH*, 3). Experiencing himself in this state, he says: “A truly burning thirst took hold of me: henceforth I really pursued nothing *more* than physiology, medicine, and natural sciences” (*EH*, *HH*, 3). The instincts begin to make themselves heard here, though their initial impulse is not to overthrow the intellect; it is rather to sharpen it. The instinct that takes root here is an instinct of overcoming. The heat of idealism is combated by a chilling lucidity of the intellect, long enough for disgust to take over Nietzsche’s being. This confrontation between an idealistic and a cold, lucid intellect yields a new instinct whose aim it is to liberate Nietzsche from the history of idealism that has dominated what “in his nature” might “belong” to him. Thus, the time of *Human, All Too Human* marks a decision of Nietzsche’s instincts to part with who he has been before:

It was then that my instinct made its inexorable decision against any longer yielding, going along, and confounding myself. Any kind of life, the most unfavorable conditions, sickness, poverty—anything seemed preferable to that unseemly “selflessness” into which I had got myself originally in ignorance and *youth* and in which I had got stuck later on from inertia and so-called “sense of duty” (*EH*, *HH*, 4).

Science is the strategy of the cooler instincts against the principle of an overheated idealism that has ruled Nietzsche’s physiology. As we have seen, the articulations of the origins of human institutions yielded by this scientific inquiry give us a picture of the human being who always acts, at bottom, on the basis of low-level desires. Science’s human being is a natural being, and science’s nature is a process of survival and adaptation in the face of indifference. Thus, science leaves us on the precipice of nihilism, insofar as “the faith in the dignity and uniqueness of man, in his irreplaceability in the great chain of being, is a thing of the past—he has become an *animal*” (*GM* III.25). This is the physiological background on which the logical result of decadence unfolds, making the operations of translation and conversion necessary.

Sitting for a while with the truths of his probing psychological inquiry, Nietzsche's instincts stage another revolt. The intellect that holds Nietzsche's body together as a unity has engaged in a double repression of the impulses – on the one hand, simply in the unifying of the impulses into a single subject, but on the other hand, in mastering the body through the scientific discourse of adaptation and survival, a discourse that covers over the organic expression of physiological impulses. However, the period of the intellectual chilling has also carved a new space in which the impulses might express themselves, a space that was blocked by idealistic sympathies. Though a focus on scientific correctness reduces phenomena to a nihilistic boredom, it also reorients the eye away from “aim,” “unity,” and “truth,” and toward the contingency of materiality and physicality. It is in this sense that nihilism might be “a divine way of thinking.”

Exhausted by the nihilism into which a scientific orientation has led him, Nietzsche's physiology thus begins the conversion that will do justice to this divine way of thinking by translating it into the language of drives, force, and will to power. This conversion consists of reviving earlier stories of the metaphorical and perspectival character of truth, such that his psychological inquiries are not refuted, but are instead resituated in a new narrative aimed at the overcoming of the nihilism with which he has flirted in his scientific orientation. His later explicit questioning of the value of truth and the situating of science into an ascetic genealogy reveals his earlier more scientific work as the rigorous employment of a perspective. If it seems absurd to push seriously for objectivity and then to qualify such an effort as the employment of a perspective, we might imagine Nietzsche giving Walt Whitman's response:

Do I contradict myself?
Very well then I contradict myself,
(I am large, I contain multitudes.)¹⁰²

The physiological stimulation involved in the conversion and translation of this potentially divine way of thinking is a stimulation whereby the organic begins to assert itself. If science is marked by the domination of the organic by the intellect's penetrating objective eye, the conversion out of nihilism depends upon the organic announcing itself in a way that troubles the intellect's hegemony. In this announcement and conversion, science becomes one of many perspectives as new perspectives are opened. Sarah Kofman notes this play of perspectives, suggesting that Nietzsche's diverse ways of speaking reflect an attempt to "see 'the world' with the greatest possible number of 'eyes'":

The multiplication of metaphors symbolizes the plurality of the points of view with which the seeker after knowledge must play; it is this play, which coincides with '*amor fati*', the affirmation of life in all its forms. It is the *will* to a total art form. To make a systematic use of metaphor is to respect the 'justice' which wills perspective and difference, by arming oneself against the 'injustice' of the concept, the shield of the weak who set up as a norm their fixed perspective cut off from becoming.¹⁰³

The taking of multiple perspectives and the employment of diversified metaphors in no way precludes an expression of singularity:

One can become 'only what one is', and the different points of view 'express' the same soil; each of them is a stage in a ripening, the level reached by the dominant drive in its increasing affirmation. A retrospective reading can establish the systematic interrelation of the various perspectives; it can unify them and speak of *one* life, just as it can find the 'same taste', the same scent in the multiple metaphors and seek the law which governs the transition from one to the other or their transformation. A diversity, then, but a unity as well; a discontinuity within a continuity.¹⁰⁴

We are finding such a logic of unity within disparate genealogies. The logic of translation and conversion allows us to imagine how the contradictory assertions in Nietzsche's work fulfill his injunction of doing justice to what is divine in nihilism, and

¹⁰² Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" 51.

¹⁰³ Kofman, *Nietzsche and Metaphor* 102.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 103-104.

Nietzsche's autobiographical writing allows us to see the physiological events guiding the employment of particular metaphors and perspectives.

Nietzsche calls the books following *Human, All Too Human* "Yes-saying books" (*EH*, GS, 1), and, as we know, it is in these books that Nietzsche first communicates the idea of the eternal return. Now we may combine the previous analysis of the fortuitous case with the story of perspective and conversion. Conversion seems to be the fortuitousness of organic life overflowing what can be said about it. Insofar as one translation of the organic into a particular discourse only expresses a slim perspective of the organic, which also contains multitudes, organic life overflows any discourse that determines it and demands to be said in multiple ways. If a scientific approach has sucked life dry, to the point of nihilism, the Yes-saying books reflect that this approach was not able to have the final word. For what follows the cold lucidity of *Human, All Too Human* is not further cold, but convalescence (*GS*, P, 1), a convalescence, that, as we know from Nietzsche's August 1881 letter to Gast, brought him to the point of explosion. This excitation of the impulses occurs as the surprising awakening of a life that seemed to have been deadened by the intellect's cold gaze. In this excitation, the meaninglessness of life in its materiality is converted, transformed, revaluated. Life means nothing at all, and yet it rejoices. This, initially, is what the eternal return means – that meaninglessness is experienced as prodigality and abundance. This is the first aspect of the eternal return – the affirmation that is born from a tremendous moment and expressed by Zarathustra as "For I love you, O eternity!" (*Z*, III, Seven Seals).

If *The Dawn*, *The Gay Science*, and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* illustrate this first aspect of the eternal return, the thought begins to manifest its second aspect more fully in later works. This becomes clear in Nietzsche's discussion of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

The task for the years that followed now was indicated as clearly as possible. After the Yes-saying part of my task had been solved, the turn had come for the No-saying, *No-doing* part: the reevaluation of our values so far, the great war—conjuring up a day of decision. This included the slow search for those related to me, those who, prompted by strength, would offer me their hands for *destroying* (*EH*, BGE, 1).

The appetite for destruction emerges out of the pure rejoicing of affirmation. The joy of life gives way to a thirst for creation, but the soil and climate of values and mores threatens to kill the creation before it can grow. Thus the creative impulse wants to destroy that which is hostile to it. In this way, a natural progression of excited impulses breeds the incompatible principles of unrestrained affirmation and (self) destruction. The tension experienced in this creative affirmation that also wants destruction becomes the thought of will to power. The excitation of creative, destructive force overwhelms previous genealogies, and they are again converted and translated through the lens of this force. Therefore, where the principle of life has been thought as utility, Nietzsche now interprets life from a level one layer deeper than utility, that of strength that wants to unleash itself:

Physiologists should think before putting down the instinct of self-preservation as the cardinal instinct of an organic being. A living thing seeks above all to *discharge* its strength—life itself is *will to power*; self-preservation is only one of the indirect and most frequent *results* (*BGE* 13).

In this conversion, the utilitarian preoccupation with preservation is relegated to a result of life's more profligate and unpredictable primal impulse to expend power. Life, sensing itself in its creative, destructive force, thus interprets itself as will to power and asserts itself before the intellect whose hegemony it threatens. This interpretation does not only reflect the excitation of impulses, but, moving circularly, such an interpretation

further fuels and stimulates the impulses. When Nietzsche offers a fresh interpretation of the nihilistic decadence of the ascetic ideal—“all this means—let us dare to grasp it—a *will to nothingness*, an aversion to life, a rebellion against the most fundamental presuppositions of life; but it is and remains a *will!* (*GM* III.28)—his interpretation is the self-overcoming of a physiology that has discovered in itself a way through nihilism. Such a self-overcoming is a grasping of one’s capacity for destruction as well as the exhilaration of a life that has converted a desire for nothingness into the force of life as will to power.

Section II: Thanatographies

I am one thing, my writings are another matter (*EH*, Books, 1).

* * *

We have now circled back to the fundamental tension between affirmation and destruction between which (and as which) Nietzsche’s fortuitous thought is articulated. Both eternal return and will to power express the duplicitous nature of life as it is manifested in Nietzsche’s physiology. Each of these thoughts, while uttered under a single sign, expresses a conflict of lineages that meet in a fortuitous physiology. It is this confrontational meeting of lineages that makes the fortuitous case fortuitous, for confrontation is a type of excitation. Nietzsche thinks as one who contains conflicting multitudes.

But thinking as one who contains multitudes is, as we have begun to see, a different event than what is expressed in the words that come to be understood as “Nietzsche’s thought.” The confrontational character of the meeting of lineages is performed as the bodily division of Nietzsche as fortuitous case into spiritual and material. Such division and difference, both in the body and between the body and “what

is thought,” concern us given the nature of Nietzsche’s thought in its distinction from the history of philosophy that he calls into question. The genealogical question of “which one?” necessarily exposes the philosopher’s body, which is neither flesh nor corpus, but rather the becoming corpus of flesh as well as the fleshing of a corpus. Our account of the translation of physiology into writing, which is equally a translation of flesh into corpus, has been devised within the force of this genealogical question. But we might be able to give such a physiological account simply by following Nietzsche’s accounts of thought’s organic roots and of the physiological decadence driving the philosopher’s activity. In a sense, then, we could give a physiological account while, for the most part, “leaving Herr Nietzsche” (*GS P 2*).

Yet Herr Nietzsche, perhaps pulled by the current of genealogical thinking, exposes himself further; it seems, in fact, that he cannot quite allow himself to be “left.” Nietzsche writes autobiography; he says “I” and speaks of his own body within the space of a philosophical discourse. This brings into the text a body that is not only a logic of impulses, but that is experienced as living physicality. Such an embodied saying of “I” in a philosophical text is perhaps an inevitable consequence of the way that genealogy changes the philosophical text, as it welcomes the contingency of flesh and blood into the space of the philosopher’s truths. But the body does not enter the text merely as a condition of thought. Instead it is what is at issue in Nietzsche’s genealogy, insofar as genealogy understands itself as an action on behalf of life’s physicality against the cruelty of Christian morality. It is therefore essential to pay attention to the division of the bodily locus and its difference from the body as it appears in Nietzsche’s thought. This division and difference will now occupy us as we try to decipher the sense in which the

multiplicity of perspectives uttered in Nietzsche's genealogies constitutes thinking as action and event and how exactly this active thinking might enter the realm of human events.

Our repetition of Nietzsche's genealogies through his telling of himself has been thanatographic in at least one of Kofman's senses of the word, namely, insofar as it has spread both Nietzsche and his work into a multiplicity of impulses and forces. We have exploded any conception of what Nietzsche "really" thought or believed by representing his most distinctive thoughts as processes of translation and conversion by which his body's impulses respond to volatile and contingent bursts of stimulation. Such a representation makes Nietzsche's thoughts wholly proper to and definitive of himself, while at the same time making what is to the highest degree his own something that is also entirely improper, something that cannot belong in the conventional sense of being controlled and appropriated by a central agency. The genealogy of bodily localization is the writing of the death of the subject, where the substantive nature of the subject and its most proper thoughts are dissolved into a play of the body's contingent drives; and rather than fully controlling those drives, the subject is revealed as a structure that has momentarily gained control, but only as a result of the play of the drives. Therefore, this localized account of Nietzsche's multiplicity of genealogies repeats *Ecce Homo's* thanatographic gesture of what Kofman calls the "'depersonalized' autobiography" wherein Nietzsche is written as "nothing but an accumulation of superabundant forces which explode."¹⁰⁵

But what can we make of this written explosion? Thinking of Nietzsche as this explosion of forces causes us to circle once again back to the locus of these explosive

¹⁰⁵ Kofman, "Explosion I" 61.

forces. We are, of course, circling back to something that is not there, something that has left its traces in the text, but the text pushes us to imagine an event outside of it, of which it bears the traces. And so we must think about the body and the life that writes the death of itself as an agent. While *Ecce Homo* is a thanatography, this does not necessarily mean that the writing of *Ecce Homo* is a pure event of superabundant forces—Nietzschean dynamite—in the sense of the achievement of the impulses dissolving the subject into Dionysian bliss. Thanatography is the *writing* of a death, and its written character puts it at a distance from the event it writes. The text certainly acts as a sign pointing toward a physiological event of great intensity, but the written character—the intelligible character—of the work also suggests a restraint that is important to our investigation of the notion of thinking as action. A true death of the subject would mean the silent, unintelligible communication of the impulses to one another, rather than a book in which the writer tells of himself in a deconstructive way; it would be madness. Such a death would mean a total submission to the thought of eternal return and would occur as the silence of one who no longer subjects the impulses to the disfiguration of the code of signs. But Nietzsche's thanatography only points to the possibility of such a death. The writing of thanatography depends upon a motion of finite return—the subject's continuous slipping away from and remembering of itself. In writing, Nietzsche performs a kind of madness without "going mad." Kofman points out the ways in which Nietzsche resists madness in *Ecce Homo* when she suggests that the work of mourning involved in thanatography is followed by the more traditionally autobiographical gesture of reappropriation and retelling of himself:

He attempts to divide up what in him properly belongs to 'him' and what were just borrowed masks, hiding places, more or less demeaning figureheads, occasionally aberrant detours, in order to achieve his unity and his center and to transform himself into a destiny.

It goes without saying that this reappropriative gesture can be read as a defense against ‘madness’: first of all against the madness of which the Germans accuse him and which they diagnose when they complain of his ‘eccentricities,’ while so long as they do not know *where his center is*, Nietzsche says, they cannot really know where and when he has been eccentric so far. The autobiography, by affirming and designating *his center*, should save him from such suspicions.¹⁰⁶

The practice of affirming and designating his center in *Ecce Homo* keeps Nietzsche from straying too far from that center, even though maintaining and inhabiting such a center makes the explosion of force released entirely from a subject impossible.

As Klossowski explains:

If his centre was identified with the ‘great passion’ to which his life was dedicated, if he needed to remain alive a few more years in order to pursue a goal – what then was this goal? The work? Or something else that would be accomplished in what was to come? Was it not his concentration that kept his *will* from achieving this goal? If the goal was the work, then as long as he remained focused on the idea of the work, and thus on communication, in reality he created an obstacle to the experience, for he still conceived of it as something communicable; ‘his centre’ was no longer his passion, but was still conceived of in terms of his understanding. By eluding the vehemence of his oscillations in this manner, he postponed the experience of *being outside his centre*. Now this experience – which was something his previous work demanded, and thus something he demanded of himself – was his own metamorphosis.¹⁰⁷

Klossowski is clearly playing with the word ‘centre’ in this passage, using it on the one hand to refer to the passion of Nietzsche’s life and on the other hand to refer to an impediment to having the experience that this passion demanded. In a sense, the center toward which his life was pointed could only be *experienced* eccentrically. For Klossowski, such an experience means the eternal return. The eternal return, according to Klossowski, begins as a *Stimmung* and grows into a thought, but the experience of the eternal return would require casting oneself into oblivion (in which case, of course, the word ‘experience’ becomes difficult to use). Thus, insofar as Nietzsche concentrated on understanding and communicating (or we could say appropriating and gathering) himself

¹⁰⁶ Kofman, “Explosion I” 59.

¹⁰⁷ Klossowski 215: I am reading this passage, as I have Klossowski’s other passages demonstrating structuralist tendencies, with an emphasis on the interruption and deconstruction already at work in any structure based on drives that never make themselves present. On such a reading, this passage becomes a description of the ways in which Nietzsche’s drives divide and oppose themselves to one another in a tension that produces the ability to think clearly.

and his center, he could not experience the circle of which the centre was only a part.

Ecce Homo is, above all, a communication and a concentrated articulation of the centre, even if the articulation is artful enough to draw the very notion of the *autos* of autobiography into question. As a gathering reappropriation, *Ecce Homo* repeats and draws attention to the basic strategy that allows Nietzsche to think thoughts with destructive and abyssal components. He experiences and undergoes such transformative thoughts as eternal return *as thoughts to be articulated*, and thus their annihilating possibilities are staved off. A simple but complete affirmation of eternal return would be the welcoming of eternity—a simple welcome of the abyss without memory. This moment of decision for the will would put an end to the tension experienced by the will in the thought of eternal return. Such a discrete act of will would overcome the division of the thought by submitting to the thought. In affirming this moment absolutely, it would also destroy it; in aggressing absolutely against the form of life that insists on meaning, it would also affirm the eternal return of the meaningless moment. Submission to the eternal return from either side of the will would thus include the opposing side. But the divided will which remains undecided in regard to this abyssal possibility produces the tension that allows the eternal return to take hold as an obsessive thought—as a thought articulated precisely within the tension experienced by the will. The finite circle happens within this tension, playing with the eternal return's abyssal quality in a forgetting of self that re-gathers and re-members. Such a circle is the *condicio sine qua non* of thinking the primacy of the organic and the eternal return, and this circle is repeated explicitly in the thanatographic re-membering of *Ecce Homo*.

Therefore, neither *Ecce Homo*, nor any of Nietzsche's texts, truly explodes. They point, through the medium of writing, to an explosion; they point to an intensity of forces as their locus and source, but these texts also leave the mark of an intelligence gathering these forces into a unity through the forces of distortion and abbreviation. In other words, these texts are the product of the intensity of excited forces, but they are written as the translation of these forces into an intelligible meaning. This translation occurs in a language of mastery by a consciousness still in command of the body's forces. Nietzsche's autobiographical texts, then, in a repetition of the more general position of his thinking, point to explosion while performing in a style of equilibrium, leaving us with a subjectivity continuously effacing itself without thereby eliminating itself.

Perhaps this point concerning the persistence of a unified intellect in the act of writing will seem fatuous and misguided. Are we not simply taking Nietzsche's metaphor of explosion and applying it too literally by focusing on the factual conditions surrounding Nietzsche's act of writing, rather than embracing the innovative and (metaphorically speaking) explosive character of his work? It would be completely shortsighted to deny the metaphorically explosive character of Nietzsche's written text by focusing entirely on the conditions of textuality, but there is a way to consider what textuality means for the kind of explosion that Nietzsche seeks without denying that a written text carries with it a force that is not necessarily performed in *the act* of writing. The content of Nietzsche's texts, specifically, is what guides us to the question of the active performance of Nietzsche as autobiographer, and to consider a living Nietzsche that cannot be reduced purely to the texts he wrote. We are challenged, by both the form and the content of Nietzsche's texts, to imagine the life, now absent, that leaves its traces

in the text. Autobiography combined with a genealogy that locates the stuff of thinking in physiology has led us to keep circling back to Nietzsche's physiology as a locus. The analysis that has emerged from Nietzsche's autobiographical gesture would thus be incomplete without considering the distance between Nietzsche's physiological states and his written interpretations of those states, a distance that we have found to be necessary in considering the focused concentration of writing and the unintelligibility of the pure communication of impulses with one another.

Tragedy and the Body

Now, however, we must turn to the other side of Nietzsche's physiology in order to examine another dimension of the distance between the locus and the thought of which it is the expression. Thus far we have drawn attention to the distance between thanatographic writing, in its writing of the subject's death by explosion into forces, and the practice of thanatographic writing, in its necessary non-explosiveness. Thanatographic writing, as an autobiographical practice of writing, repeats the distance of Nietzsche's thought in general, which is to say that it thinks life as meaningless eternal return, while performing a finite return in which meaning is established and even insisted upon. But this distance refers to the difference between the locus and the thought only in regard to self-overcoming as an explosion of subjectivity. We will recall that more than just an overcoming of subjectivity is at stake in self-overcoming. The explosion of subjectivity is an issue only in regard to something more fundamental: the liberation of the body over which intellect/agency/subjectivity has ruled. Therefore, we must occupy ourselves with the locus as body in a more extended sense than a simple collection of forces. This will require a concern with the division we have seen developing between

body in its more material and its more spiritual senses. In attending to this division, we will find a tragic dimension of Nietzsche's thought.

At the same time, however, we must proceed carefully with the word 'tragic' because it is not clear that Nietzsche's case is tragic in the same sense as the tragedy extolled in his work. The significance of tragedy as it is celebrated by Nietzsche is not found primarily in the fate of the tragic hero. What is compelling to Nietzsche about tragedy is not the mere fact that the great person meets a lamentable fate, but is rather the dynamic of the way the Greeks tell and experience the story of fatefulness. Exhibiting a "pessimism of *strength*" (*BT*, Attempt, 1), the Greeks look into the abyssal meaninglessness of a life in which great heroes fall at the hands of tricking, scheming gods, and hear music in the chaos, a Dionysian music that they are compelled by Apollonian forces to present in the shining of images. The Greeks venture down into the abyss and come back up with art. Nietzsche therefore puts forth the hypothesis that the origin of tragedy is the ripe overfullness of great health:

The question is whether his ever stronger *craving for beauty*, for festivals, pleasures, new cults was rooted in some deficiency, privation, melancholy, pain? Supposing that this were true—and Pericles (or Thucydides) suggests as much in the great funeral oration—how should we then have to explain the origin of the opposite craving, which developed earlier in time, the *craving for the ugly*; the good, severe will of the older Greeks to pessimism, to the tragic myth, to the image of everything underlying existence that is frightful, evil, a riddle, destructive, fatal? What, then, would be the origin of tragedy? Perhaps *joy*, strength, overflowing health, overgreat fullness? And what, then, is the significance, physiologically speaking, of that madness out of which tragic and comic art developed—the Dionysian madness? How now? Is madness perhaps not necessarily the symptom of degeneration, decline, and the final stage of culture? Are there perhaps—a question for psychiatrists—neuroses of *health*? of the youth and youthfulness of a people? (*BT*, Attempt, 4).¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁸ The origin of tragedy described here is, of course, considerably different from the one actually put forth in *The Birth of Tragedy*, where Nietzsche describes a poor terrified Greek seduced by the power of art to endure existence (*BT* 3). The new analyses in the "Attempt at Self-Criticism" indicate Nietzsche's embarrassment with this and other idealistic explanations, which, as we have seen, are scarcely found after his "period of cooling."

In diagnosing the early Greeks with a neurosis of health and suggesting that such a neurosis is the origin of tragedy, Nietzsche reveals that tragedy occurs with the logic of a singularity. Tragedy is the singular event whereby, in a climate of abundance, Dionysian “music strives to express its nature in Apollinian images” (*BT* 16). Its form is singular, as is the setting of its event, which is now lost. *The Birth of Tragedy* cannot recover tragedy, but can only reconstruct and remember tragedy as a lost event. As Scott explains, “He gives his descriptive account in the awareness that *his* ability to recognize the Greek accomplishment of tragedy is formed by the loss of their experience of tragedy.”¹⁰⁹ This loss makes tragedy repeatable only as a different event. It is singular.

As a fortuitous case, Nietzsche shares this singular logic. His singularity lies in being a point where the repressed impulses make themselves intelligible in thought and in being the point at which this play of the impulses expresses itself in the duplicitous sign of the return. In this sense, Nietzsche’s singularity also lies in the fact that the logic of the tragic art refigures itself in him. The becoming intelligible of the impulses mimics the structure of the coming to appearance of Dionysian music in Apollonian images. However, we must also consider the element of tragedy in Nietzsche that does not pertain to the tragic art as such, but rather to his similarity with the tragic hero, for Nietzsche is not merely the playground for art, but is also singular in the sense of being a singular human existence.

Nietzsche’s human tragedy—his similarity with the tragic hero—lies in the impossible task demanded by his own physiology. As we have seen, he is in between affirmation and destruction, the moment of joy in what is and the demand that it be otherwise. When these two demands are held in tension, they express themselves in

¹⁰⁹ *The Time of Memory* 56.

thoughts that express joy, abundance, and disgust all in one. In this way, he *writes* tragically in the sense not of the tragic hero, but in the sense of the ultimately affirmative tenor of the tragic art that he theorizes. But does his thinking (as it is written), which we have found to be at a distance from the locus to which it points, also perform such joy and abundance in its move toward overcoming? In a certain sense, the answer is clearly yes, since the translation of the impulses into writing is, in fact, a performance of the impulses. But in circling back to that lost locus and recreating it from its traces in writing, we find that there is an important sense in which the answer is also no – the event of thinking is tragic inasmuch as the exhilaration of the body’s rehabilitation is inevitably connected with a re-division of body and spirit in which the body is debilitated. Nietzsche cannot take a liberating stand on the body without performatively enslaving it in a re-inscribed version of the division that his written thought resists.¹¹⁰

The performance of his thinking imitates the tragic hero.

While the period of the will’s tension, maintained by the domination of the intellect, gives birth to thinking that will change the West (though we have yet to see how, specifically) in the form of prose exhilarating and powerful enough to, on occasion, rouse even the most bored and hungover college student (with mixed effects, to be sure), this period is not lived in the same tenor in which it is written. A physiology in an excited state could have any number of outlets, but in Nietzsche’s case, the excitation expends itself intellectually and, in a certain sense, leaves the waste products of the

¹¹⁰ This is a variation and inversion of the idea of tragic contradiction, which Krell borrows from Granier in order to describe the descensional reflection of genealogy. Krell summarizes tragic contradiction by saying that “in tragedy the one who promotes a certain value or takes a particular stand is destroyed by that very value or stand” (Krell, 41). Here the tragic contradiction is that both the stand and the one who take it are destroyed *in the taking of* the stand. The performance undercuts what is to be performed in a movement of regression. This inversion mimics the tragic in that like the tragic hero, Nietzsche’s very action undoes itself. Of course, this does not mean that “all is lost” because this event is traced in writing, which delivers a future—we will come to this shortly.

operation turning impulse to thought in Nietzsche's lived physicality. We have seen that Klossowski describes the pain Nietzsche experiences in thinking as the brain's revenge for what it perceives as an effort to dissolve it. Whatever the physiological explanation, it is clear that Nietzsche experiences thinking as a physically painful, sometimes almost unendurable, activity. In an 1879 letter to Gast, he writes:

You would not believe with what fidelity I have carried out the programme of thoughtlessness so far; I have reasons for fidelity here, for 'behind thought stands the devil' of a tormenting attack of pain. The manuscript which you received from St Moritz was written at such a high and hard price that perhaps nobody would have written it if he could possibly have avoided doing so. Often I shudder to read it, especially the longer parts, because of the ugly memories it brings. All of it – except for a few lines – was thought out on walks, and it was sketched out in pencil in six small notebooks; the fair copy made me ill almost every time I set about writing it. I had to omit about twenty longish thought sequences, unfortunately quite essential ones, because I could not find the time to extract them from my frightful pencil scribbles; the same was true last summer. In the interim the connections between the thoughts escape my memory; I have to steal the minutes and quarter-hours of 'brain-energy', as you call it, steal them away from a suffering brain. Sometimes I think that I shall never do it again. I am reading the copy you made, and find it difficult to understand myself – my head is that tired (*WDB*, Briefe, 134).¹¹¹

The painfulness of thinking indicates that the tension that allows the impulses to express themselves without entirely taking over—the tension of intelligibility—is a tension that wreaks havoc on the body that sustains it.

While the impulses achieve the overcoming movement by which they make themselves felt intellectually and are articulated in thought, their ability to speak on behalf of the "body" is becoming limited. If the impulses are being liberated in this tension, then Nietzsche's miserable condition reveals that there is more to a human life than its impulses. Perhaps it could be argued that the lack driving this division between material and spiritual bodies and the subordination of the former to the latter is that the impulses have not taken over completely enough. Is the punctuation of intellectual moments on the finite circle merely an obstruction and resistance to an overcoming that would unify the material and spiritual? Would real madness somehow be a desirable

¹¹¹ This translation is found in Klossowski, 19-20.

outcome of Nietzsche's thought? It would be a mistake to romanticize madness as a goal of Nietzsche's work, particularly when his own catatonic state at the end of his life provides a vivid example of the impotence of a life that has lost lucidity. Rather, the impulse of life to order the impulses, to arrange them, to dominate them, is one of the great innovations of will to power. Nietzsche surely knows this. Although he associates decadence with intellectual depth, he also says that such decadence has made us infinitely more interesting creatures, and in places, he gives an entirely naturalized account of the intellect's role in human life:

To what extent even our intellect is a consequence of conditions of existence—: we would not have it if we did not *need* to have it, and we would not have it *as it is* if we did not need to have it *as it is*, if we could live *otherwise* (WP 498).

Indeed, a thinker cannot live in the true sense of the word without his intellect intact. Without the intellect, the impulses would no longer effect any results in the life of the one whom they supposedly animate.

Yet it remains the case that the intellectual tension of thinking is for Nietzsche the principal strike against physicality, and thus the thing that re-initiates a divide between the body's material and spiritual aspects. Given the various ways in which life is both expressing itself and turning against itself in this tragic fortuitous case, it would be germane to clarify several different senses of life emerging in this discourse. Life is the silent life of the impulses whose traces are found in Nietzsche's texts. But life must also refer to the most complex expression of a being's power, the thing which singularizes it and sets it apart. In the case of Nietzsche, being a philosopher, this is a combined total physiology, which includes, above all, the intellect. Nietzsche has already offered some commentary on these two meanings of life in his formula "life against life," privileging the rights of the former over the latter in the name of health. This is not to say that the

life of the body's impulses is always at odds with the creative expression of the body's total physiology, but only to say that Nietzsche finds the philosophical impulse to be a decadent one.¹¹² The physiology of an artist might be more likely, within Nietzsche's account, to offer a complex expression of one's physiology in accordance with the body's life affirming impulses.

Therefore, to articulate more precisely the first two meanings of the word life, both of which are put to use in Nietzsche's texts, life is 1) the logic of will to power, as the body's drive to impose form on all it encounters. It is life in this sense that Nietzsche calls "a will to the accumulation of force" (*WP* 689) (as we have noted in chapter two), and Nietzsche seems to conceive of it as a force driven purely by affirmation. If it is destructive, this would only be a consequence of the affirmation of its own force. 2) Life also refers to the physiology of a single being, which in the case of modern human beings generally falls short of the ideal of affirmation put forward in the first sense of life. These two conceptions are the two that recur in Nietzsche's work. However, what Klossowski calls the *price* of incarnating the fortuitous case, that is, the destruction of "this organism (this instrument, this body),"¹¹³ leads us to reconsider the health generally associated with the former case, and in doing so, we add to the meanings of the word "life." Circling back to Nietzsche's body as a locus provides an example that cannot be accounted for adequately with the logic of life and health most prominent in Nietzsche's work, and thus calls for thinking a new dimension of these terms.

¹¹² Creative expression is not always the expression of abundant life, as Nietzsche shows in *On the Genealogy of Morals*: "The slave revolt in morality begins when *ressentiment* itself becomes creative and gives birth to values" (*GM* I.10).

¹¹³ Klossowski, 220.

Nietzsche's work consistently identifies bodily materiality in impulsive, instinctual terms, making issues of asceticism issues of the body's intelligence versus the intelligence of a consciousness whose power has become unnaturally and harmfully strong. Zarathustra tells the despisers of the body:

The body is a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd. An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call "spirit"—a little instrument and toy of your great reason (Z, I, Despisers).

Contrasting the "self," which both dwells in the body and *is* the body, with the "ego and its bold leaps," which is the target of the self's laughter, Zarathustra tells the despisers of the body that "the creative body created the spirit as a hand for its will" (Z, I, Despisers). Even in the hatred that these despisers have for the body, Zarathustra says, the body itself is not fooled, but its instinct has become sick and attached to death:

Even in your folly and contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve your self. I say unto you: your self itself wants to die and turns away from life. It is no longer capable of what it would do above all else: to create beyond itself. That is what it would do above all else, that is its fervent wish (Z, I, Despisers).

The self wants to die, but Zarathustra gives a definite reason for this death instinct. The body wants death because it is no longer able to perform the activity that life most essentially is: creation beyond itself. Even the decadent body, then, cannot will contrary to the greater instinct that is life. Zarathustra is suggesting here that even life that is deteriorating cannot harm life as such, that death is the process by which life removes its own deterioration. As he says earlier in the text, "Blessed are the sleepy ones: for they shall soon drop off" (Z, I, Teachers of Virtue).

These passages make of the word "life" a logic that plays itself out in the body of a living being. Even when the life of the singular being is a decadent life, this logic has the last word, in that what cannot create dies off. Thus life as will to power is served, even in those cases where the will turns against itself. The more that Nietzsche expresses

the force of unique creativity stirred up by his impulsive, instinctive life, the farther removed his being is from anything that can be considered health. The objection to this (perhaps coming even from Nietzsche himself) would be that I am thinking of health in entirely too conventional a way. Indeed, if Nietzsche is able to create and express beautifully, is not *this* the great health, and the illness that befalls him merely the consequence of such instinctive creation in *a world that is itself ill, and thus hostile to such singular creation?* Does Nietzsche have to suffer simply because he is the embodiment of great health in a world that cannot understand or tolerate such health?

Such interpretations can only go so far before they become frustrated by other implications of Nietzsche's emphasis on the body. As we have seen in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche tends to think of the body as a network of instincts that constitutes the intelligence of a life drive. However, the reason that asceticism is experienced as a problem to be overcome in the first place involves the body in a more complex way than as a mere logic of drives. At stake in the problem of asceticism is not only the squashing of the body's healthier drives, but the dismantling of the body's sensuality – of its enjoyment of itself in these drives. If we are to speak of the body, we cannot reduce it to the abstraction of its impulses, but we must also include a notion of life and of body that takes account of the body's lived experience, which is not the same as the logic of its drives. Such a conception of the body would not exclude the body's drives and desires, but these drives and desires would be understood in the context of their contribution to the body's *lived* health and vigor or lack thereof, of its joy or pain in its own expressiveness.

We have, therefore, three meanings into which the word life divides when considering Nietzsche as fortuitous case. All of these meanings are tied to the materiality of life as bodily, but they emphasize different elements of this materiality. Nietzsche's case shows us: 1) that the total domination of impulsive life would be the destruction of both the individual's creative and expressive power (individual physiology) and the individual's lived bodily experience, 2) that expressive power requires a tension between affirmation and destruction, producing a finite circle rather than an impulsive submission to eternal return, and 3) that an individual physiology at the height of its health and creative powers does not necessarily mean the health of the body as lived experience. We can say, then, that Nietzsche is tragic in the sense of a tragic paradox: whenever his body exercises the tension required for the singular expression of his physiology in thinking, his lived experience is a state of unhealthy suffering, but if his impulses were to exercise the "health" of their liberation from intellectual life, the intelligibility of singular expression would be lost. Either case means giving up the joy of lived experience for something beyond it.

Therefore, this shares the logic of the tragic hero's fate, but the fortuitous case does not share the same logic as that of the early Greek sensibility found in tragedy. Nietzsche demonstrates that, for the Greeks, tragedy was about life, and the way that he speaks of life in *The Birth of Tragedy* is not yet the logic of instincts that he develops through the thought of will to power. While the "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" points to the Greeks' physiological abundance as a source of tragedy, his analyses in the body of the text present the singular event that was the tragic age in its relation to the Greeks' lived experience:

Similarly, I believe, the Greek man of culture felt himself nullified in the presence of the satiric chorus; and this is the most immediate effect of the Dionysian tragedy, that the state and society and, quite generally, the gulfs between man and man give way to an overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature. The metaphysical comfort—with which, I am suggesting even now, every true tragedy leaves us—that life is at the bottom of things, despite all the changes of appearances, indestructibly powerful and pleasurable—this comfort appears in incarnate clarity in the chorus of satyrs, a chorus of natural beings who live ineradicably, as it were, behind all civilization and remain eternally the same, despite the changes of generations and of the history of nations.

With this chorus the profound Hellene, uniquely susceptible to the tenderest and deepest suffering, comforts himself, having looked boldly right into the terrible destructiveness of so-called world history as well as the cruelty of nature, and being in danger of longing for a Buddhist negation of the will. Art saves him, and through art—life (*BT* 7).

Later, of course, the language of ‘metaphysical comfort’ will be a great embarrassment to Nietzsche; however, we can still gain a basic insight into the way the Greeks experienced tragedy from this passage, without holding up the standard of salvation and comfort. On a very basic level, the experience of tragedy is simply that the Greek looks into the abyss, but not in an unmitigated way. He looks into the abyss through the lens of art, and thus comes up refreshed, ready to go about his life in an affirmative fashion. Nietzsche does discuss tragedy from the perspective of the tragic poets, but the real import of his analysis lies in tragedy, not as the product of an author, but as a force of a culture. As a force of a culture, tragedy is the art which “alone knows how to turn these nauseous thoughts about the horror or absurdity of existence into notions with which one can live” (*BT* 7). This element of Greek culture is the power of making life something to be desired and lived with gratitude. It is a conversion of life’s indifference into pleasure and power—not that life loses its character of indifference, but rather that this indifference is experienced in its pleasure and power. Nietzsche calls “*l’art pour l’art*—a snake which bites its own tail” (*TI*, Skirmishes, 24) because all art must serve life, and in the case of tragedy, art serves life in a very concrete manner. Nietzsche says that in Greek theatres, “the terraced structure of concentric arcs made it possible for everybody to actually *overlook* the whole

world of culture around him and to imagine, in absorbed contemplation, that he himself was a chorist” (*BT* 8). Thus, the Greek experienced tragedy as a participant, merged into a sublime unity with a heartless nature, and felt the power of life’s energy in the midst of nature’s indifference. He left the performance ready to live anew.

Nietzsche is surely right to call himself a “*tragic philosopher*” (*EH*, *BT*, 3),¹¹⁴ in the sense that his work both expresses a tragic paradox and is written in one. Nietzsche’s work says “Yes” to life while acknowledging the cruelty of life’s indifference and meaninglessness, and, as we have seen, the writing of the work takes place in the tension of a will divided between the affirmation of life’s meaninglessness and the destruction of the singular life bringing such an affirmation to articulation. Yet in another sense, Nietzsche’s philosophical activity does not share the definitive elements that he finds in tragedy in regard to life. The Greek experience of and participation in tragedy is at once the definitive creative expression of the Greek spirit and also the stimulation to a fuller lived experience. Indeed, the latter drives the content of the creative expression, which is why the Greeks are more an example of health and strength than they are psychologically interesting. Art for the Greeks, particularly in the form of their gods, helped them to “ward off the ‘bad conscience,’ so as to be able to rejoice in their freedom of soul” (*GM* II.23). This freedom of soul was bolstered by the tale of the tragic hero who falls, not from his own bad deeds, but because there is no good move for him to make: “ ‘He must have been deluded by a *god*,’ they concluded finally, shaking their heads” (*GM* II.23). The real mark of Greek art, then, is to take the horrors of existence and to speak them in a way that minimizes their destructiveness to life and intensifies the desire for life. This way of showing does not deny or cover over these horrors, but in exerting a pessimism of

¹¹⁴ He actually calls himself the first tragic philosopher—a claim that I am not prepared to address here.

strength, it makes them appear together with the power, pleasure, and beauty of life—a conversion that makes life both indifferent and blameless. Tragedy thus speaks the terrible in a way that improves the quality of lived experience.

Perhaps it is nearly impossible in a post-Socratic age to imagine the experience that a people who placed very little importance on consciousness might have had of the tragic art. As Nietzsche himself notes in his Attempt at Self Criticism in *The Birth of Tragedy*, we assume from a distance that the Greeks lived the pessimism of tragedy; we suppose that their world was marked by carrying the burden of Oedipus in their breasts. But Nietzsche suspects that art plays itself out in a pattern similar to the one we have seen with Nietzsche's work—that its content is not the same as its performance. Thus he suspects that out of abundance pessimism is expressed, while optimism is the language of the afflicted (*BT*, Attempt, 4). Tragedy founds a world that is based on the energy of the meeting of Dionysian and Apollinian, rather than on the conscious leftovers of the tragic hero's lamentable fate. The Greeks, unburdened by a tragic "consciousness", confronted life's ugliness in veiled form in the theatre in order to live more joyfully outside of it.

We have seen that Nietzsche's thought follows a somewhat different pattern. The content of what he utters is the affirmation of life in its terrible pleasure and power—he is a tragic philosopher in this regard—but this expression does not carry with it the straightforward joy of lived experience in the life of the one who expresses it. As Klossowski says in a summation of a handful of Nietzsche's letters, "The act of thinking became identical with suffering, and suffering with thinking."¹¹⁵ More significantly, though, this act of suffering divides the body into the duality that it wants to overcome. It emphasizes the exhilaration of the physical body's pain, and in doing so, initiates the

¹¹⁵ Klossowski 23.

division of the locus. Never has Nietzsche been happier with himself than in the sickest and most painful periods of his life (*EH*, *HH*, 4).¹¹⁶ Nietzsche's tragic expression, therefore, does not perform what it says; indeed, the way that the tragedy is performed is closer to the Socratic and Christian than to the Dionysian Greek. The performance is a sacrifice of life in the here and now for the sake of possibilities for a life in the future, a sacrifice of lived physicality for the sake of a more spiritualized physiology.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, as in the Christian world, there is a payoff for this life in the form of physiological exhilaration, but it has quickly become spiritualized by the division of the body into its spiritual and material expressions.

In fact, the Judeo-Christian tradition at times shows a deeper concern with the explicitly physical element of the body's health and enjoyment (or lack thereof). Job cannot be recompensed for his suffering merely by knowing he is beloved of God. His is not a spiritual reward. God pays him back in explicitly material terms: "and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before."¹¹⁸ And even with boils on his body and a desire to have never been born, Job's faith for the future remains rooted in his materiality:

¹¹⁶ "Nie habe ich so viel Glück an mir gehabt, als in den kränksten und schmerzhaftesten Zeiten meines Lebens" (*EH* *MAM* 4). We could also translate this to say that never has Nietzsche had such luck with himself as in the sickest and most painful periods of his life. He finds himself most fortunate when he suffers the most.

¹¹⁷ Certainly, self-sacrifice is not limited to Jesus and Socrates. As Scott observes, the experience of Dionysus is one of self-sacrifice and self loss, in the sense of intoxication, but also in the sense of loss with no meaning: "We may speak now of the sublimity of the body without a self-subsistent soul, of the beast without humanity, of killing without conscience, of intoxication in the passage of consciousness, of death without meaning, of life without purpose. But we speak also in this context of resurrection, coming again, re-membering, re-solution, return to determination. Dionysian sublimity dissolves individuals of all kinds into a mere passage of difference and then re-solves them into these differences again—into membered bodies who come again to pass" (*TM* 80). We certainly see this kind of sacrifice in Nietzsche's circular physiology, as he undergoes the experience of madness and returns in a circle of finite return. This is the resurrection of a Dionysian reveler who comes back to life having looked into the abyss. However, the dimension of sacrifice that I am emphasizing now happens in a division between body and soul that gives it a more Christian and Socratic than Dionysian emphasis.

¹¹⁸ Job 42:10, New Revised Standard Version

“and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then in my flesh I shall see God.”¹¹⁹ Job’s story gives us a sense of the impossibility of allowing non-fleshly justification into the economy of flesh submitted to suffering. Job’s fleshly loss is not paid back by, for instance, a spiritual satisfaction of knowing that he is right and righteous and that his friends are wrong. In fact, Job does make gains at the level of what we might call his “spirit-body.” Having suffered and been addressed by God, he now understands God’s power in a sense that profoundly exceeds cognitive acknowledgement. He has fleshly understanding of God’s ability to give and take away as He wishes. “I had heard you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you.”¹²⁰ This is an insight of the spirit-flesh. But such insight is no exchange for “loathsome sores” and the loss of everything that Job loves. The economy is decidedly not interrupted in Job; he suffers in the flesh, and he must be restored as flesh, in the most material sense of that word.

It must be said that Nietzsche has a different aim than the author of the book of Job. Obviously, Nietzsche is not looking for God’s justice.¹²¹ The eternal return, as an affirmation of the completeness of the moment in all of its pain, is non-restorative remembering. Eternal return insists that suffering utter, “thus I will it.” Job does not will it thus: “Therefore I will not restrain my mouth; I will speak in the anguish of my spirit; I will complain in the bitterness of my soul.”¹²² In sticking with his complaint, Job never experiences a sublime feeling of the spirit-body that would justify the loss of joy in physicality. The author of the story seems to sense that fleshly life is no cheap thing—

¹¹⁹ Job 19:26

¹²⁰ Job 42:5

¹²¹ The God of the book of Job obviously has a strange kind of justice, which hinges mostly on His right to do anything because of his infinite power. However, I think that the ending of the story does show a God concerned with restoring to mortals what has been taken by His caprice.

¹²² Job 7:11

that if Job suffers the loss of the enjoyment of his own flesh and God is just, then God must pay up in the end. The economy of flesh is interrupted in Nietzsche, perhaps by a persistent yea-saying that refuses to cave into weakness. This interruptive yea-saying might be understood as the strategy of a suffering physiology with an obsessive fear of suicide. In the same way that Nietzsche describes the decadent form of life taking up the ascetic cloak in order to preserve itself in its weakened form (*GM* III.13), Nietzsche's physiology performs an ascetic division in order to preserve the tension of thought that has the power to move life past asceticism. This division, and more specifically the acceptance of and spiritualized enjoyment of physical suffering, gives Nietzsche's performance of thought a sacrificial logic similar to that of Socrates and Jesus. This is not to say that Nietzsche's philosophical practice is the "same old thing" as Socratic philosophical practice, but it is to say that Nietzsche has inherited a Socratic form of philosophical practice in his embodiment of philosophy. Has he been understood? Dionysus verses the Crucified—a battle waged within his own being.

Politics and the Space of Writing

Just as Socrates dies in a way that preserves philosophy, Nietzsche practices a self-destructive thinking for the sake of a future sensibility. And just as the philosophical practice by which Socrates dies is not the same as the new form of philosophy taken up after him, Nietzsche's self-destructive philosophical practice inaugurates practices that tend to occupy themselves with the important content Nietzsche has transmitted to the future in writing, rather than with the sacrificial logic of Nietzsche's practice. The locus of the event of thinking is distinct from the traces it leaves in articulated thoughts. Nietzsche leaves in writing possibilities for ways of thinking and being intelligible that

are less ascetic and less cruel. The process of self-overcoming, then, can be understood to extend beyond the play of Nietzsche's single physiology in its self-destructive logic, to a multiplicity of future bodies that might live in less ascetic ways. The sacrificial logic of his thought makes it clear that self-overcoming must be understood to open onto a future body, making the self-overcoming that allows Nietzsche's articulation of new ideals a phase of something larger. The point of Nietzsche's thought for those reading it is not to re-enact Nietzsche's bodily division, but rather to benefit from the distance from that self-destructive locus. But he has also left in his writings the traces that help us to find an answer to the question of "which one?" These writings that hold great possibilities for non-ascetic ways of thinking and being are grounded in (and therefore, to a certain extent, ungrounded by) the ascetic logic of sacrifice for future generations. Life as impulses turns first against life as living flesh, bringing about a being's most potent expressiveness, for the sake of a life to be lived in a future time. This is one of perhaps many senses in which Nietzsche is born posthumously (*AC P*). The explosive force of his writing is only understood as such in its removal from his own physical debilitation. The writing gains an efficacy for strategies of thinking and living only in its removal from the risk lived by Nietzsche at the locus of these explosive thoughts.

We have, then, begun to fill out the notion of how genealogy might insert Nietzsche into the realm of human affairs. In the fashion of Socrates and Christ, Nietzsche's body submits to the destruction of its own lived experience in the effort to give an entirely new sensibility to future generations. While Nietzsche insists that he is no founder of a religion, his thinking does follow the strategy that has given birth to the prodigious institutions whose tyranny he combats. His body performs its own sacrifice

seemingly in order to relocate philosophy in the life of the flesh. Yet there is more to be said about Nietzsche's involvement in human affairs than a simple recognition of this sacrificial logic. What real impact does this event of thinking have in the realm of human affairs? What is the political meaning of the space of this thinking in its distance from the written articulations carried over from its event?

We have seen already that the institution that takes its lead from Socrates' death does not occur in the same space as Socrates' own practice. Nor, indeed, does the "body of Christ" as it establishes itself throughout history probably resemble the life of the man of Galilee. This is at least partly explained by the dispersal of their respective events into writing. Sacrifice gives birth to a future decidedly new, yet decidedly *undecided*. The meanings of these events begin to be decided by those who write them, and in the collective interpretations of these writings—interpretations often made more by a people's sensibilities than by a careful practice of reading. The histories born from these events begin to roll forward without them, as it were. The discipline of philosophy begins to prop up Christ's church, and the role of Christ's event in this course of history becomes nothing more than a prop for Christ's church, an institution decidedly remote from the event.

There are, of course, counter-histories punctuating the larger histories of Christianity and of philosophy, many of which are predicated upon an attempt at retrieving their founding events. This means that these events do not merely found an institution that unfolds on its own, but that they also recur and are repeated in a way that disturbs the straightforwardness of these histories. But sometimes new events that break from these ancient ones are called for as well. Nietzsche's event of thinking can be

understood somewhere in between the repetition of these ancient events that found the intellectual history that it inherits (in its logic of sacrifice) and a rupture of new kind of event (in its insistent break with the history of philosophy and Christianity).

While Nietzsche's body relocates philosophy in bodily life, the location of his body in relation to the world remains in the space carved out for philosophers by the long tradition following Socrates. Nietzsche does not do philosophy in the marketplace like Socrates, nor even in the village in the company of a wife and noisy children, but instead adopts the reclusive patterns of living at the heights. While Nietzsche's discussions of various types of peoples and philosophies might make him a geophilosopher, the space of his practice appears to be limited to a biophilosophy that only expresses a people and a soil in a very roundabout way, that is, only insofar as these factors have resulted in his own specificity and fortuitousness. Nietzsche shuns the soil of his birth and opts instead for the Italian sun and the neutrality of the high Swiss Alps. His philosophy is not performed among a specific people, as Socrates' is. While, as we have said, Nietzsche's thought in its bodily localization is a performance of life in the service of an ideal more proper to it—making it a performance fundamentally linked to human affairs—it is an event whose happening seems initially not to be tied to a social or political space. Therefore, while Nietzsche's thought has decided relevance for social and political life, its entry into actual social and political spaces is complicated. The entry happens in the space of writing. Though his writings bear the traces of a new event of philosophical thinking, tied to the life of the body, they still remain in the grove of Akademeia. This space of Nietzsche's writing does a great deal to determine how Nietzsche's thinking will

become involved in social and political spaces. We must now think about the way that writing enters social and political life.

This means that we must consider a different sense of the word thanatography, a sense that captures the death that converts body into corpus—the death (or conversion) that writing itself is. We have considered with Kofman the way in which Nietzsche writes the death of the subject, and our analysis of the role of Nietzsche’s thinking in social and political life will only be complete in thinking, with Derrida, the space of writing as a locus of a certain kind of death, whereby the living locus is given over to the ear of the other.¹²³ Derrida says that in writing *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche extends a credit to himself “in his name, but also necessarily in the name of another.”¹²⁴ The life that he tells to himself “will be verified only at the moment the bearer of the name, the one whom we, in our prejudice, call living, will have died.”¹²⁵ Therefore, “only the name can inherit, and this is why the name, to be distinguished from the bearer, is always and a priori a dead man’s name, a name of death.”¹²⁶ This seems to be true not only for *Ecce Homo*, but for all of the texts to which Nietzsche signs his name. As the conversions of living physiology into intelligible, written signs,¹²⁷ Nietzsche’s texts mark the limits of what he can say for himself. In their written form, Nietzsche’s thoughts become radically

¹²³ To be clear, Derrida uses the word thanatography with no specific description of what it means, but it is most likely that he is referring to Nietzsche’s burying his forty-fourth year in the preface of *Ecce Homo*. Particularly given the ambiguous reference, I think it is appropriate to play with the word in the context of other meanings arising in Derrida’s text.

¹²⁴ “Otobiographies,” 9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹²⁷ Here, it will help to remember that this conversion is only conceived as such in a creative reading of Nietzsche’s autobiographies and texts on the organic. Physiology, again, is the play of signs that cannot themselves be present and not the signified of which texts are signifiers. The word conversion indicates a change in form that is not a mere representation of an original.

subjected to the ears upon which they fall. Derrida relates the situation of Nietzsche's written text to Nietzsche's narration of his double origin in *Ecce Homo*:

What, then, are the consequences of this double origin? The birth of Nietzsche, in the double sense of the word 'birth' (the act of being born and family lineage), is itself double. It brings something into the world and the light of day out of a singular couple: death and life, the dead man and the living feminine, the father and the mother. The double birth explains who I am and how I determine my identity: as double and neutral.¹²⁸

This duality is important on many levels for Derrida, but I will focus on the way in which this double origin belongs to the text as its double interpretation.

Because Nietzsche dies before his name, the meaning of his name is still undecided. But this is not peculiar to Nietzsche:

Every text answers to this structure. It is the structure of textuality in general. A text is signed only much later by the other. And this testamentary structure doesn't befall a text as if by accident, but constructs it. This is how a text always comes about.¹²⁹

In order to think about how Nietzsche's thought enters the political space, then, we must think about the way that a text enters bodies through the ear. Derrida links together the two characteristics of Ariadne in order to speak of the "labyrinth of the ear." Indeed, we will see that the ear is a labyrinth in which the intelligible signs of a text take different paths, and a text will enter a body differently depending on which signs get stuck in the labyrinth's dead ends and which find a path. Nietzsche's impulsive revolution localizes philosophy in and as bodily occurrence, but this event must be dislocated into the space of writing if it is to be felt by anyone other than Nietzsche in any space other than the high mountains. Nietzsche's localized thought enters social and political spaces in the dislocated form of writing, by gradually entering bodies whose existence happens socially and politically. This series of localization and dislocation thus multiplies the meanings of Nietzschean dynamite. We have on the one hand the localization of

¹²⁸ Ibid., 16.

¹²⁹ *The Ear of the Other* 51.

philosophy in the body as a meeting of conflicting lineages that brings about self-overcoming. But we have seen that a tension remains that keeps Nietzsche's physiology from being fully explosive, and this tension carries explosive meaning over into the space of writing. Nietzsche authorizes the explosive dissolution of himself into the space of writing when he tells himself to himself in the space of writing in *Ecce Homo*. The final and most important sense of dynamite is then the way that this writing takes root in the polis.

Nietzsche's texts fall on ears that are ready to hear them in various ways. We might imagine bodies exhausted by Christian morality experiencing their own potency unlocked by Nietzsche's words of joyful physicality, or bodies thinking the death of God for the first time nauseated by the possibility of nihilism. We might imagine bodies tensing in a posture of resistance toward the claim that their moral code is constituted by resentment or bodies who find in Nietzsche a new master who corresponds to their own desires better than the Christian God and thus a justification for their decadent debauchery. All of these ears will hear Nietzsche as his words are disseminated, and these ears will carry Nietzsche into public spaces. Krell's use of the word infection is thus appropriate here (and we need not hear it pejoratively), for Nietzsche's words gain hold as they enter and alter the course of bodies, until a pervasive, if not determinate, phenomenon has gripped a group of people. It is an infection with multiple and various symptoms, and it mixes with other strands of virus and mutates as it multiplies itself, until eventually it cannot be diagnosed in terms of its source, and only some of its carriers can utter its name in relation to their symptoms. Infected by Nietzsche's writings, the writings inspired by Nietzsche's writings, and the shifting attitudes and postures

developed in the intercourse of such writings and readings, bodies experience new liberations and limitations in a way that infuses the social and political space with a different sensibility. Infection indicates better than explosion the punctuated dispersal and localization through which thought enters a space in writing, distancing itself from its origin as it spreads.

But Nietzsche's name is also attached to an event that radically closes off possibility. If, on the one hand, we can imagine an infectious Nietzsche sweeping over the political space dispersing possibility, invigoration, and the various conflicts arising from such novelty, we must at the very least acknowledge that the name Nietzsche finds itself attached to a political event of catastrophic paranoia. Derrida notes that Nietzsche ends the passage from *Ecce Homo* in which he calls himself dynamite with: "It is only beginning with me that the earth knows *great politics*" (*EH* Destiny 1). Therefore, we cannot overlook the fact that "the only politics calling itself—proclaiming itself—Nietzschean will have been a Nazi one."¹³⁰ In acknowledging the way that Nietzsche was appropriated by the Nazis, we need not concede that their reading was a good one, nor should we suppose that the Nietzschean text somehow made Nazism possible. But Nazism is certainly the most conspicuous way that the *name* of Nietzsche has exploded in a politics. This, according to Derrida, is the risk of textuality:

If one refuses the distinction between unconscious and deliberate programs as an absolute criterion, if one no longer considers only intent—whether conscious or not—when reading a text, then the law that makes the perverting simplification possible must lie in the structure of the text "remaining" (by which we will no longer understand the persisting substance of books, as in the expression *scripta manent*). Even if the intention of one of the signatories or shareholders in the huge "Nietzsche Corporation" had nothing to do with it, it cannot be entirely fortuitous that the discourse bearing his name in society, in accordance with civil laws and editorial norms, has served as a legitimating reference for ideologues. There is nothing absolutely contingent about the

¹³⁰ "Otobiographies" 31.

fact that the only political regimen to have *effectively* brandished his name as a major and official banner was Nazi.¹³¹

This lack of absolute contingency, the hint that there is perhaps something in some way necessary about the Nazi appropriation of the Nietzschean corpus, is not equivalent to saying that there is a bit of something *really* Nazi in or about Nietzsche's work. It seems instead that the necessity, or at least non-contingency, of this appropriation has to do with the spaces that Nietzsche plays with, perhaps recklessly. He steals away to the heights, yet speaks of great politics. Whereas Socrates and Christ perform their sacrifice singly and publicly and are converted to text only after they are dead, Nietzsche's sacrifice occurs within the space of *autobiography*—he turns *himself* into text. He authorizes the operation of his own duplicity in the aphoristic indeterminacy of meaning pervading his text. Nietzsche is perhaps counting on the right ears. But did he count hard enough on the wrong ones? Indeed, can one ever count hard enough on the wrong ones?

We may appropriate the Derridean text in order to begin answering this question:

We are not, I believe, bound to decide. An interpretive decision does not have to draw a line between two intents or political contents. Our interpretations will not be readings of a hermeneutic or exegetic sort, but rather political interventions in the political rewriting of the text and its destination. This is the way it has always been—and always in a singular manner—for example, ever since what is called the end of philosophy, and beginning with the textual indicator named “Hegel.” This is no accident. It is an effect of the destinational structure of all so-called post-Hegelian texts. There can always be a Hegelianism of the left and a Hegelianism of the right, a Heideggerianism of the left and a Heideggerianism of the right, a Nietzscheanism of the right and a Nietzscheanism of the left, and even, let us not overlook it, a Marxism of the right and a Marxism of the left. The one can always be the other, the double of the other.¹³²

While the way in which Nietzsche's text is performed perhaps leaves it more exposed to ears of venomous resentment, the task with which readers of Nietzsche are today faced presents itself insofar as they have already heard Nietzsche with a different ear. This ear

¹³¹ Ibid., 31.

¹³² Ibid., 32.

requires a different space; it requires sitting, with Nietzsche, at a critical distance from public spaces. If Daniel Conway is correct in suggesting that these spaces are nooks, and that Nietzsche has ended up with “nook-dwelling creatures” rather than the “vanguard of warrior genealogists”¹³³ he sought, it is surely because, as Derrida suggests, the text is constructed in signing it over to the other, and Nietzsche’s readers of new ears are still negotiating their spaces carefully in the wake of a hearing that mixed Nietzsche’s name with the great catastrophe of the twentieth century. It is therefore from the nook of the academy, in the space of writing, that the future of Nietzsche’s name is currently being decided. Indeed, Derrida speaks of a political *rewriting*, which means that should Nietzsche re-enter the polis, it will be in the form of infectious dispersal, always multiplying and mutating beyond its source, depending upon the bodies and the ears it enters.

The Future of “Nietzsche”

Within the space of this writing, however, a more active conception of Nietzschean thought is growing. Attaching Nietzsche’s name to a state fleshes the Nietzschean corpus as a static entity, but building an entity out of an aphorism is hardly the most compelling political possibility for a text that teaches self-overcoming. As Foucault has shown us, Nietzschean genealogy is a crucial tool for showing the subtle and pernicious ways that power operates and for undermining its most recalcitrant forms. And more recent commentators have shown the ways that Nietzschean tools are indispensable for political thinking. Have we perhaps focused too much on the way that the content of Nietzsche’s thought is transmitted into social and political spaces at the

¹³³ Daniel W. Conway. “Odysseus Bound?” *Why Nietzsche Still?: Reflections on Drama, Culture, and Politics*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000, pp 37-38.

expense of recognizing the way in which Nietzschean methods are beginning to radically change the political discourse? We will now consider genealogy as a critical political methodology in order to conclude our discussion of Nietzsche's entry into social and political spaces, thus suggesting a trajectory for understanding the rewriting and redestination of the Nietzschean text. We will find, initially, that these more subversive political possibilities are contained in spaces dictated by state politics, thus deflecting genealogy's destabilizing force from the realm of the power structures that determine daily life. However, by showing genealogy's failure to directly penetrate political spaces, we will put ourselves in a position to say more precisely how the dissemination of written thought might penetrate a multiplicity of bodies in a way that opens a possibility for a future politics.

Wendy Brown suggests, in a Foucauldian gesture:

Most politically sympathetic treatments of Nietzsche try to draw a politics *out of* his thought, even as they recognize that there is much in Nietzsche that cannot be redeemed for democratic practice. But what if we conceive Nietzsche's thought instead as a knife to a raiment that is the cover for the ideals and practices constitutive of political life? What if Nietzsche's thought does not guide but only exposes and challenges, functioning to strengthen democratic culture by disturbing and provoking it?¹³⁴

Thus far, we have seen that the explosive event that Nietzsche understands himself to be can refer to several different elements of the event of thinking as it occurs in its bodily locus and dispersal in a duplicitous text. The meanings of explosion range from Nietzsche's impulses as forces that explode the notion of a unified subjectivity to the sacrificial act of a thinking that converts and explodes itself into written text, which is disseminated among various ears. The sacrificial logic of Nietzsche's thought enacted in the conversion of body into corpus also paves the way for a future explosion in that it leaves a text that is still undecided. But as we consider this future, we will notice that the

¹³⁴ Wendy Brown. "Nietzsche for Politics." *Why Nietzsche Still?*

space in which the text is being rewritten and redestined is not an especially public space. Nietzsche's corpus remains in philosophy's space outside the city walls, which means that its entry into public life is likely to happen only in diluted form.

However, let us examine this possibility of Brown's: that Nietzsche has left us with tools that might explode in the manner of a vitamin pill within the space of social and political life—that his philosophical work might radically alter the possibilities for critique, deconstruction, and change in whatever ethos we currently dwell, strengthening social and political space by making self-overcoming a vital possibility.¹³⁵ Has Nietzsche transmitted in his writings a sort of pill for future generations—for us, democrats—to take? According to Brown, Nietzsche's anti-democratic genealogical critique has value for the life of a democracy, and the relationship between such a critique and a democracy offers a new way of understanding the relationship between theory and practice. Brown is careful to say that genealogy is not itself political practice, and that genealogical operations are even “antipolitical endeavors insofar as each destabilizes meaning without proposing alternative codes or solutions.”¹³⁶ However, Brown suggests that the destabilizing forces of deconstruction and genealogy can rejuvenate an existing democracy, and she demonstrates that the need for such rejuvenation comes from the basic logic of democracy, which is unable give an account of its foundation. Citing Spinoza's inability to “locate a principle that defines, animates, and binds it as a regime,” Brown considers the possibility that the problem Spinoza encountered in theorizing democracy has to do with its lack of a principle such as “excellence, *raison d'etat*,

¹³⁵ To clarify, Brown does not talk about vitamin pills. I am just exploring her analysis of genealogy's capabilities within the context of Nietzsche's explosion metaphor.

¹³⁶ Brown 215.

imperial right, or property.”¹³⁷ Then examining Tocqueville’s assertion that no society can prosper without a decisively common ground, Brown suggests that democracy’s lack of an establishing principle becomes a vacuum that will unreflectively attach itself to:

a historically available principle—nationalism, racism, xenophobia, cultural chauvinism, market values, Christianity, imperialism, individualism, rights as ends—if some other principle is not more deliberately developed and pursued.¹³⁸

Genealogical critiques, then, have great value for democratic politics, according to Brown, because they constantly challenge and interrupt democracy’s attachment to whatever insidious principle it may latch onto. While Brown does not fully explain what Foucault means by Nietzsche’s own thought being perilous action, she does at least show us the meaning of the spirit of Foucault’s claim by providing us with the conceptualization of how Nietzsche might explode in the polis posthumously. Genealogy is the counterforce that “cuts through” the dominating tendencies of established institutions. Thus, Brown’s formulation of the relationship between theory and politics is that the two, while separate, engage and resist one another directly, such that theory destabilizes the more recalcitrant and pernicious side of democratic institutions. This would be thought acting direct and explosive way in social and political life.

But a word of caution is needed here. We have seen that Nietzsche’s thought remains in the quiet space of texts read in nooks and commented on by nook-dwellers; the future of the Nietzschean corpus is largely the concern of academics. Brown’s claim about theory and practice would make of theory a necessarily critical and forceful practice—at odds with political life in a way that the polis could not resist. How, exactly, might we expect for theory to maneuver its way so directly from Akademeia into social

¹³⁷ Ibid., 207.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 208.

and political life? Indeed, do we see any evidence of such a relationship between genealogy and politics in the world? I will venture to give an initial, bold answer to these questions: we do not see any evidence of such a relationship in the world, and it is difficult at present to imagine how one might come about. We might begin with a banal example. In a country where Foucault's prolific body of work is translated and accessible, it is highly likely that anyone randomly selected from the voting booth (or, for that matter, from the Senate floor) would still take it as a given that the Victorians were repressed about sex, whereas we are clearly hyper-liberated, and that our prison system indicates a higher level of humanity than the quartering of the eighteenth century. In the public space, the narratives guiding our self-understanding are fairly recalcitrant and no need for revision presses itself upon us.

If it seems a stretch to use the non-reception of a French intellectual with Maoist sympathies in American politics to gauge genealogy's impact on the political sphere, let us use an example whose relevance to American political space can in no way be justifiably denied, by looking at genealogies of anti-black racism. That the relevance of discourses on anti-black racism for twenty-first century American life is, in fact, denied will only further demonstrate the dullness of genealogy's blade against established democratic institutions. Critical race theory is an example of Nietzschean genealogy at work in the most crucial areas of American (and, increasingly, global) political life.¹³⁹ In *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*, Charles Mills tells the story of race in America in a way that directly attacks American liberalism's self-understanding by showing that anti-black racism is not an unfortunate glitch in the system of what are at

¹³⁹ In fact, it would be impossible for me here to use "critical race theory" as an example, but I will take as an example some of the compelling narratives of Charles Mills to demonstrate the ways that the most politically potent of genealogies can be thwarted by the institutions into which they try to cut.

root humanistic egalitarian values, but is rather a foundational element of those supposedly humanistic and egalitarian values. America, he says, is a “racial polity,” which means that race is not one challenge among others arising within the liberal state, but is instead an organizing principle for Western liberalism. This makes present-day racism a systemic problem of political relations, rather than a set of unfortunate opinions:

Race and white supremacy are therefore seen primarily as a system of advantage and disadvantage and only secondarily as a set of ideas and values. The atomic-individualistic ontology is necessarily displaced by a social ontology in which races are significant sociopolitical actors.¹⁴⁰

Though Mills’ work might not be considered a genealogy in a traditional sense, I think it is fair to characterize *Blackness Visible* as a genealogical study in that it exposes an origin of a people’s social and political life that has been covered over by both that very way of life and by flattering mythologies of the origins of that people’s practices. In allowing the narrative of a people to unfold in a less flattering way from the suppressed origin, the study aims to overturn the way of life that has grown up on the soil of racism.

Mills makes it clear that he is speaking in a distinctly philosophical space, and thus his analysis of the social and political space directly engages liberal political theory, the whiteness of which he emphasizes. But it is also clear that his discourse is meant, as Brown says, quoting Foucault, “for cutting.” Mills says of African American/black philosophy:

Insofar as this is a philosophy that develops out of the resistance to oppression, it is a practical and politically oriented philosophy that, long before Marx was born, sought to interpret the world correctly so as better to change it.¹⁴¹

The philosophical space is an appropriate one to occupy here because Philosophy, in its theorization of the polity through white eyes, only intensifies political blindness to race

¹⁴⁰ Charles Mills. *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998, pg. 134.

¹⁴¹ Mills 17.

by proliferating various versions of the old Modern liberal narrative in which “we” like to understand ourselves. It would seem, then, that this is exactly the sort of deconstructive theoretical practice that Brown envisions joining in a productive tension with politics.

Yet the tension between theory and practice seems not to work this way. In order for a tension to exist that would actually disturb the unreflective commitments of democratic institutions, the disturbing discourse must occur as a force within political space. That a discourse such as Mills’ is not making it as a potent force in American political space is evident from the recent successes of anti-affirmative action campaigns undertaken in the name of racial equality. Now, rather than practicing outright discrimination, white America usurps the language of civil rights to maintain its own power. And when a white senator lauds his black colleague as the first mainstream African American presidential candidate who is articulate, clean, etc., etc., the New York Times’ blogs are abuzz asking what exactly the senator *meant, intended* by such a comment, rather than asking what his speech *means* about race in America. Mills would also lament these examples, and would not be surprised by them, as his analyses of whiteness surely predict their occurrence. Our purpose here is simply to note that these operations that cover over the deep issue of race continue, barely fazed, even as provocative counter-knowledges are printed by major university presses.

To say that genealogies and counter-knowledges are making no direct impact in the political space is not to say that they are making no impact at all. It is only to say that Brown, in supposing that theory as genealogy and politics can exist in a relationship of productive tension, has surveyed the theoretical/political landscape of established democracies as a more volatile space than it actually is. As mentioned, critical race

theories are in print by major university presses, and critical race theory is becoming a “hot topic” in the academy. Genealogical and deconstructive discourses are making their cuts, hammer-blows, and precision shots into the body of knowledge—in the grove at Akademeia. Indeed, genealogy may well be confined to that space because philosophy is still, after Nietzsche, serving the function that Nietzsche’s own thought refused. As Mills demonstrates, philosophy still props up institutions of power:

Race is abstracted even more thoroughly out of the philosophical models of the polity than from their political science counterparts; those models reproduce the silences of European theory and are supported by a professional demography that makes philosophy one of the whitest of the humanities.¹⁴²

Derrida anticipates this frustration faced by critical genealogies attempting to engage the political in the same text where he announces the importance of rewriting and resending Nietzsche’s name. Discussing Nietzsche’s 1872 Basel lectures on “The Future of Our Educational Institutions” alongside *Ecce Homo*, Derrida reads the lectures as “a modern critique of the cultural machinery of State and of the educational system that was, even in yesterday’s industrial society, a fundamental part of the State apparatus.”¹⁴³ It is appropriate that the issue of the university and its connection to the State should come up in a discussion of Nietzsche’s politics, not only because Nietzsche himself was obviously concerned with the connection, nor only because of the obvious significance of the connection to Nietzsche’s Nazi appropriation, but also because this connection sheds light on the possibilities and complications for the future of Nietzsche’s corpus. Derrida takes Nietzsche’s lectures as an opportunity to address an issue of academic freedom that he has mentioned earlier in his remarks:

¹⁴² Ibid., 132.

¹⁴³ “Otobiographies”, 33.

Behind “academic freedom” one can discern the silhouette of a constraint which is all the more ferocious and implacable because it conceals and disguises itself in the form of *laisser-faire*. Through the said “academic freedom,” it is the State that controls everything.¹⁴⁴

According to Nietzsche, this state control happens in the university by way of the ear. He invokes the imagery of an umbilical cord, by which the student hangs, attached to the university by his ear. Derrida imagines it this way:

Dream this umbilicus: it has you by the ear. It is an ear, however, that dictates to you what you are writing at this moment when you write in the mode of what is called “taking notes.” In fact the mother—the false mother whom the teacher, as functionary of the State, can only simulate—dictates to you the very thing that passes through your ear and travels the length of the cord all the way down to your stenography. This writing links you, like a leash in the form of an umbilical cord, to the paternal belly of the State.¹⁴⁵

The state haunts the space of the university. The ear is linked to the belly of the state insofar as it takes on the role of a university student. But the state is not the same thing as the university. Nietzsche says that it stands at a “carefully calculated distance.”¹⁴⁶ We might say, then that an umbilicus also links the university and the state. The university is both inside and outside the state, attached to it by the umbilical cord, such that the space of dissent is cast outside the city walls but also roped to the state for its life. The university serves the double function of theorizing the state, providing the discourses that allow its smooth maintenance, while also providing a detached but supervised space in which dissent can occur. Derrida recognizes the confining nature of this space more provocatively in his 1968 “Ends of Man” address. Explaining that he has only agreed to come to America with the understanding that he may bear witness to his solidarity with those opposing American foreign policy, he discourages enthusiasm about receiving such permission:

And yet it would be naïve or purposely blind to let oneself be reassured by the image or appearance of such a freedom. It would be illusory to believe that political innocence has been

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 33.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 36.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 37.

restored, and evil complicities undone, when opposition to them can be expressed in the country itself, not only through the voices of its own citizens but also those of foreign citizens, and that henceforth diversities, i.e. oppositions, may freely and discursively relate to one another. That a declaration of opposition to some official policy is authorized by the authorities, also means, precisely to that extent, that the declaration does not upset the given order, is not *bothersome*. This last expression, “bothersome,” may be taken in all its senses.¹⁴⁷

Brown has proposed a promising future for the Nietzschean corpus, but she has not attended to the subtleties of the spaces in question as rigorously as the work of Mills and Derrida force us to. It would seem that Brown underestimates the tenacity with which networks of institutions maintain themselves when she suggests that theory could exist with political institutions in some kind of partnership. Mills shows us that genealogies of race must respond to the entrenched narratives of liberalism keeping democracies up and running with the self-authorizing and history-erasing language of rights and equality. And Derrida has helped us to understand that the intransigence of the public space toward deconstructive genealogies is a function of the umbilicus linking the university to the state. It is significant that Derrida says that the umbilicus attaches at the state’s “paternal belly”—making the state a “dead father”—because it allows us to speculate that the life lines do not run in the same directions as they do in the standard umbilical cord. The state feeds and supervises the space of the university, casting it outside of itself in a gesture that confines dissent. Yet it also feeds off of the discourses produced in the university, relying on the storehouse of knowledge that preserves and reproduces its authenticating discourses. Genealogy is left to speak to these authenticating discourses. It does not engage the state directly. The state will continue to cherry pick from its storehouse of authenticating discourses.

But the state is attached by many cords to many bodies, and these bodies each have two ears. Should these bodies come through the university, they will certainly be

¹⁴⁷ Jacques Derrida. *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. pg. 114.

attached by one ear to the belly of the state, but will the other ear be free to hear something else? Genealogical discourses would make no sense without this possibility. These discourses may happen primarily outside of the city walls in a space designated by the state, but bodies and their ears move in and out of this space fluidly, inside and outside the city walls. Should that other ear be working well when they come through the university, the polis will be inhabited by bodies carrying lineages of conflict, and conflicting lineages have the power to explode into new sensibilities. There are plenty of other possibilities as well. There is the possibility that the other ear will work well, but that the body will not absorb what the ear hears—that conflict will not be excited in this physiology. It is possible that the ear will hear well, that the body will be stimulated, but that such stimulation will only drive it to an antisocial isolation, such that the lineage carrying the possibility of conflict will not be proliferated in a social space. And of course, there will always be the ears that hear too many things at once, bringing about the excitement of an unintelligible stupidity, or in the worst cases, the catastrophic stupidity of an ideology taken to its extreme. The possibilities are infinite, and the translation of explosive thought into political spaces cannot occur without multiple disfigurements and mutations. The various appropriations of Nietzsche's text show us that this is the inevitable risk of writing—a risk we cannot help but take so long as we have sensitive ears.

PART III: MATERIALITY

Chapter Four: Bodily Resistance: Lived Experience and the Basic Conditions of Life

For every high world one must be born (*geboren*); or to speak more clearly, one must be *cultivated* (*gezüchtet*) for it: a right to philosophy—taking that word in its great sense—one has only by virtue of one's origins (*Abkunft*); one's ancestors, one's "blood" (*Gebliit*) decide here too. Many generations must have labored to prepare the origin of the philosopher (*BGE* 213).

* * *

What ear has been calling us throughout this inquiry? It is an ear for explosions, but also an ear for distances and dispersals. This ear has heard a body calling out through the silence of text. We have heard this body as a disruption to the text, as a singularity resisting a more conceptualized sense of body that is written. This singular body is constituted by two distinct meanings attaching themselves to a singular locus. Nietzsche's thought of eternal return in its duplicitous meaning occurs as a division of the body that thinks it into a spiritualized physiology and a more material body making itself felt on the margins of the text. We have, thus far, attended to the body—to Nietzsche's body—as a logic of drives. In attending to this logic, we have established 1) that Nietzsche's physiology converts and translates itself into the various meanings that will make up his corpus, 2) that a division and distance occurs between the meaning corpus and the bodily performance of thought, 3) that such a division calls our attention to a meaning of body as a lived, physical/material¹⁴⁸ experience, and 4) that a logic of

¹⁴⁸ Throughout this chapter, I will use the words "material" and "physical" interchangeably. I do not think that these words are exact equivalents, but rather in using them together, I hope to convey a couple of different elements of the particular sense of body that I am trying to single out here. It is difficult to hear the word "material" as something other than the metaphysical opposite of "spiritual." I do not suppose that I can, nor do I want to, completely kill off the lingering metaphysical resonance of the word, but I do hope that it will become "translated" in the way that it is used in connection with "physical," in the way that I have described in chapter 3, referring also to Scott's notion of translation. The lingering metaphysical resonance is appropriate because I do want to address the way that Nietzsche's description of his body performs a division of the body into a more spiritual and a more material sense. In light of this division, I want to emphasize the brute stuff of the body's materiality, without reducing it to such stuff. The word "physical," in its relation to φύσις, suggests a site of dynamic bodily events rather than just "stuff," and I would like to include this dynamism without focusing on it to the exclusion of the brute thereness of matter. In using the two words to refer to the same sense, I hope to show something like the becoming-physical of matter, which is a good way to describe Nietzsche's discussion of nutrition and climate in *Ecce Homo*. I will use "physiology" to refer to the more specifically spiritual meaning of the body. This is not the most common usage of "physiology," and I use it in this way because I am thinking of it in the translated sense of the *logos* of what is physical.

sacrifice in regard to body as lived, physical experience pervades the becoming corpus of the body's physiology.

The body in its living materiality has shown itself to be distinct from the instinctual body thematized in Nietzsche's work. In speaking autobiographically and making his own lived experience a topic of discussion, Nietzsche allows us to understand his body as the locus of his thinking, and from this location we are able to see what thinking means for the singular body as the site of explosive thought. This hermeneutic strategy is always a circling back from an already dislocated locus, that of the text. We have found in the text an avenue to Nietzsche's body, a body that must be reconfigured and represented from the space of the Nietzschean corpus. Thus far in this reconfiguring reading, we have heard the disruption of the body in its living materiality only to the extent that, in its pain, it is drawn into an economy of sacrifice attending the becoming corpus of flesh. We have seen that the political future of Nietzsche's text lies precisely in its textuality, in its relation to "ears." If the body in its materiality is disrupting and rupturing this text, then it is also opening a new direction for reading. We will therefore turn more explicitly to the ways in which this body whose meaning is thematically excluded by Nietzsche, yet in fact included in his autobiography, disrupts his own meanings and opens his text onto a new political future.

Looking at Nietzsche's corpus as a series of translations and conversions of a physiology into philosophy, we have seen the contingency pervading the event of philosophical thinking. If nihilism is the logical outcome of Christian physiological decadence, then the physiological operations that convert and steer such decadence from its logical course are contingent and fortuitous occurrences. In *Ecce Homo*, though,

Nietzsche deepens his understanding of this contingency. While he has said, on the one hand, that great men are like explosives whose conditions of existence are first and foremost historical and physiological (*historisch und physiologisch*)—an accumulation of force (*Kraft*)¹⁴⁹—in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche also includes in his account of fortuitous physiology what we might call life’s basic conditions.¹⁵⁰ The historical collection of physiological forces occurs both among and through conditions that can be better understood as basic in a material sense. The fortuitous case, then, is a meeting point in which multiple trans-generational lineages of physiological force meet and are also crossed by lineages of material conditionality and contingency—birth, nutrition, climate, soil, bacteria, social encounters—that shape a physicality that is bound up with and even constitutive of fortuitous physiology. This means that in order to understand how forces meet fortuitously in a contingent occurrence of thought, we must draw attention to the strands of contingency running through a meeting point that is itself contingent. These most contingent strands differ from the physiological and historical strands in the order of their priority. While it would clearly be incorrect to say that the basic material conditions of life are ahistorical, and we will attend to the ways that these conditions take on histories of their own, they are also the very conditions of the possibility of historical and physiological lineages—of histories in general.¹⁵¹ The particularities of the way that

¹⁴⁹ *TI*, Skirmishes, 44.

¹⁵⁰ I am deliberately using Nietzsche’s language from *GM* here. Nietzsche says the ascetic life “wants to become master not over something in life but over life itself, over its most profound, powerful, and basic conditions (*GM* III.11).

¹⁵¹ While, as Foucault has pointed out, Nietzschean “*wirkliche Historie*” shuns the metaphysical appropriation of history’s high points employed by Hegelian *Geschichte* and “shortens its vision to those things nearest to it—the body, the nervous system, nutrition, digestion, and energies” (N,G,H 157), I am suggesting an extra layer of contingency that cannot be thought in terms of a lineage, but is instead highly specified. *Ecce Homo* shows that Nietzsche is concerned with this extra layer, but I will argue that the narrative impulse that creates lineages of instinct eventually overshadows the awareness of material contingency in Nietzsche’s text.

various histories are re-membered in Nietzsche's physiology are shaped by the element of chance in the material occurrences that form his body. The primarily historical and physiological lineages that meet fortuitously meet in connection with the chance materiality of the body that they inhabit, manifesting themselves differently according to their interactions with these basic conditions of life.

Ecce Homo demonstrates Nietzsche's intense awareness, perhaps even preoccupation with, the layers of material contingency underlying, shaping, and allowing the contingent meeting of historical and physiological forces that form his singular instinct. These forces themselves are formed upon the configurations taken by life in its materiality. One of Nietzsche's most elaborate examples of the way in which this is the case is found in his discussion of diet and nutrition. German cuisine becomes the focus of criticism in this discussion, and it must be noted that such a focus alerts us to the fact that we are not dealing with the basic conditions of life and materiality in a roots and berries kind of way. German cuisine, in naming both a people and a tradition of practice, already suggests that a historical practice has asserted itself and become inseparable from life's basic material conditions. But Nietzsche also makes clear that the lineage we might call "German," one of the historical lineages intersecting to form his own physiology, is at least partially *a result* of German food:

Soup *before* the meal (in Venetian cookbooks of the sixteenth century this is still called *alla tedesca*); overcooked meats, vegetables cooked with fat and flour; the degeneration of pastries and puddings into paperweights! Add to this the virtually bestial prandial drinking habits of the ancient, and by no means only the *ancient* Germans, and you will understand the origin of the *German spirit*—from distressed intestines (*EH*, *Clever*, 1).

The German spirit, or *Geist*, is, of course, for Nietzsche, a physiological occurrence. We see in this passage that the physical stuff of food is an origin of a distinctly German physiology. While we can assume that this *deutsche Geist* informs the continued

historico-cultural practice of German cooking, Nietzsche clearly gives priority here to the stuff of food in the formation of a distinctly German physiology, or spirit-body. This priority is evident in his suggestion that the so-called “salvation of humanity” depends much more on the question of nutrition than any “theologians’ curio” (*EH*, Clever, 1).

Yet speaking of cuisine, as we have noted, complicates any notion we might entertain of food as pure materiality. At least part of what matters is that food be prepared artfully—that the most basic conditions of life be ordered in way that will enhance the life of which it is the condition. This would require that creative practices concerning food are practices of bodies aware and attuned to their own most basic conditions. The body best equipped to be a force of intellectual creativity will likely be one that directs a certain amount of focus and concentration toward the gut. This gut is not a mere metaphor for something like a primal instinct, for Nietzsche is, at least on one level, speaking of the importance of the actual fleshy, growling stomach:

A few more hints from my morality. A hearty meal is easier to digest than one that is too small. That the stomach as a whole becomes active is the first presupposition of a good digestion. One has to know the size of one’s stomach. For the same reason one should be warned against those long-drawn-out meals which I call interrupted sacrificial feasts—those at a *table d’hote* (*EH*, Clever, 1).

On the one hand, then, food, intestines, and digestive systems in their materiality are basic building blocks for the formation of one’s body in its *geistig* dimension—its basic instinctual life or physiology. We have noticed two ways in which this is the case: namely, historically and singularly. This is simply to say that the spirit-body is an intersection of historical lineages, all of which owe their formations and distinctive characters to a particular set of material conditions, but that the individual body incorporating this intersection of lineages also becomes what it is through its singular

relationship to its own materiality and the way that it is nourished by the stuff of its environment.

It is clear that a sharp distinction between the material body and the spiritual body, the body in its physicality and the body in its instinctual physiology, is impossible. The basic materials of life carry with them a latent *logos*, and are thus on their way to shaping a physiology of drives as soon as they meet the materiality of the body. This physiology of drives in turn directs the body toward a certain kind of materiality to feed it. Bodies in their events occur as a continuous interpenetration of these two modes of the body, which separate from one another only in the practice of speaking about them. Ordered physicality creates certain physiologies, and these physiologies in turn create certain habits concerning their own materiality. German food makes Germans, and Germans make German food. But this closed economy is disrupted by the instinct to talk. A physiology able to reflect upon itself adds another dimension to this analysis. Here we may repeat in the context of this problem of physicality and physiology the logic that has been explained in regard to Nietzsche's fortuitous existence. The history of Christianity shows us a self-destructive instinct of bodies turning against their own materiality. It is counteracted by the instinct of a body usurping the developments of the destructive instinct in order to assert itself over against that instinct. In this counteraction, instinctual life now begins to take a stance, an intelligibly utterable stance, toward its own physicality. It regards itself by reflecting on itself in its material being without taking a negative and annihilating stance toward this materiality. Yet in this reflective movement, a physiology raises itself above its own materiality, initiating a certain distance between a more passive and more active sense of body, despite an

awareness that in reflecting, it is never fully separate from materiality. We have seen, on the one hand, that this separation occurs at the locus as the divisive thinking of eternal return, which divides instinct from its own flesh in the pain of thinking. This division is played out again in Nietzsche's consideration of his own instinctive life. Whereas we have seen in the previous passages the priority of basic material existence as a basic condition for the formation of a *Geist*, physiology, or spirit-body, Nietzsche shifts his language slightly in a way that reverses this priority when he discusses climate:

The question of *place* and *climate* is most closely related to the question of nutrition. Nobody is free to live everywhere; and whoever has to solve great problems that challenge all his strength actually has a very restricted choice in this matter. The influence of climate on our *metabolism*, its retardation, its acceleration, goes so far that a mistaken choice of place and climate can not only estrange a man from his task but can actually keep it from him: he never gets to see it. His animal *vigor* has never become great enough for him to attain that freedom which overflows into the most spiritual regions and allows one to recognize: *this* only I can do (*EH*, *Clever*, 2).

The shift in this passage is subtle. Clearly, Nietzsche is still emphasizing the utterly indispensable role that a particular kind of materiality plays in one's becoming what one is. However, there is also a sense in which a person's *geistig* nature—in this case Nietzsche says his "task"—exists independently of the materiality that allows it to come into being. The wrong climate, in its effect on a person's metabolism, can keep a person from this task—a task that is singularly his regardless of whether it can be fulfilled. At this point, the physical and physiological elements of the body, which were wedded so tightly in their happenings as to form a circular logic, are conceived as separate, or at least separable, events. Whereas we have discussed the physical as the basic condition under which a body's instinct can take form, Nietzsche speaks in this passage of a proper instinct for the sake of which the material conditions of life must be ordered and directed.

Evidently, the ability to distinguish among various instincts and the effects of diet on each comes to Nietzsche as a result of the resistance of his own instinctive life to the basic conditions that ought to have formed him. While he insists that the distressed intestines resulting from German food are responsible for the indigestion that is the German spirit,¹⁵² his own spirit has somehow resisted what he has observed as the natural course of things:

My experiences in this matter [nutrition] are as bad as possible; I am amazed how late I heard this question, how late I learned “reason” from these experiences. [. . .] Indeed, till I reached a very mature age I always ate *badly*: morally speaking, “impersonally,” “selflessly,” “altruistically”—for the benefit of cooks and other fellow Christians. By means of Leipzig *cuisine*, for example, I very earnestly denied my “will to life” at the time when I first read Schopenhauer (1865). To upset one’s stomach for the sake of inadequate nutrition—this problem seemed to me to be solved incredibly well by the aforementioned *cuisine* (*EH*, Clever, 1).

Despite the poverty of his nutrition up through a “mature age,” Nietzsche still suggests that he knows “a few things *more*,” is “altogether so clever,” (*EH*, Clever, 1) and has “turned out well” (*EH*, Wise, 2). Even soup *alla tedesca* and overcooked meats have not dulled the sharpness of his instinct and the sensitivity of his nose. Nietzsche’s physiology has outrun what, on Nietzsche’s own terms, should have been possible for it given the conditions under which his bodily being has been formed. This is not to say that Nietzsche’s spirit-body has somehow broken free from his body’s material conditions—far from it. But the manner in which he tells himself to himself is a distancing of these two senses of body whereby his physiology takes possession of itself over against his body as it has previously been nourished and begins to prescribe for that body the physical regimen for its singular task. Speaking in general terms, Nietzsche surveys the problematic elements of a few types of cuisine, but he also refers to food specifically in terms of how it affects him: “But *English* diet, too—which is, compared to

¹⁵² “Der deutsche Geist ist eine Indigestion” (*EH*, Klug, 1).

the German and even to the French, a kind of ‘return to nature,’ meaning to cannibalism—is profoundly at odds with my instincts” (*EH*, Clever, 1).

In putting his instincts in a position of priority, he solidifies the division that has been necessary in making evaluations of material conditions and their effects on bodies. In order for Nietzsche to compare and evaluate various types of nutrition, his own physiology must put itself at a distance from its physicality so that a reflection concerning how a singular instinct is best served might occur. This would seem to indicate that the historical intersection of physiological forces has somehow taken on a life of its own in a way that transcends the material particularities of its embodiment. Yet this reflective distancing never becomes a transcendent, or objective, point of view. Indeed, his reflective ability has come from the specifics of his embodiment:

I know of a case in which a spirit of generous predisposition, destined for greatness, became, merely because he lacked any delicate instinct for climate, narrow, withdrawn, a peevish specialist. And I myself might ultimately have become just such a case, if my sickness had not forced me to see reason, to reflect on reason in reality. Now that the effects of climate and weather are familiar to me from long experience and I take readings from myself as from a very subtle and reliable instrument—and even during a short journey, say, from Turin to Milan, my system registers the change in the humidity—I reflect with horror on the *dismal* fact that my life, except for the last ten years, the years when my life was in peril, was spent entirely in the wrong places that were nothing short of *forbidden* to me. Naumburg, Schulpforta, the province of Thuringia quite generally, Leipzig, Basel, Venice—so many disastrous places for my physiology (*EH*, Clever, 2).

Stuck in the wrong climates, it appears that Nietzsche was well on his way to becoming peevish. Who can say exactly what happened next? Perhaps the climate so overwhelmed his body that it began to attack his muscles, which alerted his physiology that something was wrong, forcing a reflection on itself in its physicality. Or maybe the climate did not attack Nietzsche at all. Perhaps his body compliantly allowed itself to be dictated by his physical surroundings, which gradually began to form in him a peevish spirit-body, until some excessive impulse inherited in a historical intersection of force had had enough of

Nietzsche's becoming-peevisish and attacked the body in a way that made its own task felt in its incompatibility with its surroundings.

Regardless of how his sickness came upon him, it is clear that the body responded to its own illness through an enactment of reflective distancing. In this reflective distance, Nietzsche apprehends himself both as subject to various material conditions, yet also as a set of forces exceeding the materiality that in some sense composes him and makes him who he is. The body's distress leads it to recognize itself in the singularity of its physiology in a way that reveals how its environment is thwarting the potential of that physiology. In this reflective distance, the spiritual life and task of the body become the terms that materiality must follow and serve. The instinct now aware of itself seeks out the climate in which it can thrive. At this point, the utterly contingent nature of the material conditions in which a set of historical lineages intersects becomes somewhat less contingent. Materiality becomes a matter of instinctive selection, as the self-aware physiology is no longer at the mercy of the conditions under which it finds itself. The contingency of the meeting of historical and physiological forces becomes the most relevant factor, and in taking the lead, this meeting of forces removes the chance element from the materiality in which it necessarily finds itself. Thus, it is no surprise that, within Nietzsche's discussion of the basic conditions of bodily existence, the most material conditions come to be conceived in increasingly passive terms, while the activity regarding them becomes the focus of attention. The concern with the formative, contingent power of material conditions gives way to a concern with the disciplines of an active physiology in managing these conditions: "The choice of nutrition; the choice of

climate and place: the third point at which one must not commit a blunder at any price is the choice of *one's own kind of recreation*" (EH, Clever, 3).

The awareness in Nietzsche's body of the conditions under which it most thrives converts life's basic conditions from the chance that brings about one's embodiment to the choices that must be deliberately made for the sake of the contingent meeting of forces that one most properly is. Nutrition and food, which are on the one hand the way that the body takes in the earth around it such that it may persist and have a basic level of material substantiality, are grouped together in Nietzsche's thought with the body's shaping of itself in recreation. The body actively pursues what it will take into itself and the kind of air and weather in which it will be in much the same way that it pursues its most proper activity and pleasure. Whereas Nietzsche's emphasis on the importance of nutrition has caused us to imagine food shaping potentialities of the body and its instincts, the language of choice converts Nietzsche's spirit-body into an increasingly Aristotelian phenomenon, as the material life upon which it reflects becomes increasingly passive. As Aristotle puts it: "Further, food is acted upon by what is nourished by it, not the other way round, as timber is worked by a carpenter and not conversely; there is a change in the carpenter, but it is merely a change from not-working to working."¹⁵³ This is not to say that food does nothing, but its doing is utterly dependent upon the body's status as ensouled. To quote Aristotle again:

Since nothing except what is alive can be fed, what is fed is the besouled body and just because it has soul in it. Hence food is essentially related to what has soul in it. Food has a power which is other than the power to increase the bulk of what is fed by it; so far forth as what has soul in it is a quantum, food may increase its quantity, but it is only so far as what has soul in it is a 'this-somewhat' or substance that food acts *as* food; in this case it maintains the being of what is fed, and that continues to be what it is so long as the process of nutrition continues. Further, it is the

¹⁵³ Aristotle. *De Anima*, 416a 34 - 416b 2.

agent in generation, i.e. not the generation of the individual fed but the reproduction of another like it; the substance of the individual fed is already in existence.¹⁵⁴

Clearly, the thought of will to power does not admit of active and passive as metaphysical opposites, and the selective physiology seeking the material conditions under which it can best thrive is not simply the equivalent of the active soul bestowing a *dunamis* on passive matter. However, the body insofar as it reflects upon itself has become increasingly active in a way that begins to efface the contingency in which a given, situated body might find itself. In fact, if we were to continue to speak in Aristotelian terms, we would also have to note the way in which the thinking part of the soul has come to direct Nietzsche's nutritive spirit-body in the service of its own ends.

Of course, as Nietzsche's instructive illness demonstrates, a radical contingency drives the turn that brings about this reflective capacity. Illness is, at least for the most part, a way of being embodied that is not chosen; one finds oneself in the undesirable position of being sick without having tried to become so. Even if an excessive impulse in Nietzsche's being selects illness for the sake of the awareness that will ultimately allow it to be saved from weakening conditions, this is a choice of one element of the body that acts against the body in the fullness of its lived experience—a caprice that is not chosen with one's whole being. But this chance element that descends upon Nietzsche in his physical being is the factor that allows his physiology to distance itself from and control the basic conditions of his physical existence. A fortuitous physiology thus depends on the chance physical occurrence that allows it to awaken to its own physicality in a way that makes it in some sense the master of that physicality.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 416b 8 – 17.

Nietzsche's recognition of the importance of material conditions for his own being thus always also contains the recognition of the contingency of his existence, not only as a contingent meeting of forces in history, but also as a meeting of forces requiring the support of basic material that is other to the forces composing his fortuitous physiology. This shows us that a fortuitous occurrence does not come into being and maintain fortuitousness "within itself," as it were. While this might seem obvious enough given the dynamism of Nietzsche's understanding of the *Trieben*, it is an insight that has in fact been covered over in the way that Nietzsche often speaks of himself and in our examination of Nietzsche's fortuitous physiology. His metaphors of explosion, particularly the discussion of genius in *Twilight of the Idols*, with its emphasis on the storing up of historical and physiological forces, would lead us to believe that explosive fortuitousness occurs in the closed physiological economy of a single being. Indeed, in following Klossowski's reading, it often seems that thinking is merely the struggle of impulses housed within the skin of one man. But in these passages in *Ecce Homo*, even in their reflective distancing that increasingly pulls the spiritual body away from its materiality, putting the spirit over against the material, Nietzsche reminds us that fortuitousness is always subject to the nourishment of the soil in which the body finds itself.

This contingency opens the body's impulsive economy onto something other than itself. This otherness is different than the otherness of the past that refigures itself in a historical lineage, though the past is also an important way in which a fortuitous occurrence can never claim to be entirely its own event. Genealogically, Nietzsche links

himself to the Greeks, the French,¹⁵⁵ and, the Germans¹⁵⁶ that have come before him, to name just a few of the ways that Nietzsche places himself within histories. This means that his own physiology is a play of instincts and forces that have formed themselves in previous generations. Nietzsche's signing of his letters "Dionysus" in early 1889 is perhaps a more exaggerated display of a suspicion that already composed his self-understanding—that his being was composed of forces that did not belong to him exclusively. Thus, the task of "becoming what he is" is a task that can only be performed together with a certain kind of becoming other. Becoming what one is would be a manifestation and recognition of what is other in one's own event. Nietzsche's work is full of these manifestations and recognitions, perhaps to a fault, since they often serve as a means of self-aggrandizement. If his intense attachment to Dionysus is a way in which an old god is reborn, it is also a way that Nietzsche finds a god within himself. Similarly, Nietzsche speaks of the political tenor of his texts in a way that suggests a direct line running from Nietzsche to Napoleon, such that his task for the present is also a refiguring and manifestation of the past and its otherness:

Finally, when on the bridge between two centuries of decadence, a *force majeure* of genius and will became visible, strong enough to create a unity out of Europe, a political and *economic* unity for the sake of a world government—the Germans with their "Wars of Liberation" did Europe out of the meaning, the miracle of meaning in the existence of Napoleon; hence they have on their conscience all that followed, that is with us today—this most *anti-cultural* sickness and unreason there is, nationalism, this *névrose nationale* with which Europe is sick, this perpetuation of European particularism, of *petty* politics: they have deprived Europe itself of its meaning, of its reason—they have driven it into a dead-end street.—Does anyone besides me know the way out of this dead-end street?—A task that is great enough to *unite* nations again? (*EH*, W, 2).

¹⁵⁵ "The fact that I do not read but *love* Pascal, as the most instructive victim of Christianity, murdered slowly, first physically, then psychologically—the whole logic of this most gruesome form of inhuman cruelty; that I have in my spirit—who knows? perhaps also in my body—something of Montaigne's sportiveness; that my artist's taste vindicates the names of Molière, Corneille, and Racine . . ." (*EH*, *Clever*, 3).

¹⁵⁶ I am thinking of Goethe, but of course, Nietzsche also resists his German influences, a fact that will become relevant as the chapter progresses.

The association with historical and mythical figures is not simply a tool that allows Nietzsche to fill out his “task,” but these figures help to constitute the task itself. His final answer to the question of why he is a destiny comes in the form: “Have I been understood?—*Dionysus versus the Crucified*” (*EH*, *Destiny*, 9). In this formula, we see that the most basic reference that Nietzsche can give to one seeking to understand him is one that brings into play the forces of determinate historical lineages. And although he understands himself in a radical distance from the Christian lineage in particular, this distance is in fact a very large part of the meaning of who he is.¹⁵⁷

There are clearly some parallels between Nietzsche’s treatment of the ways that historical otherness composes him and the ways that material otherness composes him. We have seen that Nietzsche speaks of the material conditions of his existence in a way that very much recognizes the necessary openness of his own being and task to the chance happenings of the stuff of life that surrounds him and maintains his physical person. Yet we have also seen the way that Nietzsche’s thematization of this materiality enacts a distance in which the priority of physicality is eclipsed by a task designated by the interaction of physiological and historical forces. We have seen that the otherness of historical forces seems, in this distancing and prioritization, to gain a position of control toward material otherness. In order to look more closely at Nietzsche’s engagement with the otherness that composes him in these two distinct modes, let us consider an example

¹⁵⁷ A somewhat more cryptic, though equally significant example of this is his claims that “Among Indians I was Buddha, in Greece I was Dionysus,—Alexander and Caesar are my incarnations, as is the Shakespeare poet, Lord Bacon. Latterly I was Voltaire and Napoleon, perhaps Richard Wagner, too. . . . But this time I have come as the victorious Dionysus, who will make a feast day of the earth. . . . Not that I have much time. . . . The heavens are glad I am here . . . I hung on the cross, too. . . .(*KGB* III/5 572f). I have taken this quote from Kofman’s “Explosion I.”

in which both modes of alterity are combined into a moment that brings about a singularity—the moment of birth.

Nietzsche gives an account of his own birth that places him in between the logical outcome of Christian decadence and the chance occurrence of being a beginning:

The good fortune of my existence, its uniqueness perhaps, lies in its fatality: I am, to express it in the form of a riddle, already dead as my father, while as my mother I am still living and becoming old. This dual descent, as it were, both from the highest and the lowest rung on the ladder of life, at the same time a *decadent* and a *beginning*—this, if anything, explains that neutrality, that freedom from all partiality in relation to the total problem of life, that perhaps distinguishes me. I have a subtler sense of smell for the signs of ascent and decline than any other human being before me; I am the teacher *par excellence* for this—I know both, I am both (*EH*, *Wise*, 1).

This passage brings historical/physiological otherness together with the contingency of material otherness in the event of a birth. On the one hand, Nietzsche's characteristic decadence and being a beginning are clearly a reference to the historical lineages with which he most identifies. Being a philosopher trained in the style of Plato, living in a Christian world where God is gradually being killed by scientific objectivism, Nietzsche inherits the physiological decadence of the West's practices. And finding himself untimely within these decadent forces, Nietzsche understands himself in the terms of his own task—a "revaluation of values" which is "perhaps possible for [Nietzsche] alone" (*EH*, *Wise*, 1). Yet the genealogy put forth in the above passage does not yet make the distinction between the physiological/historical and material/physical that we have seen occurring in other places. Instead, Nietzsche intertwines these two senses of the body by thinking of the incorporation of his distinct historical task as something bestowed upon him through the contingencies that attend a birth. It is no longer Napoleon and Dionysus who are chiefly responsible for his fortuitous occurrence, but rather, two fairly ordinary people and the union of their sperm and egg. In this chance occurrence of Nietzsche's birth from two parents, there is no distance between the physical and physiological. Birth

is the coming into being of a body that inherits a material being with numerous instincts and predispositions for cultivating certain kinds of habits. In merging an account of hereditary inheritance with instinctual, physiological inheritance, Nietzsche narrates a body that is thoroughly instinctive in its basic fleshiness.

Yet if we follow this passage in its relation to other parts of the Nietzschean corpus, we will see that this moment does not hold itself together throughout Nietzsche's thought. In examining the enactment of distance between the physiological and physical, spiritual and material, senses of body, we have seen distancing that is marked by return and reunion. Nietzsche's instinct gains distance from and even control over the body in its materiality, but this distancing produces a kind of reflection that maintains awareness of the role of material otherness in its own enactment. However, beginning with Nietzsche's account of his dual descent, we will see that this distancing sometimes gives way to an impulse to throw off the material otherness that shapes his own body. In the above passage where Nietzsche first puts forward a hypothesis of his own fatality, the account seems to center itself around a straightforward duality: he has inherited the decadence of his father and the strength of his mother. Yet the riddle of his existence is riddled with a bit more subtlety than this, for most of Nietzsche's other discussions of his family place the decadence on the side of his mother. As Kofman notes:

His mother, like his sister, is typologically classified on the side of the rabble, of "the immeasurable baseness of instincts" from which Nietzsche feels himself to be at the opposite pole. Furthermore, Nietzsche here pays homage to his father, a priest who was compared to an angel by the peasants to whom he preached, a delicate being representing God on earth, more celestial than terrestrial. Nietzsche claims to have received his divine nature—which his mother and sister would blaspheme in their too terrestrial baseness if he did not deny all kinship with them—from his father, from whom he also claims to have received the system for evaluating decadence.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁸ Kofman, "A Fantastical Genealogy," 37.

While Nietzsche considers it “a great privilege to have had such a father” (*EH*, Wise, 3), he says that the treatment he has received from his mother and sister:

fills me with unutterable horror: here a highly perfected, infernal machine is at work, one that operates with unflinching accuracy at the very moment when I am most vulnerable and most likely to bleed—during my supreme moments, . . . for in these moments one lacks all the energy that would be needed to defend oneself against venomous vipers (*giftiges Gewürm*) . . .¹⁵⁹

When we combine these scathing remarks with Nietzsche’s riddle, it becomes clear that Nietzsche is distinguishing between a physiological and a physical decadence, or perhaps we could even say that he is distinguishing between two kinds of physiological decadence, which helps to do justice to the difficulty of the distinction. While his father’s decadence lies in the literal meaning of illness, his mother’s decadence lies in the more figurative meaning of illness, in a baseness of instincts marked by bad taste and pettiness. Such a reversal in the meaning of decadence indicates that the decadence of poor health resulting in a painful and shortened life is not only not the objectionable kind of decadence, but it is also accompanied by the sort of health that produces clear thinking. In a gesture similar to his claim that sickness brought him to reason, Nietzsche suggests that the physical decadence inherited from his father has produced in him a spiritual excellence:

The perfect brightness and cheerfulness, even exuberance of the spirit, reflected in this work [*The Dawn*], is compatible in my case not only with the most profound physiological weakness, but even with an excess of pain. In the midst of the torments that go with an uninterrupted three-day migraine, accompanied by laborious vomiting of phlegm, I possessed a dialectician’s clarity *par excellence* and thought through with very cold blood matters for which under healthier circumstances I am not mountain-climber, not subtle, not *cold* enough (*EH*, Wise, 1).

Beyond the ability of this sickly variety of health to produce clear thinking, it also seems to be a mark of singularity, for Nietzsche attaches a badge of nobility to that which

¹⁵⁹ This revised version of *Ecce Homo*, which did not make it to publication, is quoted in Krell, *Infectious Nietzsche* 215-217. Kofman translates *Gewürm* as “vermin,” but notes that “venomous” displaces the lice-like associations somewhat, evoking instead images of aggression against him (“A Fantastical Genealogy,” 43).

does not survive and persist in the modern world. The contrast between a dead but noble father and a mother whose decadent instincts are accompanied by living and growing old echoes Nietzsche's assertions that decadent instincts seek self-preservation, while stronger instincts are marked by "overflow and squandering" – claims that he makes primarily as a criticism of Darwinism:

The wish to preserve oneself is the symptom of a condition of distress, of a limitation of the really fundamental instinct of life which aims at *the expansion of power* and, wishing for that, frequently risks and even sacrifices self-preservation (*GS* 349).¹⁶⁰

While Nietzsche hardly describes his father as a great unleashing of force (he calls him "delicate, kind, and morbid, as a being that is destined merely to pass by—more a gracious memory of life than life itself" (*EH*, Wise, 1), he does say that he is his father's "continued life after an all too early death" (*EH*, Wise, 5), primarily because of the estimation that he, like his father, does not live among equals. The ascription of such superiority to a father who dies too young suggests that Nietzsche's father enjoys a nobility of rank that distances him from decadent self-preservers. Furthermore, when we contrast the praise of the father with Nietzsche's vitriol toward his mother's baseness, we are led to ask whether it is not as the "lowest rung on the ladder of life" that he understands himself to be "still living and becoming old," and as the highest rung on that ladder that his existence is punctuated, short-lived, and "dying."¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ The theme of self-preservation versus squandering and will to power comes up frequently in Nietzsche's work, and there are a few variations in the way that he thematizes the issue. The above passage emphasizes the distress of any instinct that wants merely to preserve itself. The notion of self-preservation as the expression and sign of a degenerate form of life is an approach to this issue found in *WP* 4, where Nietzsche suggests that morality is a mode of preservation that keeps man from despairing of himself as man, *WP* 266, where he discusses the utility of morality in terms of the way it preserves man in an instrumental, mediocre, suffering, and lowly state, and *WP* 684 and *TI*, Skirmishes, 14, where Nietzsche contradicts Darwinism by saying it is the weak who prevail against the strong where survival is concerned. *WP* 688 and *BGE* 13 take a slightly different approach by emphasizing that the fundamental impulse of life is never self-preservation, but rather will to power.

¹⁶¹ Kofman and Klossowski each allude to the sort of squandering death of which we are speaking here. Kofman focuses on *Ecce Homo* as a deconstituting of subjectivity that cannot be reduced to madness, but is

If, as his mother, Nietzsche is living and growing old, and his mother is the target of his disgust for her decadence of instinct, then we can gather that Nietzsche's life as his mother is the preservation of one in distress.¹⁶² It is his decadent maternal inheritance that allows him to survive in the weakened form inherited from his father. In fact, he describes his particular way of preserving himself as the only remedy against a physical weakness and sickness that threaten to wear the sick person down into a state of total exhaustion. Nietzsche calls his method of self-preservation "Russian fatalism, that fatalism without revolt which is exemplified by a Russian soldier who, finding a campaign too strenuous, finally lies down in the snow" (*EH*, Wise, 6). This fatalistic hibernation is, for Nietzsche, a way of restraining himself from the harmful effects of resentment, which might otherwise exhaust him and cause him to "use himself up too quickly." He claims that he must deny himself feelings of resentment and rancor during periods of decadence because they will harm him in his weakened state (thus, his Russian fatalism), but that in periods of strength he shuns such feelings as beneath him (*EH*, Wise, 6).

A genealogy of Nietzsche's physiology is thus put into place. He inherits physical decadence from his father, while strategies rooted in his mother's physiological decadence equip him to survive through this physical decadence until moments of great

rather a series of "various incarnations" which "are all required routes which Nietzsche had to take in order to reach the stage of introducing into his double inheritance of health and morbidity a hierarchy favoring health and the unreserved affirmation of life." Rather than madness, Kofman suggests that he is following the likes of Empedocles and Peregrinus in traversing every condition of existence (*Explosion I*, 60). Klossowski, on the other hand focuses on Nietzsche's final year of activity as a full exercise of Nietzsche's understanding, which brought him at once to apotheosis and abyss (Klossowski 210-211).

¹⁶² Jean Graybeal offers the interesting suggestion that Nietzsche's growing old as his mother can be understood as his lifelong love and creation through the mother tongue, the German language. This is one way to make sense of Nietzsche's reticence toward his mother other than to say that she is something "very German." I will take a very different direction here, but think that this reading has merit also. (Jean Graybeal. "Ecce Homo: Abjection and 'the Feminine.'" *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Oliver and Pearsall. University Park: Penn State University Press, 1998).

health reach him. And whence come these moments of great health? On the one hand, Nietzsche will not attribute responsibility to either parent. When he expresses gratitude for the privilege of having had a father such as his, he qualifies his assertion that he owes all of his privileges to his father, saying that his father is responsible for his privileges, “*not including life, the great Yes to life*” (*EH, Wise, 3*). The great Yes to life is the fortuitous element of his nature, the moment of chance emerging from a more determinate physiology. We have seen that the otherness composing this fortuitous physiology extends back further than family inheritance. Clearly, though, Nietzsche feels that the inheritance from his father plays a certain role in the possibility of such a chance, for he credits the weakness of his own constitution with giving him preparation for great health. His physical weakness allows him to look “from the perspective of the sick toward *healthier* concepts and values” (*EH, Wise, 1*), and he claims that his fickle health gives him advantages “over all robust squares” (*GS, P, 3*). Thus, as we have seen in the case of the illness that allows for a recognition of the maximal climate conditions, physical decadence clears the way for physiological health. His father gets the credit for this orientation toward health. The decadence attributed to his father in the riddle, then, turns out not to be decadence in the full sense of the word. The essential thing “is *that one be healthy at bottom*” (*EH, Wise, 2*), and such a conception reevaluates the decadence of the father that is formulated in the riddle. The decadent physicality inherited from his father gives Nietzsche a way of being embodied conducive to the realization of the task produced in the meeting of historical and physiological forces.

In order to get from physical sickness to the brighter days of both wellness and a physiological instinctual health, however, we should remember that Nietzsche must in the

time between adopt a decadent strategy of survival. The path from sickness to wellness, though oriented by his father, is facilitated by the type of decadence that he has inherited from his mother—that is, Russian fatalism, the preservation of something weak through a calculated attempt to conserve energy. Furthermore, Nietzsche claims that this strategy of the decadent allows him to remain free of *ressentiment*. This indicates that decadent preservation is inseparable in Nietzsche’s case from a physiological superiority. But Nietzsche’s mother receives neither gratitude nor even recognition for this strategy that allows him to live and grow old. After the initial formulation of the riddle, he mentions her only once in order to subtly insult her, saying that she is “something very German” (*EH*, Wise, 3). The absence of commentary on his mother becomes a very noisy silence in light of Nietzsche’s comments in other texts about the decadence of what preserves itself as well as the several fond references that he makes to his father.¹⁶³ Appropriately, in section five of “Why I Am So Wise,” a section that begins with Nietzsche’s identification with his father, he also mentions that silence is the most indecent form of objection, one that leads to bad character and even an upset stomach. Was Nietzsche perhaps feeling the weight of his own silence in this chapter devoted to his family origins? Did this weight perhaps lead him to unleash the wrath of the unpublished revision on his mother and sister?

This analysis of Nietzsche’s account of his own fortunate existence reveals, on the one hand, that Nietzsche understands himself to embody multiple forms of decadence and multiple forms of health and vigor that are not easily untangled from one another. On the other hand, the formulation of such complex decadence and health into a riddle of mother

¹⁶³ Kofman suggests that Nietzsche’s rejection of his mother is violent enough to be suspicious, particularly since she is said to give him life and all subsequent gratitude goes to his father (“A Fantastical Genealogy 37). I will speak about this rejection more explicitly as I continue.

and father indicates Nietzsche's need to have them untangled and evaluated somewhat straightforwardly. And so even as he remembers himself to himself, Nietzsche's memory reveals its own questionability. This questionable memory leads us to continue to ask "Which one?" past Nietzsche's own formulation of an answer. What kind of an impulse guides such a memory?

Nietzsche's formulation of the riddle of his existence combined with his attitudes in writing toward his own mother demonstrate an attempt to throw off the basic material otherness from which he has come to be and grow. Nietzsche says that he is dead as his father, but it is his father who receives the greatest credit for what is fortunate about his life. As dead, Nietzsche's father is no longer there as a physical being whose materiality has been translated into Nietzsche's own flesh. Nietzsche thinks of him, as we have seen, as "a gracious memory of life rather than life itself." Nietzsche's remembering of his father is not so much a memory of a life, then, as a memory of a sort of shadow. He is thus free to figure his father in memory as he wishes; his father's physical being is not there to resist his account, so he easily takes on the status of those dead figures that join in the historical lineages that give Nietzsche his fortuitous physiology. Nietzsche adds his father to his play of memories of the dead in a fantasy that bolsters the notion of his fortuitousness.¹⁶⁴

But his mother is still living and is, in her fleshly being, the living reminder of the womb—that other flesh to which one owes the very condition of being alive. In addition to the obvious relation of the maternal body to the basic material conditions of life, Nietzsche has also linked her to the instinctive tendencies that allow the very fact of

¹⁶⁴ Kofman suggests that Nietzsche engages in a Freudian family romance, in which he exalts the father in order to kill him and "can only conserve his kinship with his father by reconnecting him genealogically to more or less fantasmatically noble stock." "A Fantastical Genealogy," 38-39.

staying alive, of persistence, of not dying. Nietzsche has inherited this instinct of self-preservation to a certain extent, and it is put into motion in him as Russian fatalism. But, as we have seen, Nietzsche also makes consistent references to the degeneracy of the life that seeks self-preservation. Furthermore, Nietzsche seems to be somewhat forgetful of these remarks that he has made earlier concerning self-preservation. He understands his own particular kind of self-preservation as the act of a superior instinct in a situation of unfortunate material contingency, while his general formulations about self-preservation suggest that the phenomenon is the expression of an impoverished instinctive life. Celebrating his own strategy as one that illustrates the aversion of his being to *ressentiment*, Nietzsche says:

I displayed the “Russian fatalism” I mentioned by tenaciously clinging for years to all but intolerable situations, places, apartments, and society, merely because they happened to be given by accident: it was better than changing them, than *feeling* that they could be changed—than rebelling against them.
Any attempt to disturb me in this fatalism, to awaken me by force, used to annoy me mortally—and it actually was mortally dangerous every time.
Accepting oneself as if fated, not wishing oneself “different”—that is in such cases *great reason* itself (*EH*, Wise, 6).

This claim perhaps contains more truth than Nietzsche realizes. Its truth is basic to the point of being banal. For the living, accepting oneself and not wishing oneself different might require clinging to life in a mode of survival. Self-preservation is a mode of existence that might be required of a great instinct if the task demanded by the instinct needs more than a moment for its coming to be. Russian fatalism thus shows self-preservation as a temporary mode of will to power, while other texts would suggest that it is a state in which the will to power is wholly inoperative:

But a natural scientist should come out of his human nook; and in nature it is not conditions of distress that are *dominant* but overflow and squandering, even to the point of absurdity. The struggle for existence is only an *exception*, a temporary restriction of the will to life. The great and small struggle always revolves around superiority, around growth and expansion, around power—in accordance with the will to power which is the will of life (*GS* 349).

To struggle for existence then means to exist in a state of not willing life. It is a will to be alive, but not a will to *live* in the Nietzschean sense of life as a sometimes reckless overflow and squandering of force. We might say, then, that the life struggling to exist is a case of the “stuff” of life that lacks the affirmative *force* of life. This is another instance where life in its complexity divides itself into its material and spiritual components. By engaging in a kind of hibernation, life wills itself as a persistent material existence separated from will to power’s force. Thus, will to power engages in a sort of self-suspension in which the material exists in separation from its *geistige* nature. Nietzsche’s Russian fatalism, as a division of this sort, shows that the care for one’s being in its exclusively material sense must punctuate the will to power. The struggle for the preservation of an individual existence is not simply a restriction of the will to power, but will to power’s self-restriction. Will to power takes account of the physicality of its occurrence and its need for rest. The body’s physicality makes demands of its own.

Nietzsche’s account of his Russian fatalism, then, has the ability to serve as a translation and revaluation of the decadence of self-preservation that would emphasize the demands of the physical body. Yet in failing to refer to his mother and her supposed decadence of instinct as a saving force for the will to power, Nietzsche disconnects his own kind of preservation from the general sense of preservation detailed in his earlier texts. He never refers to the degree of decadence in his fatalism, and thus fails to open the possibility of revaluation for the instinct that exposes life in the material necessity of its force. He instead praises the nobility and freedom from *ressentiment* that such an instinct allows. It is telling that the only mention of decadence in the section on Russian fatalism is a reference to his illness: “During periods of decadence I forbade myself such

feelings as harmful; as soon as my vitality was rich and proud enough again, I forbade myself such feelings as *beneath me*” (*EH*, Wise, 6). Thus, even as he describes a saving instinct that clearly has connections to his mother, the only decadence that he will admit is still that of his father. And as we have seen in Nietzsche’s insistence that his illness has been wholly beneficial to the subtlety of his nose, taste, and instinctive life, this decadence is reevaluated in a way that ties it at bottom to the health and strength that matters most.

Kofman, discussing Nietzsche’s vitriolic rejection of his mother, notes, “If he cannot deny his kinship with her, because *semper mater certissima est*, he denies all typological kinship, claiming to be of noble Polish descent.”¹⁶⁵ She then makes more explicit Nietzsche’s strategy of rejecting typological kinship where a biological one is impossible when she says:

In order to deny all connection and affinity with those closest to him, in favor of exclusively “elective affinities,” Nietzsche substitutes an economic hypothesis for biological or racial hypotheses of kinship. Birth is conceived as the result of an accumulation of energy necessitating the build up of a capital that will burst forth or explode all the more strongly for the time it is kept in check.¹⁶⁶

Presumably, the substitution of the economy of forces for biological kinship would be a strategy for distancing himself from what has already occurred to him as his mother’s baseness of instinct. But we might also suppose that Nietzsche’s strategy operates the other way around. What if Nietzsche’s insistence upon his mother’s baseness of instinct and the ensuing distance he gains from her actually follows from the *semper mater certissima est*? This would mean that, far from a mere strategy of distancing himself from his mother’s baseness of instinct, the exchange of economic for biological forces would be part of the same distancing operation as the very evaluation by which his

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 48.

mother is proclaimed part of the rabble. This operation has everything to do, as the Kofman quotation above would suggest, with a reconfiguration of the facts of birth.

Birth is a coming to be in a womb that requires drawing from the materiality of the body of another. There are many indications that Nietzsche's family genealogy in its focus on the father and exclusion and eventual rejection of his mother is as much an obsession with and rejection of his body's reliance on the maternal body as it is an effort to distance himself from his mother's instincts. First, we might remember that Nietzsche's father was a Lutheran pastor, which would bind Karl Ludwig to Luther, that "calamity of a monk" (*EH, CW, 2*) who is hardly esteemed by Nietzsche for the solidity of his instincts. This small oversight on Nietzsche's part alerts us to the possibility that the removal of bad instincts might not be the first motivation of this family romance. Secondly, Nietzsche drops hints in other places of the horror of women's bodies, and one might imagine that being composed of such horror would strike him as doubly awful. In a passage entitled "We artists," he says:

When we love a woman, we easily conceive a hatred for nature on account of all the repulsive natural functions to which every woman is subject. We prefer not to think of all this; but when our soul touches on these matters for one, it shrugs as it were and looks contemptuously at nature: we feel insulted; nature seems to encroach on our possessions, and with the profanest hands at that. Then we refuse to pay any heed to physiology and decree secretly: "I want to hear nothing about the fact that a human being is something more than *soul and form*." "The human being under the skin" is for all lovers a horror and unthinkable, a blasphemy against God and love (*GS 59*).

Kelly Oliver gives a compelling psychoanalytic account of Nietzsche's rejection of his mother that emphasizes the problems that the maternal body and birth pose for Nietzsche. Looking to the work of Julia Kristeva, Oliver suggests that Nietzsche, in his ambiguous relationship to the mother, "can be read as the phobic who is caught at the stage of abjection, with no imaginary loving father to support his separation from an

overbearing mother.”¹⁶⁷ Abjection is the process whereby the child separates from its mother, a process made difficult by “the child’s intimate relation to its mother’s body.”¹⁶⁸ In this process, the child finds his mother’s body both repulsive and attractive. Within the heterosexual account of masculine gender identification, the male child must split the mother into two parts, abject and sublime, in order to make her as a woman an object of love. Failure to abject can take several forms. If the mother is only sublime, the child will not identify a subject or object at all, will completely merge with the Other, and will be psychotic. If the mother is only abject, the child will displace the Other in order to maintain its ego and become neurotic. Finally, “when the child remains at the stage of abjection and abjects itself, then the maternal body becomes a phobic ‘object.’”¹⁶⁹

Understanding Nietzsche to be in this third predicament, Oliver suggests that “in his writings, Nietzsche continually struggles to separate from the maternal.”¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, having argued for a need to distinguish between the mother and the woman, she then refers to the connection that Nietzsche makes between the two in *Human, All Too Human*: “Everyone bears within him a picture of woman derived from his mother; it is this which determines whether, in his dealings with women, he respects them or despises them or is in general indifferent to them” (*HH* 380). Oliver claims that regardless of Nietzsche’s relation to his actual mother, his relation to the figure of the mother in his writings is one of abjection, which will also cause his relation to the figure of woman to be one of abjection.¹⁷¹ For Oliver, this relation is evident in Nietzsche’s

¹⁶⁷ Kelly Oliver. “Nietzsche’s Abjection.” *Nietzsche and the Feminine*, 53-67, pg. 57.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 54.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 55-56. Oliver is following Kristeva’s *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* very closely here.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 58.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 60.

fetishization of the womb: “His woman is the fetish of eternal pregnancy, eternal nourishment, eternal potency, the phallic mother.”¹⁷² This is the Dionysian—an eternal pregnancy that does not individuate.

Oliver is careful to say that her reading is a matter of textual positionality rather than personal psychology, and she is critical of Graybeal’s suggestion that Nietzsche abjects his own mother, rather than a textualized figure of the maternal.¹⁷³ Given the way in which Nietzsche writes about his own family, this seems like a false distinction. Nietzsche translates his relation to his own mother, Franziska, into writing, and we can only approach Nietzsche’s relation to his mother in a mediated, textual form. The unfolding of this relation in writing hardly gives us access to Nietzsche’s private psychological states, but neither does it present an entirely metaphorical relationship. The implication of Oliver’s distinction, namely that she is not reading Nietzsche in a manner that would reduce his texts to psychological problems, is certainly an important point to stress. However, suggesting that Nietzsche’s relationship to his own mother is implicated in his autobiographical texts in an important way surely does not compromise this principle. His mother’s body has nurtured his own, and the written translation of his relationship to his mother points to living flesh *in* its textual positionality. Thinking of Nietzsche’s texts as the becoming corpus of flesh in no way makes present an untextualized life, but it does demand imagining the lives to which the text points and which exceed that text.

Oliver’s reading is important because it shows one of the many ways in which Nietzsche is unknown to himself (*GM*, P, 1). In hearing an unacknowledged logic at

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 61-62, 66n.8.

work in the Nietzschean text, this reading suspends Nietzsche's authority in the narration of his own life in the same manner that Nietzsche suspends the authority of Christian morality's telling of itself in the *Genealogy*. By telling a story that runs beneath autobiography, accounts of Nietzsche's neuroses open his autobiography onto a new sort of hermeneutics of suspicion. We have begun to see the way that Nietzsche's texts degrade the living mother in exchange for the dead father, and we have noticed a connection between this devaluation and the denial of the otherness that composes life's most basic material conditions. In adding the story of abjection to the observations we have already made about the bodily divisions performed in Nietzsche's thought, we are able to understand Nietzsche's thought as the expression of a body that regards the material otherness that constitutes it and tries to escape it. The material otherness that most concerns and repulses Nietzsche's body is that of his mother—the basic condition of his coming to be in birth. As the riddle of his existence indicates, her status of being still alive in the flesh makes her body the unavoidable reminder of his attachment to the repulsive, sublime object. The body's struggle to reject the mother and to rise above and separate itself from its inevitable physicality thus contains the logic of the child whose identity is compromised by the womb: "How can he become a man when 'he' was once a woman? He was once part, now the expelled waste, of a woman's body."¹⁷⁴

In listening to Nietzsche with an ear for what is being repressed, denied, and shoved away, we are beginning to see that the basic physical conditions of life, while on the one hand included in the account of who Nietzsche is, are subsequently covered over in a gesture that also excludes both mother and woman. The ear for such an exclusion marks a new political future for the Nietzschean corpus. Luce Irigaray's *Marine Lover of*

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 55.

Friedrich Nietzsche is a sustained engagement of a woman's ear and voice with these exclusions in Nietzsche's text. The voice of the woman in Irigaray's text links its exclusion from Nietzsche's text with Nietzsche's preference of heights, mountaintops, and seclusion to metaphors of water, earth, milk, blood, and skin:

This sickness of man. But that he gives as security for what he is leaving behind and claiming to rise above. Veiling his nostalgia in contempt. And vomiting up that first nurse whose milk and blood he has drunk.¹⁷⁵

In connecting the female voice to that which is earthy and bodily, Irigaray is clearly drawing upon the classical distinction by which the masculine is considered rational and the feminine is bodily and emotional. Yet it is equally clear that she is employing the distinction in a new way.

Far from making an essentialist claim about the nature of women and men, Irigaray is instead speaking in the voice of a female body that has been used and appropriated in the space of Nietzsche's text.¹⁷⁶ It is not the case that the male is somehow less tied to a body than the female, but rather that the philosophical text betrays its author's use and abuse of female bodies in the effort of self-overcoming. As the passage above would suggest, the male relation to the female body in Nietzsche's text is not one of independence, but is rather a disgusted and resentful dependence. In the first section of *Marine Lover*, "Speaking of Immemorial Waters," the female voice speaks in

¹⁷⁵ Luce Irigaray. *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991, pg. 26.

¹⁷⁶ I am only speaking for *Marine Lover* here. Penelope Deutscher writes: "However, at times Irigaray does refer to sexual differences as a self-identity in a way that breaks with and potentially paralyzes that swinging motion [between possibility and impossibility]. Many readers of her work have had the experience of finding this rather paralyzed notion of sexual difference amidst an inventive philosophical project with which they are highly sympathetic" (190). (Penelope Deutscher. *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2002). Clearly, then Irigaray is not immune from an essentialist worry, but I do not see a reason to suppose that the difference Irigaray is trying to open in her conversation with the Nietzschean text has this problem. Interestingly, Deutscher claims that Irigaray's moments of paralysis and exclusion are not altogether inappropriate, but instead create productive failures that open up possibilities—a strategy similar to the one we are taking here with Nietzsche.

metaphors of water and the sea, suggesting that Zarathustra's distance from metaphors of the sea is a textual manifestation of Nietzsche's fear of the maternal body:

And when you say that the superman is the sea in whom your contempt is lost, that's fine. That is a will wider than man's own. But you never say: the superman has lived in the sea. That is how he survives.

It is always hot, dry, and hard in your world. And to excel for you always requires a bridge. Are you truly afraid of falling back into man? Or into the sea?¹⁷⁷

As the passage above indicates, the exclusion of woman and the rejection of the maternal does not happen as a symbolic mapping of water onto woman and sky and mountain onto man in which water is degraded or included less frequently and heights dominate the text and are praised. Nietzsche has spoken favorably of the sea, but his metaphors have somehow rung hollow for Irigaray's female ear. In order to understand precisely how this critique of Nietzschean metaphors is operating, we should first point out that the Nietzschean text is full of positive references to earth and sea.¹⁷⁸ Zarathustra tells his followers to "*remain faithful to the earth*"¹⁷⁹ (Z, P, 3), and tells his "jubilant conscience," "I am alone again and I want to be so; alone with the pure sky and open sea" (Z, III, Bliss). The sea is even affirmed in Zarathustra's song of "Yes and Amen":

If I am fond of the sea and of all that is the sea's kind, and fondest when it angrily contradicts me; if that delight in searching which drives the sails toward the undiscovered is in me, if a seafarer's delight is in my delight; if ever my jubilation cried, 'The coast has vanished, now the last chain has fallen from me; the boundless roars around me, far out glisten space and time; be of good cheer, old heart!' Oh, how should I not lust after eternity and after the nuptial ring of rings, the ring of recurrence? (Z, III, Seven Seals).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 13.

¹⁷⁸ Water and sea were important to Nietzsche throughout his life. Krell tells how, as a boy, Nietzsche was afraid of water, and learning to swim changed his life; nothing gave him more pleasure. "The most agonizing day his mother had with him after he was released from the Jena Institute for the Care and Cure of the Insane was the day they closed the local swimming pool for repairs. He raged. He ran off and discovered another place where he could strip and swim" (Krell 239). For a more comprehensive account of the importance of the sea to Nietzsche's life and work, see "Intimate Converse with the Sea" in: David Farrell Krell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997, pp. 178-227.

¹⁷⁹ Krell also notes this passage in his questions to Irigaray (Krell 235).

What then, is the meaning of Irigaray's engagement of Nietzsche on the point of his un-marine metaphors? Although Nietzsche employs metaphors of earth and sea, his use of them always occurs within the context of his scathing remarks about women in general and in the context of the autobiographical attempts to reject his mother's lineage that we have noted earlier. Irigaray's female voice finds something of her own in the metaphors of water and earth, and that something has been forgotten in Nietzsche's use of the metaphors. How can Nietzsche speak of water without acknowledging that his body was formed in it? Using these metaphors in a way that excludes the meanings belonging to the other in whose body he comes to be makes his use of them a violent appropriation.

Irigaray's female voice takes the sea back as her own metaphor, finding herself reflected in it in two primary ways. The sea, is, as we have noted, a metaphor that evokes the memory of the body's origination in the mother's womb—the birth from which Nietzsche struggles to remove himself in writing. The memory evoked here would truly be a re-remembering of what has been forgotten, for the waters are, as Irigaray says, “immemorial.” They cannot be remembered in the common sense of the word because they are the body's dwelling before “birth—the birth of your language.”¹⁸⁰ In speaking of the sea, then, the woman provokes a bodily memory to figure itself in language for the first time. We have examined the way that Nietzsche's bodily memory translates and re-members itself in the space of language in a gesture that performs a liberation of the body's impulsive life. But the woman's body—the mother's body, in this case—performs another memory. The body re-members itself in a life that cannot be translated into a language of force, but is better understood as an “immersion in primary matter”¹⁸¹

¹⁸⁰ Irigaray, 65.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 66.

whereby the body is nurtured and protected in its coming to be. Irigaray engages Nietzsche with this newly appropriated feminine meaning of sea in order to remind him of the birth that his body tries to forget:

Where does difference begin? Where is it (elle)? Where am I? And how can one face something that hides from appearing? How can one master that dark place where you find birth? Where you begin to be.¹⁸²

In speaking of birth, the female voice also speaks of the beginning of difference. This difference occurring in birth would be a difference born in an event of individuation in which both parties contain the other in their own being, while becoming distinctly their own event. As Oliver says, maternity represents “alterity within identity.”¹⁸³ Nietzsche’s rejection of the maternal is a rejection of the alterity within himself, and this rejection appears in his writing not only as the distancing from materiality and maternity that we have noticed, but also as textual appropriation of female figures:

I was your resonance.
Drum. I was merely the drum in your own ear sending back to itself its own truth.
And to do that, I had to be intact. I had to be supple and stretched, to fit the texture of your words.
My body aroused only by the sound of your bell.
Today I was this woman, tomorrow that one. But never the woman, who, at the echo, holds herself back. Never the beyond you are listening to right now.¹⁸⁴

Therefore, the metaphor of the sea marks another immemorial occurrence—immemorial because it has never taken place, but exists as a possibility that continually exceeds its own deferment and postponement. This is the possibility of sexual difference, a possibility eclipsed by the attempts to inscribe woman and the feminine within a masculine framework. Irigaray’s woman thus finds in the sea a metaphor to combat this continual postponement of difference. The sea is a metaphorical strategy for initiating this immemorial possibility of difference. It evokes a fluidity, an infinity, a lack of

¹⁸² Ibid., 67.

¹⁸³ “Nietzsche’s Abjection,” 56.

¹⁸⁴ Irigaray, 3.

boundaries and definition, expressing that woman has not been bounded or used up in the stretching operation that molds her to the texture of the words that would claim to define her. Speaking as the sea, she thus presents Nietzsche's discourse with the excess of her being that cannot be circumscribed by what he says about her:

There is nothing like unto women. They go beyond all simulation. And when they are copied, the abyss remains. Far short of your measurements, the abandoned ones, the women, have their place."¹⁸⁵

Once again, the reference to the boundlessness and abyssal nature of the sea is not an essentialist claim about the mysterious and exotic depths of woman, but is rather the very discovery of a voice that escapes women as they have historically been identified—always by men. The sea does not thereby become woman's identity; it is instead a way of beginning to seek an identity that is unknown because it has never come to pass. The question of woman's identity is as wide open as the sea insofar as it has always been defined by men. Irigaray's woman identifies with the sea precisely because she lacks an identity of her own, yet slips away from and resists masculine attempts to define her.¹⁸⁶ Therefore, the sea is appropriated by this woman's voice in order to refer to the immemorial waters of maternity as well as to the immemorial, yet to come openness of woman's different identity.

But who is this woman that speaks both as the waters of maternity and as the woman violently appropriated by Nietzsche's text? To whom is Nietzsche's text violent?

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., 39.

¹⁸⁶ For more on Irigaray's strategy of opening texts onto the excluded possibility of a feminine identity, see Deutscher, who explains, "Concepts of femininity exceeding the terms of man's other have traditionally been excluded from western discourse. As a disruptive strategy, Irigaray wants to insert into philosophical texts, language, and culture a concept of femininity she takes to be excluded. Because its possibility has been excluded, there is no sexual difference. What resources remain for a disruptive project? Irigaray sometimes reappropriates particularly traditional ideas about femininity, such as notions of the feminine as fluid, elusive, or virginal, exaggerating them and reinserting them into the texts in question" (32).

Oliver suggests that “Speaking of Immemorial Waters can be understood as Ariadne’s complaint against several male figures implicated in the Nietzschean text:

‘Speaking of Immemorial Waters’ is Ariadne’s refusal to marry the male lover – Dionysus, Nietzsche, Derrida – because he wants to marry only his own image of her; and it is this insistence on the self-same that prevents their making merry together.¹⁸⁷

Ariadne’s voice is clearly in this section. The woman mentions Nietzsche’s desire to marry Ariadne¹⁸⁸ and also refers to “very small ears.”¹⁸⁹ Indeed, sometimes the voice speaks like a lover treated unequally, which could indicate that Ariadne is speaking to Dionysus or to Nietzsche as he textualizes her. Yet the voice that names Ariadne speaks of her in the third person. At times, the woman’s voice can be heard more as a mother than a lover or would-be lover, particularly when she speaks of birth and of the violence she suffers at Nietzsche’s hands:¹⁹⁰

And I have suffered the violence of your passions so many times that often peaceful serenity tries me. I am lifeless but deprived of yet living my death. Indefinitely in death. A mourning veil into which you endlessly transfigure me so as to make yourself immortal. Dwelling in death without ever dying, I keep for you the dream—of being able to overcome your body. And this ideal—not to feel life passing by. Neither to suffer from nor even to imagine the matter from which life is made, and unmade. And to descend into the depths of your existence to ask you the question of your sustenance.¹⁹¹

This passage has a maternal note to it in its link between the rejection of the matter from which life is made and the woman’s suffering. Yet another passage in this section sounds with a voice that we might imagine as Nietzsche’s mother:

And how incredibly bare I am becoming, and undetectable to the eye that has forgotten the body where it takes place. And what a hole in your memory is made when I come back to myself. How

¹⁸⁷ Kelly Oliver. “The plaint of Ariadne: Luce Irigaray’s *Amante Marine de Friedrich Nietzsche*.” *The Fate of the New Nietzsche*, ed. Ansell-Pearson. USA: Avebury Press, 1993.

¹⁸⁸ Irigaray, 72.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 37.

¹⁹⁰ It seems that lover might be understood more broadly here than simply a romantic lover. While Ariadne is clearly one woman’s voice, some passages could as easily be the voices of friends or sisters. The third person voice that I mention indicates that there are not only two voices here. My account will focus on the voices of a mother and a lover because Ariadne and Franziska are treated explicitly in Nietzsche’s text.

¹⁹¹ Irigaray, 28.

deep into forgetting you must dig to find the memory of a place where I had not yet entered your horizon.¹⁹²

Sometimes the voice speaks as a lover in the first person, and sometimes, as in the passages above, it strikes a more maternal tone. The voice also speaks in the third person, sometimes of a maternal body and sometimes of a lover's body. The woman's voice, then, is better thought as plural, as the re-created voices of several women who have been appropriated in various ways by Nietzsche's text.¹⁹³

If the female voice is indeed best understood as the voices of several women, then we must also imagine that the complaints with Nietzsche, Dionysus, and Derrida cannot be reduced to a generally unified claim against Nietzsche's text. We have, on the one hand, the complaint of Ariadne, a woman who was always only text, story, writing. In engaging Nietzsche and/as Dionysus, this woman in writing laments the situation of being trapped in man's writing—in a language that never belongs to women or allows for the possibility of sexual difference. Ariadne complains as a woman written by a man in a gesture that appropriates women's difference and creates woman in man's image, confining her within a space of non-reciprocity:

If you were to gaze on yourself in me, and if in you also I could find my reflection, then those dreams would unlimit our spaces. But if I keep your images and you refuse to give me back mine, your self-same (ton meme) is but a prison.¹⁹⁴

Therefore, one dimension of this feminine engagement with the Nietzschean corpus must be understood as addressing the problem encountered by a writing that takes up the voice of an other without an adequate acknowledgement of that other's difference. Several elements of Nietzsche's text point to a failure to acknowledge sexual difference, and such

¹⁹² Ibid., 31.

¹⁹³ This especially seems true if Oliver's suggestion of the plurality of the male lover—Dionysus, Nietzsche, Derrida—is correct.

¹⁹⁴ Irigaray, 6.

a failure would easily lead the male lover to write Ariadne in his own image. To be sure, Nietzsche is in no way overtly unjust to the image of Ariadne, whose labyrinthine nature arouses his love and respect. Dionysus speaks to Ariadne as a lover, and even admires her in her rage against him: “Must we not first hate each other, if we should love each other?”¹⁹⁵ But Dionysus does not speak admiring words until Ariadne has completed her raging complaint against this “hangman-god” with “No! Come back! With all your torment! . . . come back, my unknown god! my pain! my last happiness!”¹⁹⁶ It is surely this final embracing of Dionysus, despite the anguish of Ariadne’s complaint that causes Irigaray to say:

From this ‘yes’ of her flesh that is always given and proffered to suit your eternity, you draw your infinite reserves of veils and sails, of wings and flight. . . Of sublimation and dissimulation. For this flesh that is never spoken—either by you or by her—remains a ready source of credulity for your fantasies.

It is because she never says anything but ‘yes’ to your all that you are able to go off so far, so high, soaring up in your dream life.¹⁹⁷

While Nietzsche’s respectful tone toward Ariadne seems to signal a degree of mutuality in this love relation, Irigaray’s text allows us to consider more deeply the possibilities foreclosed in this writing of woman. The male lover in this relation is a god. In the end, it is he who must be affirmed. What Ariadne affirms in inviting the tormenting pain that is Dionysus back is, precisely, Dionysus. The worthy woman is one who affirms the masculine task. Would her own task be the same as Nietzsche/Dionysus? Would her own notion of love insist upon hatred first? We do not know what “her own” would mean, for she is the wife of Dionysus,¹⁹⁸ wedded to the task of Nietzsche’s text. “Her own” has already been decided within the scope of this task:

¹⁹⁵ *DD*, Klage der Ariadne.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁷ Irigaray, 33.

¹⁹⁸ *KSA* 12, 9[115].

In a real man a child is hidden—and wants to play. Go to it, women, discover the child in man! Let woman be a plaything, pure and fine, like a gem, irradiated by the virtues of a world that has not yet arrived. Let the radiance of a star shine through your love! Let your hope be: May I give birth to the overman! (Z, I, Little Old and Young Women).

Derrida and Kofman have both demonstrated convincingly that Nietzsche's alleged misogyny and anti-feminism come under a certain kind of erasure when considered in the context of his claims about truth and woman's complex entanglement within those claims.¹⁹⁹ Derrida writes:

There is no such thing as a woman, as a truth in itself of woman in itself. That much, at least, Nietzsche has said. Not to mention the manifold typology of women in his work, its hordes of mothers, daughters, sisters, old maids, wives governesses, prostitutes, virgins, grandmothers, big and little girls.

For just this reason then, there is no such thing either as the truth of Nietzsche, or of Nietzsche's text. In fact, in *Jenseits*, it is in a paragraph on women that one reads 'these are only—my truths' (*meine Wahrheiten sind*). The very fact that 'meine Wahrheiten' is so underlined, that they are multiple, variegated, contradictory even, can only imply that these are not *truths*.²⁰⁰

Derrida proceeds from this multiplicity of truths to identify three figures of woman that appear consistently in Nietzsche's work. The well known trio of the castrated woman, the castrating woman, and the affirming woman leads to a thinking of woman in Nietzsche's text that moves beyond questions of misogyny. Irigaray picks up where Derrida leaves off. The response to *Spurs* in *Marine Lover* does not come in the form of an argument for why Derrida is wrong on the question of Nietzsche's misogyny, but rather begins in a place that has already moved on to questions of multiplicity and difference. Ariadne is the affirming woman—the woman that Nietzsche, according to Derrida, both was and loved. Though Nietzsche's truths about woman are multiple and perhaps not altogether misogynistic, Irigaray's response repeats Derrida's provocative claim back to him with a new meaning: Nietzsche's most beloved and powerful figuration of woman is precisely *Nietzsche* as woman. The voice of Ariadne engages

¹⁹⁹ In *Spurs*, and Sarah Kofman. "Baubô: Theological Perversion and Fetishism." *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*.

²⁰⁰ *Spurs*, 102-103.

Nietzsche/Dionysus on the question of whether she could be loved outside of the notion of the task—if she could be embraced in her difference from the male lover.

The first complaint of the female voice against Nietzsche's text, then, is a voice of resistance to being written into Nietzsche's task rather than being allowed a voice for any task that might be called her own. In writing for and as a woman, Nietzsche takes the woman's voice in a double sense of the word. This is an appropriation into the male lover's framework of a voice, which, if allowed to speak on different terms, would perhaps differ significantly—a reduction of the other to the same:

Becoming speech in your mouth, a stranger in her own body.²⁰¹

The most powerful effect of women: to double for men, sublime souls. To give body—and with no difference—to their ideals. And as those ideals are the gods of the language: to give them voice, foundation—material for transcendental productions.²⁰²

Now, however, we must concern ourselves with the complaint of the mother. If Ariadne's complaint centers around the problem of writing for the other, the mother's complaint addresses the problem of what is required to write oneself. Derrida and Kofman both take note of Nietzsche's claim in *Beyond Good and Evil* that an "unchangeable 'das bin ich'" pervades the question of woman, as well as other fundamental problems in his text.²⁰³ The interruption of this "biographical desire" consistently postpones the establishment of truth; it turns truth into the plural "*my truths*." But the "das bin ich" has a duplicitous relationship to the question of woman, for it is always the translation of body into corpus. The "das bin ich" comes together in a writing, and we have begun to see that Nietzsche's writing of himself leaves traces of a bodily performance sometimes at odds with the ostensible meaning of his text.

²⁰¹ Irigaray, 36.

²⁰² Ibid., 109.

²⁰³ *BGE* 231. Derrida and Kofman's discussions of the passage are found in *Spurs* 105, "Baubô" 46, and "A Fantastical Genealogy" 44.

We cannot, therefore, simply assume that Nietzsche's truths about woman reflect his "experience" of women in some straightforward way. We cannot, in other words, suppose that Nietzsche's experience of women is first and foremost what is pointed to or indicated by his complicated claims about women. For as our analysis of Nietzsche's account of his birth in *Ecce Homo* has begun to show us, the very writing of the "das bin ich" is an operation requiring a certain exclusion of the woman that Nietzsche has identified as most relevant to one's opinions about women—the mother. The "das bin ich" that would allow him to identify his comments on women as "my truths" already depends upon the exclusion of woman for its very articulation. It might therefore be the case that Nietzsche's comments on woman are locked in an abyssal circularity with the operation of Nietzsche's written "I," burying Nietzsche's "experience" of women beneath the posture that allows him to say who he is.

Nietzsche's autobiography is a translation into writing of the "das bin ich" that is his life. It requires a rebirth—a birth that he gives to himself.²⁰⁴ Writing his birth so as to give birth to himself, Nietzsche aligns himself with dead men, situating himself in a line of force of which he is the inevitable explosion. This birth is therefore also a death, in Derrida's sense of thanatography. In translating his body into corpus, Nietzsche writes for his own death, turning himself into the figure that will be seen by history; he writes "in the name of the living *as* a name of the dead."²⁰⁵ The exchange of economic for biological forces, however, is a doubly thanatographic gesture, for the death haunting

²⁰⁴ This is primarily Klossowski's language: "But to recover *life itself*, Nietzsche, as his *own mother*, gave birth to himself to himself anew and became his own creature" (178). Krell, commenting on this idea, reminds us that automaternity is "a usurpation that no mortal man or woman has ever successfully executed" (227). Kofman uses the language of Nietzsche burying himself ("I buried my forty-fourth year today" (*EH P*)) in order to be reborn to himself in "Explosion I." The notion of being reborn is clearly a reference to Dionysus, who was not simply resurrected as Christ was, but who actually gestated in two "wombs": Semele's and the thigh of Zeus.

²⁰⁵ "Otobiographies," 9.

Nietzsche's authorship is not simply a matter of textuality as such. Rather, the rejection of the maternal body is a rejection in writing of the basic conditions of life—a movement toward death. He separates himself from his living mother and the contingent matter of her womb in order to become what he is as text and as task. This rebirth of himself in writing thus enacts the rejection of his mother in her flesh, still living and growing old. Irigaray captures the connection between this reconstitution of one's own birth and the desire for death when she says: "And to repeat your own birth is simply impossible. And by wishing for it, you choose to die."²⁰⁶ The complaint of Franziska is not just a complaint about the way that the mother is written by the son, but rather the way that the living mother is wounded by the rejection that accompanies the son's task of writing. It is a complaint concerning the way that the son's understanding of his task leaves him always with "one foot *beyond* life" (*EH*, Wise, 3).

Irigaray's female voices point not only to failures within Nietzsche's text, then, but they also point outside the text, to what cannot be textualized, but whose memory disrupts Nietzsche's text. In the autobiographical reflection that leads Nietzsche's readers to his body as the locus of his thought, Nietzsche's text is always pointing beyond itself to a body of which text will always be a translation and conversion. The body is in this way a kind of abyssal origin whose drives are never present as they are but are always only present in the translation in which they are written and made intelligible. This, of course, does not mean that the body is an absolute origin, but rather that the living body is constituted by a relationship of the *differance* of signs, and the body so constituted is in a relationship of *differance* with what can be said about it. They are two different occurrences, but they retain the ability for a certain interpenetration of one

²⁰⁶ Irigaray, 57.

another. Irigaray's text repeats Nietzsche's signification of the body with an emphasis on its otherness to signification. Individuated bodies are born of other bodies, making their occurrence an alterity within identity. Bodies in this way always elude their signification; something that pervades and constitutes my body is at the same time totally other to it. While Nietzsche's work contains a thought of a bodily resistance to signification in the idea of consciousness as a weak and fallible epiphenomenon, his notion of this bodily resistance is articulated purely in terms of the body as instinct. Irigaray's repetition and criticism demonstrate that Nietzsche has failed to think the body in its material otherness. Or, more specifically, as we have seen, Nietzsche's effort of telling himself to himself contains a continuous effort to evade and transcend the material otherness that has formed him. By evoking the impossible memory of immemorial waters, Irigaray signifies a type of *differance* between bodies that Nietzsche's text, in its emphasis on will to power, tries to forget. We may call this forgotten alterity of the body the basic conditions of life.

Penelope Deutscher suggests that Irigaray's work on sexual difference goes well beyond the problems concerning relations between and representations of men and women:

Irigaray clarifies that space, time, matter, and form share a history of gender connotations, whereby the feminine has been associated with space and matter and the masculine with time and form. But this is not her only reason for an interest in space and time. We saw that her drive to locate the possibility of a thinking of sexual difference leads her to conceptualizations of materiality, envelopes, intervals, intermediaries, place, space, time, wonder, the touch, and identity in historical philosophers. Sexual difference could now be thought of as a term substituting for the thinking of the cosmos, time and space, divinity and the universe.²⁰⁷

We should think of Irigaray's engagement with Nietzsche in light of this analysis. In her conversation with the inability of Nietzsche's text to engage a sexual other, her concern

²⁰⁷ Deutscher, 118.

turns out to be not so much sexism, but rather the impoverishment of a shared world. Nietzsche's text is an appropriate interlocutor because the bodily liberation at its heart is performed as the overcoming of a world impoverished by a metaphysics that degrades the life of the body. Nietzsche has recognized the impoverishment of a life that denies the life of the body's physicality. He has shifted the locus of thought from the mind to the body, making the mind an expression of the body's life. Furthermore, in the discussion of nutrition, climate, and place, Nietzsche's text has acknowledged a material otherness that sustains the body in its basic materiality. But Nietzsche pulls this otherness under the authority of a task that conceives the body in increasingly spiritual terms. This spirit-body does not live up to its effort to think physicality infused with life, but instead performs a bodily division that rejects life in its basic conditions. This failure is, at least in part, a failure of sexual difference to take place, since what the text fails to express is the body's character of having been born of a mother—that is, its having originated as a dependence of flesh on another nurturing flesh. The flesh that would perform a task whose logic draws exclusively on lineages of the dead would have to withdraw from its living contingency—from its birth and from the enjoyment of its own flesh in the body of another. The impulsive life desiring to make itself text would hold the flesh prisoner. And so the mother and the would-be lover cry out.

This is not simply a textual problem, but rather one that happens in the space between body and text in the becoming corpus of the body. *Ecce Homo* is the performance of Nietzsche's burying himself and giving birth to himself in text as a product of historico-physiological forces—a birth/death, as we have seen—but it is also the text that directs us to imagine the life of Nietzsche's body as something other to the

text. A few relevant remarks by Nietzsche about this body come to mind in regard to bodily liberation when we add to the conception the dimension of body that Irigaray's text has helped to fill out. Nietzsche writes in an 1886 letter to Overbeck:

The *antinomy* of my current situation, of the form of my existence, consists in this: everything that I *need* in order to be a *philosophus radicalis*—freedom from profession, wife, child, society, fatherland, faith, etc., etc.—I equally suffer as *deprivations*, inasmuch as I have the good fortune to be a living creature and not merely an analyzing machine or objectivizing apparatus. I have to add that this juxtaposition of necessities and deprivations is driven to extremes by the lack of an even moderately durable health. For in my moments of health I feel the deprivations *less* keenly. Further, I absolutely do not know how to bring together the five conditions that would *restore* my delicate health to a bearable modicum. Finally, the worst possible situation would prevail if in order to attain those five conditions of health I had to *deprive myself* of the eight freedoms of the *philosophus radicalis*.²⁰⁸

Nietzsche's musings on his lack of sensuality, commitments, and connectedness bring to mind a passage from the *Genealogy*. Reflecting on Schopenhauer's hatred of sexuality, Nietzsche speculates that Schopenhauer needed the enemies of sensuality and woman, for these "enemies seduced him ever again to existence" (*GM* III.7). Nietzsche takes Schopenhauer's particular campaign against sensuality to be the "most ravishing and delightful expression" of a general tendency among philosophers to regard sensuality with rancor and irritation. Nietzsche locates this rancor in the peculiar instinctive composition of the philosopher:

Every animal—therefore *la bête philosophe*, too—instinctively strives for an optimum of favorable conditions under which it can expend its strength and achieve its maximal feeling of power; every animal abhors, just as instinctively and with a subtlety of discernment that is 'higher than all reason,' every kind of intrusion or hindrance that obstructs or could obstruct this path to the optimum (I am *not* speaking of its path to happiness, but its path to power, to action, to the most powerful activity, and in most cases actually its path to unhappiness). Thus the philosopher abhors *marriage*, together with that which might persuade to it—marriage being a hindrance and calamity on his path to the optimum. What great philosopher hitherto has been married? Heraclitus, Plato, Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Kant, Schopenhauer—they were not; more, one cannot even *imagine* them married. A married philosopher belongs *in comedy*, that is my proposition—and as for that exception, Socrates, it would seem, married *ironically*, just to demonstrate *this* proposition (*GM* III.7).

²⁰⁸ Quoted in Krell and Bates, 5.

The letter to Overbeck suggests that Nietzsche's body, whose impulsive life has announced the body's life and preeminence, relies for its most original expression on the same ascetic practices in which the metaphysicians of old have rooted their thought. But unlike these old metaphysicians, Nietzsche does not utter ascetic ideals. The paradox is that he speaks against the bodily deprivation of asceticism, yet understands the deprivation that he suffers as the only way of continuing his campaign against this moral understanding of the world. Even this liberating expression of the impulses occurs as a separation from the world, and as we have seen, this performance of thinking divides the body into spiritual and material parts. Nietzsche's body shows us that Nietzschean philosophy is still a practice of death in the Socratic sense. We will recall that the Socratic practice of death separates the body from the soul and that it requires sending the crying women away.²⁰⁹

And yet, Nietzsche's text points beyond this practice of death to a new bodily existence, making his particular way of practicing death a Dionysian practice as well. His text turns a critical eye toward the philosophical practice of death even as it engages in it, thus opening avenues for other ways of being embodied. Nietzsche's autobiographical gesture is a crucial element of this ability of the text to point beyond itself, for it opens the question of "which one?" toward Nietzsche's text as his own question. Nietzsche gives his own answer to this question, but he also opens the floodgates for the sort of hermeneutics that we have opened in this inquiry. We have understood Nietzsche's text as a translation of his physiology, only to find that the translation from body to text bypasses living flesh. We have seen that a sacrificial logic

²⁰⁹ *Phaedo*, 117e.

pervades the text as the living body becomes corpus. This logic implies an orientation toward a future in which the corpus might become re-fleshed.

As we have seen, though, this re-fleshing is a questionable and undecidable process. The fleshing of the Nietzschean corpus has been tied to one of the great disasters of the twentieth century. While Nietzsche's emphasis on physiological health has been truncated and appropriated so as to be implicated in the logic of health driving the Nazi project of extermination, we have seen that this appropriation occurs as a fixing-in-place of an aphorism, rather than as a setting-into-motion of the deconstructive possibilities of the text. If the political future of the Nietzschean text is still undecided after a flirtation with disaster, it is because it has been worthy of other ears. These ears are trained by Nietzsche's insistence upon perspective, his suspicion of truth and asceticism, and on his model of friendship in its emphasis on resistance (*Z, I, Friend*). These ears do not find a new political Truth in Nietzsche's name, but instead heed the genealogical call of his text, which allows the narratives covered over by a text to come forward and speak of their suppression.

In following the lead of these genealogical ears, we are rewriting Nietzsche's text in terms of its exclusions, and by listening to these exclusions, we have found Nietzsche's body to resist its textual expression. The risk for any text, as we have seen in the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche, is that its exclusions, concretizations, definitions, and prioritizations will be made to stand still. No writing avoids the presence of certain sedimentation in its establishment of meaning—no meaning can happen without this risk troubling it. We have seen that Nietzsche's establishment of the concepts of physiology and instinct is performed in a way that rejects the material otherness that makes these

structures highly contingent. We might say that this, as a place where contingency is rejected in place of the stable logic of a task, is a risky place in Nietzsche's text. But we are able to come to such a place with ears trained to hear the riskiness of its exclusions because the text signed "Nietzsche" also authorizes its own deconstruction. It is not simply the case that Nietzsche's text, like any other, can be deconstructed, but rather that Nietzsche's corpus teaches this truth-unraveling suspicion.

While a political future of Nietzsche's corpus is already underway in the practice of genealogical and deconstructive writing, this account that deconstructs an element of *the Nietzschean text* offers something unique to this political future. Our reading does not simply take up a general Nietzschean practice of reading. Rather, in circling back to the way the bodily locus becomes text, it brings to light an exclusion that occurs in the very performance of genealogy and thus brings the practice of deconstructive genealogy itself into question. This questioning will help us to define more exactly how such a practice of writing might open a political future. We have shown that the division between the performance of thought in writing and its expression marks a sacrificial logic in Nietzsche's text that opens our political understanding of the text onto a dispersed future. This means that the division of the body in which materiality is subordinated opens the space for a questioning of thinking's political possibilities. Furthermore, in this chapter we have seen yet another way in which materiality is subordinated. The insistence on a physiological and historical birth that takes the place of a more literally physical birth is an even more active distancing than the divisive performance of thought we have associated with eternal return. It is the Socratic practice of death. Once again, this active distancing demonstrates the difficulty of a writing that would liberate bodies,

not simply because of a sublimation of pain suffered in writing, but because of the active turning away from physical flesh that accompanies a genealogical writing.

Nietzsche's autobiography does not merely show us that a failure for liberation at the locus must cause our understanding of self-overcoming to be spread out across time, but it shows also a way that a writing of the body actively excludes the materiality that makes such a writing possible. If a re-writing of the Nietzschean text is to occur as the embodiment of a dynamic genealogical and deconstructive practice, then it must engage this active exclusion at the heart of Nietzschean genealogy in order to understand its own practice. Our reading, however, has found at the locus not only an exclusion, but also a resistance to exclusion. The resistance consists in the fact that even in performing a writing that excludes materiality, Nietzsche's text also points beyond itself in speaking of the body, whose life is different and "*differant*" in its textualization. If Nietzsche's autobiography has been violent to the body in its materiality, it has also brought into play a *differance* that comes with translating flesh into corpus. The exclusion of materiality can therefore also be thought of as a play of text with materiality, since materiality disturbs the text and is therefore not simply set aside by it. Materiality comes into play in the text, but it becomes a sign that points beyond the text. It is this play that will concern us as we ask how, precisely, a dispersed genealogy might be understood to bring political possibilities to living, material bodies.

Chapter Five: Toward a Political Future for the Nietzschean Corpus

Ultimately, nobody can get more out of things, including books, than he already knows. For what one lacks access to from experience one will have no ear (*EH*, Books, 1).

* * *

In chapter four, the recovery of an excluded materiality in Nietzsche's text led us to question how we might understand the political possibilities of deconstructive genealogy, given the textual play of a corpus and the sign of materiality pointing beyond it. We have spoken of the political future of Nietzsche's text as a fleshing of the corpus. Yet such a renewed attention to materiality and the notion of fleshing Nietzsche's corpus will prove to be problematic in more ways than one. As we have seen, the Nietzschean translation of flesh into corpus occurs within the fluid and undecidable space of writing, and the re-fleshing of this corpus has already taken place in the disastrous politics that remains the only clearly fleshed out politics to stand behind Nietzsche's name. Furthermore, a political future for this corpus would be a matter for new ears, and these new ears are often engaged in the re-writing of the Nietzschean corpus more than in an explicit political fleshing of this corpus (and, to say it once again, such a fleshing-out is an undecided and undecidable future). Such a re-writing only multiplies the ways in which a corpus will be disseminated into the spaces of the various bodies who read it. Therefore, it remains to ask, what kind of political future are we re-writing in the name of Nietzsche, and what is the significance of our analysis of resistant materiality for such a future?

Throughout this dissertation, we have focused on the body to which Nietzsche's text points and on a division occurring in that body as it translates its drives into the language of philosophy. This division is played out in multiple ways. Nietzsche's body divides into spiritual and material elements both in his account of his own pain and in his account of the lineage through which he has become what he is. In attending to this division and the coinciding subordination of the more material element of the body, we

have focused on an understanding of the body that is at once non-Nietzschean and at the same time pervades and disturbs Nietzsche's text in ways that we have described in detail. But why would the political re-reading and re-writing of the Nietzschean corpus need to focus on this exclusion? What might be the significance of pushing Nietzsche to be more of a materialist than he already is? Is Nietzsche's greatest contribution and overcoming not the way that he thinks the *life* of the material, leading us to think past its blunt thereness, the mundane functionality of its operations, and its opposition to the spirit?

Indeed, in attending to the materiality of the body that disturbs and resists the text in which it is spiritualized, we are flirting with a danger to which we must be especially attuned in the context of a political future for Nietzsche's text. The danger of returning to an emphasis on the body's materiality is not simply a danger of slipping back into metaphysics (though this, admittedly, is a danger) but rather, there is a risk of bringing the body into political discourse as bare life stripped of any meaning beyond staying alive. Giorgio Agamben, following Foucault and Hannah Arendt, describes how natural life, once excluded from the space of the polis, becomes reincorporated into modern political strategies.²¹⁰ This reincorporation is the production of a biopolitical body—a merging of life and politics whereby life becomes bare, or sacred,²¹¹ by being held in a state of exception. Given the merging of life and politics into biopolitics, Agamben claims that the camp and not the polis is the political paradigm of the modern West because the camp is the space in which life is, precisely, laid bare. Furthermore, the

²¹⁰ Giorgio Agamben. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.

²¹¹ *Sacred* in this context means that one can be killed without the killing constituting a homicide, and thus refers to life merely insofar as it is constantly exposed to death. Such a state of affairs, Agamben claims, comes about by a sovereign decision that includes it in the juridical order by way of excluding it.

camp—the refugee camp along with the concentration camp—is a state in which politics is held in suspension. It is an exception, but as Agamben points out, this exception has become the rule of the twentieth and twenty-first century. Thus, this exception is not a mere suspension of politics, but is rather the very space of the politics of bare life, which is the politics of the continuous suspension of politics.

Given the association of Nietzsche's name with the politics of the exception and of the camp, our re-writing of Nietzsche's corpus toward a new political future must proceed cautiously, warned by this analysis linking a politicization of the biological body with the logic of the camp. This is not to say that in emphasizing the material meaning of the body we are reducing it to bare life, but only to acknowledge that such a meaning is always nearby, troubling and guiding the possibilities for thinking about the body's materiality. It is to say, furthermore, that in thinking of bodies as sites where political meanings become fleshed, we cannot avoid bare life as a literal way in which politics is already being fleshed out. Therefore, to ask it again, why push the material in the re-writing of Nietzsche's corpus toward a political future, when the political past of this text is haunted by a link to the camp—a space of bodies reduced to bare materiality?

By following Derrida's account of the university and the state in "Otobiographies" in chapter three, we established the importance of individual bodies (and ears in particular) for a possible re-fleshing of the Nietzschean corpus. In this way, we have seen that the localized bodily event of thought by which Nietzsche utters a self-overcoming genealogy is dispersed into the spaces of multiple bodies through a dislocating writing. This dislocation and ensuing reincorporation puts distance between the localized event of Nietzsche's thought and the political event attached to Nietzsche's

corpus, thus dispersing self-overcoming over a historical plane. Therefore, in order to expand our notion of the political future of Nietzsche's text, we must first expand our account of the way that bodies incorporate thinking in the public space. In doing this, we will describe how genealogy enters the political space and what kind of political impact it can possibly have. This description will be a more definitive response to one of the principal questions that we have addressed throughout this study—the question of Nietzschean dynamite, or what radical philosophy accomplishes in social and political spaces. In responding to this question in a more definitive way, we will speak of a genealogical politics as the way that genealogical discourses expose repressive orders and in doing so invite new worlds.

We will see, however, that this genealogical politics happens in a temporal spacing of its own, and this temporality is not aligned with the temporality in which the daily decisions of what is commonly called politics take place. The temporality of a genealogical politics is given in a duplicitous way by the body's materiality. We will see that materiality names both the malleability that allows bodies to embody various orders as well as the resistance to change that comes with living in the meanings given by those orders. The time given by materiality to genealogical politics is thus the trans-generational time of bodies in their living meanings. But the temporality to which genealogy is confined does not coincide with materiality that has been stripped of meaning when a politics produces bare life, and this denies genealogy any liberating possibilities in relation to this form of materiality. In thinking materiality more extensively, then, we will encounter the political possibilities of genealogical thinking together with its limits.

Bodies, Worlds

We should be clear first of all that the emphasis on the body's materiality is not an attempt to think the body as a slab of meat stripped of meaning, but is rather an attempt to recognize meanings multiplied beyond Nietzsche's more spiritualized formulations. While, as we have noted, recovering these meanings paradoxically inches us closer to a loss of meaning in bare life, the loss of these meanings might also render Nietzsche's corpus more easily appropriable by a politics of the camp. In what way might the suppression of the body's materiality in his text expose Nietzsche's work to a biopolitics that erects a camp while taking his name as an authority?

Nietzsche shrugs off his own illness by referring to the benefits it brings to him, and the condition for reaping these benefits from an illness "is *that one be healthy at bottom*" (*EH*, Wise, 2). Only one who is healthy at bottom can cause health to come about from physical illness, for this is what it means to be healthy *at bottom*. It means that one is essentially a condition of health—that in the face of any material deprivation or deterioration, an untouchable internal logic maintains that health. This physiological, instinctual composition, while not a fixed essence, nonetheless names a general pattern of a given body's drives that determines how contingencies will affect the body. And this means that material contingencies are not fully contingent, but are rather subordinate to the leading term of a physiology that already gives a body a character of health or decadence. We have already examined the way that Nietzsche's detailed attention to material contingency slowly and subtly gives way to the priority of the body's more spiritualized and pre-determined drives. The body's spiritual resistance to the

contingencies of its world, however, are also especially clear in the characterizations of human types in the *Genealogy*.

The second essay of the *Genealogy* is very much driven by material contingency. Nietzsche traces the origins of the most seemingly natural human moral capacities and ideals to the chance events of certain economies of exchange. This genealogy exposes memory as something that had to be “burned in” (*GM* II.3) and the human capacity of introspection as the result of a terrible event of political ordering befalling the unprepared animal-man (*GM* II.16). Nietzsche’s account of the “*internalization* of man” that occurs when “some pack of blond beasts of prey” imposes the order of the state on the animal-man is decisive in revealing the chance character of instinctive life. In the event of state-formation, the healthful instincts serving man in his natural state become sick simply because of material restraints placed upon his body. Left with no avenue by which to discharge his aggressive impulses, but unable to lessen their force, he becomes the object of his own instinctive aggression. This event of internalization shows that health and decadence are not static characteristics of a being, but are instead conditions that fluctuate according to the chance events of the environment in which one lives. The instincts that make one healthy in one environment only make one decadent in the next.

However, this insight is eclipsed somewhat by other more static descriptions of the body’s instinctive life in the *Genealogy*. In giving an account of the evaluations of good and bad as the most original evaluations, Nietzsche tells a story of an early state of affairs following a straightforward dialectic of natural types. He says that it is “‘the good’ *themselves*” (*GM* I.2, emphasis mine) who seize the right of giving names in a way that reflects their own value. This genealogy does not extend farther back than this

moment in which there are those with strong and noble instincts and those with base and plebeian instincts and these instincts are discharged, setting up a social order in accordance with these natural instincts. Likewise, while Nietzsche gives a genealogy of the origin of the evaluations good and evil, he does not provide a genealogy to account for the occurrence of those figures who fuel and harness the *ressentiment* of the masses—the ascetic priests. The priest, like the noble and the base, arrives on the scene as a type without a complex origin. He is a weaker sort of noble with an obsessive predilection for cleanliness and purity, and Nietzsche gives no account of how such an obsession comes about, but merely notes that this unhealthy type is a branch of the equally ahistorical knightly-aristocratic caste (*GM* I.6-7).

This tendency toward types is the final element that we will explore in Nietzsche's more general tendency toward a spiritualizing dematerialization of the body. This final element will begin to make more clear the problem involved in this spiritualizing tendency. The tendency to only extend genealogy as far back as individual physiological types corresponds to the subordinating distance that Nietzsche puts between his own "healthy at bottom" physiology and the material contingencies affecting his bodily being. Whereas Nietzsche's spiritualization of his own body shows a counteraction of a bodily liberation at work in the performance of the text, these examples of a genealogical standstill leading to physiological types indicate that the performance, which has proven to be at a distance from Nietzsche's ostensible meanings, has in fact also infected these meanings. These meanings provide a more specific way of approaching the decadence of certain groups—namely as the natural occurrence of an inferior physiology. In both cases, bodies are presented as orders unto themselves,

physiologies closed off from the disrupting effects of the world's contingency, which both strengthens and destroys. If bodies are simply these closed economies of force, then a politics engaging them can, at best, seek an arrangement that will privilege the bodies deemed to have superior instincts and marginalize those deemed inferior. The health of the "people," then, will depend upon the ability to contain inferior physiologies, for, as Nietzsche writes, "the *sick* are man's greatest danger," from whom "the healthy should be segregated" (*GM* III.14).

Let us not suppose, in this play with Nietzsche's text, that we have finally put our finger on it and discovered just what about Nietzsche's thought made him so irresistibly appropriable for the Nazis, for that is hardly the point of this reading. What this reading suggests is rather that the thought of the body's materiality is no more attached to bare life than is the thought of the body's spirituality. Furthermore, it suggests that the strand of Nietzsche's thought that presents the body's physiology without particular consideration for its immersion in a material world is significant in regard to a political future because of the way this strand connects with a political past. This is not the same as demonstrating the secret Nazi lurking in Nietzsche's work or isolating the strand that caused the Nazis to claim Nietzsche. Such a project would be difficult at best and futile and simplistic at worst in its attempt to make the past hinge on some definite piece of Nietzsche's text. Our reading, however, only looks to the past insofar as that past helps to open onto new meanings for the future.

While we have shown that Nietzsche's text demonstrates a definite trend of dematerializing the body, there are also places within his text that might allow us to begin to recover the meanings that are gradually stripped away by Nietzsche's thematizations.

The passages on nutrition and climate have already opened up meanings for the body in its openness to and dependence on a material other, even if they do not retain the importance that Nietzsche initially assigns to them throughout *Ecce Homo*. We have also noted the shaping of instinct by the world's contingencies in the case of the animal-man who turns against himself in order to become a spiritual creature. In addition to these openings, the very practice of genealogy in the Nietzschean style authorizes reaching further back than the narrative that is told within the spaces of Nietzsche's text. In opening up the story behind all things that have come to appear as static, Nietzsche invites a new way of approaching whatever sits still, even if he himself has allowed it to sit still. At times, Nietzsche intimates that there is a story behind these natural types, though he does not pursue these hints. For example, there is a reason for the instinctive *ressentiment* unleashed by the ascetic priest, though it is difficult to say whether this reason takes us to material contingency or another essential nature:

As is well known, the priests are the *most evil enemies*—but why? Because they are the most impotent. It is because of their impotence that in them hatred grows to monstrous and uncanny proportions, to the most spiritual and poisonous kind of hatred (*GM* I.7).

Impotence is not quite the same thing as weakness, in that it is a condition more clearly defined by situation. Impotence, rather than a permanent characteristic, is best thought as an impotence *to something*, as a lack of power in one's particular circumstances. This is yet another way in which Nietzsche's text opens onto possible contingencies behind what has appeared as fixed.

The importance of opening the Nietzschean text onto a renewed understanding of the body's materiality is first of all an issue of recognizing the body's susceptibility to the banal contingencies of the world in which it lives. Bodily physiologies are not fixed as a type, but are instead radically exposed to the contingencies of a world that feeds them,

forces them into certain positions, and in doing so constitutes what and how they will be in that world. To be material, and more specifically *living* material, means to be malleable, shapeable, and vulnerable. It means to always be in a process of extending past the borders of one's own body and drawing otherness into oneself in eating, drinking, and breathing. To be material, then, means not just to create a world in the unleashing of the body's will to power, but also to build and carve out a world in accordance with the body's constant needs.

But of course, in emphasizing this material element, we also cannot dispense with Nietzsche's great insight in regard to materiality (albeit an insight that has led to what we have called a spiritualizing dematerialization of the body): the body is not just a heap of matter engaged in the input and output required for survival. In addition to the porosity, malleability, and the vulnerability of basic need, the body is a seat of force. We must now consider the body's force together with its vulnerable openness, and Nietzsche's example of the animal-man locked within the confines of a state order once again provides a good place for reflection upon this combination. The animal-man's body as Nietzsche describes it prior to the state is well suited to the world in which it lives. The discharging of its own force and the maintenance of its own life through the world correspond harmoniously. But from what seems to be out of nowhere, a disastrous event occurs, and Nietzsche says that the animal-man's "instincts were disvalued and 'suspended'" (*GM* II.16). How is this event possible? How can such new evaluations come to pass? Such an order, Nietzsche reminds us, does not come about by social contracts:

Secondly, however, that the welding of a hitherto unchecked and shapeless populace into a firm form was not only instituted by an act of violence but also carried to its conclusion by nothing but acts of violence—that the oldest "state" thus appeared as a fearful tyranny, as a repressive and

remorseless machine, and went on working until this raw material of people and semi-animals was at last not thoroughly kneaded and pliant but also *formed* (GM II.17).

Imposing new orders upon the world means at every turn reorienting bodies from a world to which their instincts are well suited into the world that comes into being through the new practices into which these bodies are forced. The aggressive animal-man inevitably resists the loss of his world, and in order to be compelled to make his body conform to the new order being imposed, he must be acted upon violently. Thus, it is not simply the case that he *loses* the space for outward aggression, but it is equally the case that he *gives it up* in a recognition that he can be killed. The internalization that he wages on himself is at the same time a decision to protect the life of his body. The behaviors and dispositions of his body are malleable precisely because he can be killed. But the malleability found in the face of violence does not only form these human animals; it also gives them a new capacity for *being formed*. The violence that turns the human animal inward also gives it the capacity to form itself. The body turned inward has a new ability to be formed by language and discourse. It is now possible to shape this body without explicitly physical violence,²¹² for the very structure allowing it inward reflection carries with it a memory of its own physical vulnerability. Being able to be killed is an important component of the event turning the human animal inward, and inwardness and self restraint make this animal capable of life in a political formation.²¹³

²¹² It will be noted that the spiritual developments of language and discourse are also physical, yet their physicality is different because they owe their development to a physicality turning against itself. This turn of an organism against itself is always for Nietzsche the distinctive mark of what is spiritual, and though it never becomes a non-physical event, its distinctive kind of physicality allows Nietzsche to identify and criticize it.

²¹³ Another piece of the genealogy is relevant here, namely, Nietzsche's comments on justice and law, also in the second essay (GM II.11). Law and justice are creations of a creative restraint without *ressentiment* and self-torture. In reading this passage together with II.16-17, I gather that while Nietzsche sees only creative cheerfulness in the restraint required for the imposition of political order, the actual maintenance of everyday political life is made possible by the internal structures that make those under the order capable of

Interestingly, this ability to be killed the recognition of which is prior to any political order seems to be an instance of what Agamben calls bare life, for it is the laying bare of a life that can be killed before any law is instituted. This bare life precedes the separation of political from biological life that Foucault and Agamben describe of Aristotelian politics. The Aristotelian separation would assume that a political order is already in place, but the moment of internalization is a moment at which bare life converts itself into a body with the capacity to take on political meanings that bring it into a realm where it is no longer laid bare. The occurrence of bare life is then inseparable from the human animal's extreme malleability into the confines of various political orders, since it is this occurrence that initiates the ability to act as a member of a political machinery.

With a reflective capacity and internal space, a body is no longer coercible simply in the blunt terms of a bare life that may move or be killed, but is instead an occurrence of physicality that embodies various political positions by incorporating them into its own logic. In this way, the orders of others are internalized and lived out as if they belonged to the body itself. The orders are multiple and dictate to bodies diverse ways of negotiating their worlds in terms of various bodily disciplines including labor, sexuality, and morality.²¹⁴ The repetition of these bodily practices thus creates a certain kind of world, and in doing so also perpetuates this world by defining the possibilities for the kinds of practice and expression possible for generations to come. We may think, for instance, of the way the extremely limited possibilities for being a woman have

enforcing the restraints of that order on themselves. These structures would be the decadent moral structures of the sick modern human.

²¹⁴ Here I am intersecting Nietzsche's narrative of the formation of inwardness as a result of political order with the shaping of bodies by the complex circulation of power described by thinkers like Foucault and Judith Butler.

historically been accompanied by a cultural understanding of woman's nature, such that in practicing the roles defined for them, women have also found such roles to be their own natural function. We may think just as easily of a peaceful agricultural community tied together by land and custom.

Whether we think of more pejorative and insidious examples of power limiting bodies to certain roles and producing their functions and desires or of the tight bonds of community, worlds exist because bodies make and find their homes inside an order that extends past the boundaries of their own skin. And beyond the initial genealogical role of the recognition of mortality in making human bodies ready to take on the meanings projected by various orders, the vulnerability of being a living body is always, at some level, addressed by one's world. A world is what must sustain physical existence, and if it does not sustain the body, it will instead manage bodies in order to continue its order. In the case of the agricultural community, for instance, bodies are sustained by the order of the community; they are fed both by the land and by the presence of one another. If an order is to persist when no one is being fed, it will only persist so long as bodies are threatened in other ways.

Yet these worlds break down and are torn apart. The destruction of a world surely happens in countless ways, sometimes gradually and sometimes in a sudden unleashing of violence. The destruction of a world, though, particularly the gradual crumbling of one, suggests that the bodies that have so thoroughly become what various orders demand of them have also retained something of their own. As we have noted, Nietzsche's account of the becoming-civilized of the animal-man shows him becoming something other in a very particular way. He does not simply get a new instinct, but rather

internalizes the aggressive instinct that is his own. As our examination of the fortuitous case of Nietzsche has shown, this retained instinct, which may well oppose its own body's way of being in the world, negotiates its expression within the structures available to it—in Nietzsche's case, responsible, rational thought. When this retained, buried instinct announces itself, this is thoroughly an event of spirit-matter, an occurrence of the body's physicality in which spirit and matter are indistinguishable. In other words, this instinctive announcement is not mere instinct, but rather an instinct that announces itself in response to pressure on its material being. It is the fluidity of experiencing one's own physicality confined into an order not its own together with a physical resistance to that shaping force.

In this event, an order of the world is experienced in its arbitrariness and violence. But a world is composed of many different political, religious, and metaphysical orders, and inevitably, the event of radical questionability does not extend to all orders making up a world. Thus the avenues for the expression that come with this experience of an order's arbitrariness and violence are also products of the world of which a body is still a part. This means that the resistant instinct is never somehow a pure expression of the body's own logic, but is instead at every turn an expression that also reflects the body in its vulnerability and malleability. It also means that the instinct that we have described as retained and buried is not the human animal's pure or true instinct, expressing itself after a long hibernation, even though it might be linked genealogically to an unrepresentable past before civilization. Instead, even this instinct is thoroughly embedded in the shapeable materiality of the body, such that the resistant instinct is also porous in regard to the

world in which it lives, and it is shaped by that world.²¹⁵ This is a subtle difference between spiritualizing the body and understanding the body as spirit/matter in a way that really recognizes materiality.

To be spirit/matter, or a living body, means at once to take on the meanings of the world that nourishes and shapes, but also to retain an ability to resist these meanings. Because the same body is both formed by and resistant to its world, its resistance will be paradoxical, often making use of structures in order to resist them. Even in initiating new spaces, it is confined by various old ones. This is the case for Nietzsche as he performs a philosophical liberation of the body from metaphysics, at once writing an overturning of an asceticism held in place by philosophical discourses while also performing the ascetic practice death that has defined philosophy since Socrates. It would be the case in the violence and destruction of revolutions undertaken in the name of justice and peace. Sensing themselves to be something other than the function to which a certain world reduces them, these resistant bodies reduce others to the ability to be killed in an effort to bring new possibilities of meaning to the world. We might also say, following Agamben, that it would be the case for those humanitarian efforts that make the refugee camp their space of resistance against the orders that unleash a genocidal logic, thus continuing to consider bodies as bare life instead of lives with meaning.

Indeed, even the boldest resistances are often confined by the orders that they are resisting, and we have seen that this is a paradox of being spirit/matter in that the body is alive at once by virtue of something that is its own but also because of its belonging to

²¹⁵ I understand these claims to be responding to some of the issues that arose in chapter two, particularly in regard to the worry over the theologizing of the body's impulses. This issue is easier to address now that our inquiry has moved us past the limits of the Klossowskian framework, which was nonetheless a helpful place from which to launch the inquiry.

that which feeds it and is other to it. We have called this other in which a body lives a world and noted that worlds are composed of various orders, and in doing so, we have employed a term often used in phenomenological contexts in a decidedly non-phenomenological way. World, which often means a space that is lit up, in which one can live in connectedness and understanding, certainly occurs for the spirit/matter of body in its everyday comings and goings. But a world is no longer limited to such a straightforward occurrence of openness, and in speaking of a world as a space in which bodies fall into orders, we evoke the layers of unlit and non-understood meanings of the actions that embodied beings carry out with understanding. Perhaps it could be argued that this is a difference between being in a world and “having” a world, but if the world that one “has” is shaped by the world that one is unaware of being a part of, the difference between the two is eroded. The Christmas shoppers at the mall are all engaged in their shopping as friends, family members, and lovers. Their buying habits are determined by hearth and home, by what is intimate and dear. Many of them have taken a child’s name off of the Angel Tree at church because of a sensibility that extends past themselves and into the world of their communities. Christmas shopping then means, for many of these mall-goers, love, family, tradition, putting others first, peace on earth, and good will to men. For the majority of them, it does not mean running the engine of consumerism that absolutely depends upon and creates expendable sweatshop labor all over the globe. In fact, the engine runs much more smoothly when it does not mean that. Yet regardless of whether this world is open to these mall-goers, they still live in it and give it its solidity. Worlds and orders are absorbed into the materiality of bodies, driving their habits and desires without making themselves present as such. This opacity of

worlds made by orders pressing themselves subtly through the pores of the skin is another reason that resistances often remain attached to the orders that they would resist. A world makes itself felt in the dispositions of the body, but in making itself felt, it often does not bring itself to light. Thus, it is possible to wage resistance against the wrong part of the world, erring toward what is in the light.

This analysis of the living body as spirit-matter leads us back to a genealogical politics as the future of the Nietzschean corpus. Nietzschean politics would be the resistant strategy of making worlds and orders visible. Such a strategy is best conceived in accordance with the body's materiality, for the embodiment of an invisible world is an occurrence of a porous flesh that internalizes meanings. Furthermore, the ability of a body to shape itself to conform to a certain kind of world is connected genealogically with the possibility of laying the body bare in its materiality. The resistance defining Nietzschean politics is therefore the body's own resistance to the consequences of its malleability. As we have seen, the body feels itself in its difference from the order that it embodies and enacts that difference. Such a differencing, however, is not the action of spirit over matter, but is rather an event of spirit occurring within the limits and according to the possibilities of materiality. Resistance is thus never a return to the body's pure and true way of existing, but is instead an exertion of force thoroughly marked by the vulnerability and malleability of being material. This means that a genealogical politics will always gesture toward what is, to use Derrida's language, to come. It will never have done with its task because we will always be living in the midst of orders that are covered over and we will always resist within the force of those orders.

A more robust conception of materiality thus allows us to begin to develop a more complete picture of the way in which a future Nietzschean politics must be a bodily affair. Just as Nietzsche's own resistant instinct is always tied up in a materiality that disturbs its claims to an originality of force, so too must the fleshing of the Nietzschean corpus account for the complex ways that materiality plays into the embodiment of discourse and thought. This is the first way that a renewed attention to the materiality excluded from and disturbing Nietzsche's text is crucial to thinking the future for a Nietzschean politics.

The Time of Genealogical Politics

A renewed attention to materiality has allowed for a deeper understanding of the possibilities for thinking as a political event by demonstrating how thinking as a bodily event resists the orders taken on by bodies in their material malleability. In the analysis of thought's resistance to orders and worlds, we have found a way of understanding a future for the Nietzschean corpus as a genealogical politics. A genealogical politics is, as we have noted, a resistant strategy of the body by which orders and worlds are brought to light in their difference from the flesh that embodies them. In speaking of a genealogical politics, we are clearly using the term "politics" differently than we have used it in earlier chapters. We noted in chapter three that subversive genealogical thought is contained within the academy, which sits in a space outside the city walls, thus confining subversive thought to a space from which it cannot directly engage the affairs of the polis. Of course, this lack of a direct engagement does not mean that genealogical thought fails to engage political spaces altogether. We have begun to see in the preceding section how thought engages these spaces in its dispersal among bodies, spreading more

in the quiet manner of infection than in a sudden event of explosion. This dispersal means that a genealogical politics never happens in a discrete or determinate event, but, as we have seen, is always oriented toward what is to come. Genealogical politics is thus temporally distinct from political action more conventionally understood. Continuing our discussion of materiality will help us to better understand both this temporality, and this temporality will help us to understand more precisely the role of a genealogical politics.

In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche tells of the madman who runs into the market seeking God and proclaiming, “Whither is God? I will tell you. *We have killed him—you and I*” (GS 125). Following a long rant, the madman finds the crowd unreceptive to his message:

Here the madman fell silent and looked again at his listeners; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. “I have come too early,” he said then; “my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men. Lightning and thunder require time; the light of the stars requires time; deeds, though done, still require time to be seen and heard. This deed is still more distant than the distant stars—and yet they have done it themselves” (GS 125).

The deed of which the madman speaks has been done and the madman is announcing it and drawing attention to it, yet no one is able to see the deed that they themselves have done. How is it possible to come too early and to find ears that cannot hear of their own deeds and their own world?

The madman’s predicament in this parable is also that of the philosopher practicing a genealogical politics, and the parable expresses the unique temporality of a genealogical politics. The immediate impact of the madman’s words is not a sudden enlightenment of the people in the marketplace, but rather confusion and scornful laughter. They cannot see the truth in the madman’s words. Their confusion in hearing the state of the world that they themselves live in demonstrates the potential of

provocative words to be politically explosive. Words seldom fall upon an entire body of people and break them into new orders in the manner of some great disaster. They are, rather, dispersed. They enter ears that perhaps do not know how to hear them. In some bodies, they will find no space in which to resonate, and they will be flushed out and forgotten. Yet some bodies will retain the words, and this some will not be a random sample.²¹⁶

If words find a space in which, despite a lack of clarity, they can be retained and made to mean something in the future, it is because a body has already understood something without having articulated it or heard it articulated. Indeed, the madman says that the tremendous event on its way has already been done. The genealogical philosopher articulates an event with a similar temporal structure when he illuminates the orders composing a given world in a way that destabilizes them and invites change. He does not dream up new orders arbitrarily but instead speaks of an event already on the way in the silent spaces of bodies that feel their own difference from the orders they habitually enact. For the genealogist's words to infect the people to whom he writes, there must be a susceptibility to such infection that comes with the body's partial and foggy awakening to the orders that define it. If the words are to be comprehended, the body will have already begun to enact a difference within itself—the difference we have noted earlier as that between the resistant something of its own retained by the body and the order that it imposes upon itself.

²¹⁶ This account has similarities with Jesus's parable of the sower in Mark's gospel (4:1-20), but I do not intend the moral resonances of the "good soil" on which some of the seeds fall. The ears that find something worth retaining in the genealogist's or the madman's words are not the good and pure of heart or even the most intelligent, but are rather people whose lived experience renders the words recognizable in some way.

What drives this differencing and susceptibility to a genealogy's claims? On the one hand, we might speculate that what causes radical thought to resonate is a certain type of superior instinct or naturally rebellious disposition. This is plausibly part of the equation. Yet chance encounters of the body in its lived experience and openness toward the world are surely a crucial factor in determining its openness to words that articulate the orders of worlds and their ripeness for instigating change. Perhaps it is catching an expression on the minister's face as he talks about the peace of Jesus that makes you shudder inexplicably, or an unexplainable sense of violation in an otherwise routine visit to the doctor. It might be a moment in which you desire something that you cannot admit to yourself that you desire, or a moment in which you feel somehow forced into what you have ostensibly chosen. It is chance encounters with the world such as these that cause bodies to be receptive to words that lay one's world bare as an arbitrary set of orders. Of course, the possibilities of such encounters might just as easily be usurped by the very orders that they threaten. Orders employ mechanisms that defuse the situations that threaten them, and the effectiveness of these mechanisms is also related to the material positions of the bodies that they re-order.²¹⁷ Whether it is the gadgety distraction described by Marcuse²¹⁸ or simply the force of a moral interiority that blocks deconstructive thinking, mechanisms that maintain orders prove to be effective in making bodies resistant to words that would crack orders open.

²¹⁷ For instance, in systems of racial oppression, the mechanisms that maintain the oppressive order will be the most effectively embodied by the superior race, who will feel that all is right with the world and thus resist attempts to expose this world's violence. Living life in the skin color deemed inferior might make these mechanisms less effective, thus making the bodies with the inferior skin color more open to subversive discourses.

²¹⁸ See, for instance: Herbert Marcuse. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

With such mechanisms in place, bodies resist the words that point beyond the world in which they live. Whether it is the dismissive resistance of one who has not lived the experiences that bring the words home, the combative resistance of one afraid of their truth, or the distracted resistance of careless boredom, the various ways in which bodies are resistant to the words of philosophers means that even the most provocative words can come to the polis dead on arrival. Words can only be disseminated and proliferated if they find a space to resonate within the bodies whose ears they enter, and this says something significant about the role and potential for the philosopher as dynamite. The philosopher's words do not penetrate into the spaces of bodies that have not already understood something that they articulate. Thus, when a philosopher speaks and is understood, the event that she inaugurates articulately has already been coming, happening silently in the differencing of flesh with itself. The madman speaks of a deed that has already been done, though its event somehow has not yet occurred. It has both already happened and is yet still to come.

It is appropriate that the madman describes the event and its temporality in terms of thunder and lightning, for just like the thunder that arrives ten seconds after the lightning cracks, the storm at the location ten miles away is not the same event as that where the lightning strikes, but is rather removed from its inaugural event. The storm is spread out over a spatial and temporal plane. This means, of course, that like thunder and lightning, the two events are in no way separate either. The philosopher's words are not a mere voice-over narration for something that is already apparent to everyone, but instead guide and direct the event that is already taking place. An articulation of an event interacts with the body in which the coming event is sensed, accelerating it, to be sure,

but also shaping and changing it. As we have noted earlier, the dispersal of the genealogical philosopher's words among diversely situated bodies turns the event of which he speaks into something at a distance from his own text.

The philosopher thus does not cause the event, nor does he merely narrate it, but his words are caught up in it, driving and soliciting what is to come. In this way, it seems that the genealogical philosopher remains in the role of Socrates, albeit in a very different way. He is still a kind of midwife, encouraging the birth of the new thing that has begun to grow independently of him. Unlike Socrates, this new midwife does not attend to the young people of the city individually. As we have noted in the case of Nietzsche, the location of the philosophical event in the space of the body is accompanied by the dislocating act of writing that allows thought to be disseminated back inside the city walls, since Nietzsche's own life and work are performed at a distance from public spaces. This genealogical midwife writes, thus soliciting the event in a form as dispersed and undecidable as the event itself. This midwife no longer works intimately with the single idea of a young person, but rather attends the birth of orders and worlds. In articulating both the insidious structures as well as the fractures in an order that molds the bodies of the present, the genealogist invites and solicits the undecidable *a venir*:

This man of the future, who will redeem us not only from the hitherto reigning ideal but also from that which was bound to grow out of it, the great nausea, the will to nothingness, nihilism; this bell-stroke of noon and of the great decision that liberates the will again and restores its goal to the earth and his hope to man; this Antichrist and antinihilist; this victor over God and nothingness—*he must come one day—(GM II.24).*

Nietzsche's promise for the future does not tell when this *Übermensch* will arrive, but he says simply "one day." Is it possible that "one day" will be too late or the wrong time? When "he" comes "one day," but will he look like what was imagined? Will he arrive

stillborn? Will he prove a wind-egg? Will he exact some unimaginable fee for his liberation?

This is not some rhetorical way of saying we'd better stick with what we know even if it's bad because what we don't know might be far worse. On this analysis, it is always too late to say such a thing; when an order is ripe for change, it is ripe, and the dynamic bodies held in an order's grip have begun to usher in the new prior to any possible authorization. It is, however, to say that a genealogical politics is *always* a relationship toward what is to come, and that what is to come is always still on its way. The messianic way of speaking adopted by Nietzsche above is a welcoming orientation toward the future, but it does not eliminate futurity as such. Nor would Nietzsche's genealogical suspicion²¹⁹ allow him to believe in a finished future, even if he indulges in messianic rhetoric in places like the passage above.²²⁰ Genealogy for Nietzsche is not, after all, a measure adopted as a temporary strategy in the service of some fixed end, but is instead a performance of life enacting its own law of self-overcoming. Such a law requires constant suspicion of all that authorizes itself by standing still.

We might say then, that a genealogical politics, as that which is always inviting what has started to come but what is also yet to come, takes place in the temporality of a mitigated messianism. Derrida describes the timing of the "to come" in this way when he speaks of a "democracy to come":

²¹⁹ Here I am once again using Krell's terminology from *Infectious Nietzsche*.

²²⁰ Alan Schrift has argued that Nietzsche's figure of *Übermensch* (the "he" referred to in the above passage) is neither an ideal human being, nor a particular attitude toward life, but is instead the affirmation of becoming, such that one can never "be" an *Übermensch*. (Alan Schrift. "Rethinking the Subject: Or, How One Becomes-Other Than What One Is." *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*, ed. Schacht. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). I think this focus on becoming is the proper emphasis in thinking what is to come for Nietzsche, but here I want to emphasize the idea of becoming less as an existential principle and more as a way of thinking about historical movement. In other words, rather than thinking about how an individual existence engages in constant becoming and overcoming, I am trying to emphasize here how becoming takes place across the space and time of bodies in multiple generations.

The *to* of the “to come” wavers between imperative injunction (call or performative) and the patient *perhaps* of messianicity (nonperformative exposure to what comes, to what can always not come or has already come).²²¹

Genealogy also wavers in this space, at once inviting and waiting. It invites an event that is both already coming and has not yet come, but that also will never stop coming. A genealogical politics is always oriented toward what is on the way, and what is on the way might not be determinate enough for one to say when it has arrived. The undecidable temporality of this event requires that one actively calls for she knows not what, and that thing that she does not know is also that which she lacks a decisive power to bring about, even as she actively pursues and calls for it.

Therefore, having described the way that materiality temporalizes the events articulated by the genealogical philosopher, we may think of the political future of the Nietzschean corpus in a twofold manner—both in terms the dispersal of the Nietzschean text among bodies and in the terms of the kind of political-philosophical practice that we have been describing. On the one hand, this future is the undecidable constant unfolding of the new sensibilities that find their meanings in the pages of Nietzsche’s texts. This is the continuous fleshing of the Nietzschean corpus, and is by no means a “pure” engagement with Nietzsche, as such sensibilities are informed by the Nietzsche of the twenty-first century, a Nietzsche created by a full century of reading and commenting. In naming such a multiplicitous engagement of bodies with text as a “fleshing,” we deliver an indeterminate and therefore also humble and anticlimactic picture of how Nietzsche’s corpus might take on flesh. And this account would not preclude the event of a highly determinate and static fleshing-out of the corpus, but the anticipation of such an event is

²²¹ Jacques Derrida. *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005. pg. 91.

most decidedly not what draws a set of ears excited by the possibility of self-overcoming and genealogical suspicion back to Nietzsche's text.

On the other hand, we can think of the political future of Nietzsche more specifically in terms of the philosophical-political practice of a genealogical politics—the active solicitation of what is to come through the articulation of the ways in which orders invisibly repress the bodies through which they establish themselves. The increased emphasis on materiality has allowed us a more complete understanding of this possibility of a political future by showing more precisely the philosopher's relation to political transformation, which has allowed us to articulate the role of a genealogical politics. Furthermore, this emphasis has helped us to articulate the peculiar temporality in which such a politics takes place. Thinking the materiality of bodies as the malleability of a flesh in its contact with the otherness in its world, we have seen the way that bodies take on orders and inure themselves in ways that form worlds. In this way, they are both shaped and shaping, and are thoroughly spirit-matter. But the material aspect of spirit-matter also makes itself felt as resistance of bodies toward the transformative aspects of words. A body that has not, in the contingencies of its interactions with the world, happened into an encounter in which it has felt the orders it embodies in their difference with its own possibilities will be like stone against a language soliciting new orders. Rather than being moved by such language, a body lacking the space for subversive speech will become a site at which words are physically blocked.²²²

²²² What has happened to porosity here? Why should a body take on an order so easily but then be closed to new language? I would argue that the difference is the vulnerability that we see in the initial turning inward of the animal-man. When the embodiment of discourse has a threat attached to it, the body is made to feel the vulnerability that makes it malleable. Subversive speech does not necessarily have such threats attached to it, whereas allowing oneself to be moved by it has the considerable threat of losing one's place in the world.

Therefore, since the event solicited by a genealogical politics is always an event dispersed among bodies that both form and resist that event in multiple and complex ways, the contours and conduits of bodies in their porous and resistant material being space and temporalize a politics to come. Our focus on materiality has then helped us to think the time of genealogical politics. Understanding thought in relation to the materiality of bodies, both in their porosity and in their resistance, has shown us more precisely how genealogies are disseminated, and it is in the undecidable character of dispersal and dissemination that genealogies find their distinct temporality. This temporality—an orientation toward what is already on the way and yet always still coming—has caused us to name the genealogical philosopher a new kind of midwife. It seems that this midwife reverses the Socratic reversal, and attends to bodies rather than exclusively to souls.

Yet when Socrates speaks of pregnancy in the *Theaetetus*, the metaphor is fairly straightforward, and we know exactly where the pregnancy lies. The young boy is pregnant of soul, pregnant with an idea that may be solid or weak, substantial or wind-egg. In extending the metaphor of the midwife to the genealogical philosopher, we have perhaps lost some of the clarity concerning the pregnancy itself. We cannot name a particular mother or a particular womb. As midwife, the genealogist invites an event that is spread out over a multiplicity of bodies, and the event is possibly never quite an event, but is always on its way and always still happening. The pregnancy to which this new midwife attends is thus undecidable. It is hard to say exactly when the birth is taking place, for the pregnancy embodied by these multiple bodies is the pregnancy of an age, and its continuous birth is the birth of a world. The philosopher practicing a genealogical

politics therefore waits in a space of undecidability, encouraging an event without determinate limits, an event whose temporality is given by the thickness and resistance of bodies in their materiality.

In the Meantime

A more robust understanding of materiality has helped us to better understand a possible political future for the Nietzschean text, but it has also put us in a complex situation regarding the problem of bare life that we noted in the beginning of the chapter. In describing political formations as the shaping of bodies by power, and in connecting the possibility for such shapings to bare life, we have shown bare life to have a foundational role in political formations. The possibility that life can be laid bare is therefore linked inextricably with the body's porosity and potential meanings, and this means that even in distancing materiality from the meaningless body called bare life, we have found that the two are never far apart. As we have noted at the beginning of this chapter, however, the recent genealogical work of Agamben has located bare life as a political problem squarely within modern Western politics. If it is indeed the case that the politicization of bare life is a unique political situation of our age, then a genealogical politics will confront modern orders on the issue of the production of bare life. Its task will be to expose this production and solicit a new politics that does not thrive on stripping bodies bare of meaning and confining them to the space of a dire state of exception. However, the very production of bare life exposes the limits of a genealogical politics. We will see that the problem of bare life confronting modern politics occurs in a way that is temporally distinct from the genealogical politics that confronts and exposes it. This difference of temporality will reveal a meantime between the present situation

and the politics to come that genealogy cannot confront. The limits placed on genealogy by a materiality laid bare calls for an ethics of the meantime, which we can think of as an orientation toward material life necessitated by the temporal difference between bodies in their ability to take on meanings and bodies in their living material needs. Therefore, the third reason that we must emphasize materiality is that the body in its specifically material being delimits the political potential of genealogy.

In order to explore more fully the way that the production of bare life exposes the limits of genealogy, we must first say more precisely what is meant by the production and politicization of bare life. We have noted already that bare life plays a foundational role in political formations. Now we will analyze Agamben's account of bare life in order to gain this precision. Agamben also notes a foundational role of bare life in politics, but in a considerably more limited way. Considering a Hobbesian account of the creation of the sovereign as an inaugural narrative of a modern biopolitics, Agamben says:

Sovereign violence is in truth founded not on a pact but on the exclusive inclusion of bare life in the state. And just as sovereign power's first and immediate referent is, in this sense, the life that may be killed but not sacrificed, and that has its paradigm in *homo sacer*, so in the person of the sovereign, the werewolf, the wolf-man of man, dwells permanently in the city.²²³

This corresponds to one of Agamben's major theses: "the fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, *zoe* and *bios*," which implies that "Western politics is a biopolitics from the beginning."²²⁴ Agamben therefore equates the production of bare life—the life that may be killed but not sacrificed—with biopolitics, and he understands his analysis of the totalitarian regime and its concentration camp to

²²³ Agamben, 107.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 181.

fill out an element of Foucault's account of biopolitics on which Foucault himself remained (in Agamben's view) strangely silent.

Yet Agamben's definition of biopolitics is decidedly un-Foucaultian, and Foucault seems to be on the more legitimate side of the divide. First of all, the politicization of bare life is older than Aristotle and more widespread than the West. Bare life is politicized whenever violence enters politics. It is already at work politically in the formation of a very basic form of subjectivity that allows human beings to become political beings. This is not to make of Nietzsche's genealogy of interiorization some literal event, but simply to say, on the one hand, that Nietzsche is correct in suggesting that some kind of interiority is necessary for political formation and that this capacity is linked to various forms of violence. On the other hand, more simply, we can leave the psychological point out and say that violence always accompanies political formations at some level, even when daily life is lived in relative peace. The threat of violence is the reminder of bare life, and in this way, politics always already incorporates bare life into its economy.

Secondly, Foucaultian biopolitics describes a phenomenon much more recent than and not at all equivalent to a Western politicization of bare life. Foucault's references to biological life never designate a life stripped bare of meaning, but rather the production of multiple meanings that make biological or natural life the explicit concern of politics. Biopolitics is the merging of discourses on the biological body with political discourse. Foucault explains the two poles of development of this biopolitics:

One of these poles—the first to be formed, it seems—centered on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces, the parallel increase of its usefulness and its docility, its integration into systems of efficient and economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines*: an *anatomo-politics of the human body*. The second, formed somewhat later, focused on the species body, the

body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population*.²²⁵

Biopolitics is the power over the biological body that comes with the sort of subject formation that we have described earlier in this chapter as the way that bodies impose orders upon themselves. It is characterized by regulation and normalization. What is distinctive about this modern biopolitics, then, is not *that* it lays life bare, holding it in a state of exception in which it can be killed, but rather *the way* that it manifests this age-old danger to bodies of all politics:

But this formidable power of death—and this is perhaps what accounts for part of its force and the cynicism with which it has so greatly expanded its limits—now presents itself as the counterpart of a power that exerts a positive influence on life, that endeavors to administer, optimize, and multiply it, subjecting it to precise controls and comprehensive regulations.²²⁶

Our analysis of political formation has shown that any politics shapes a world by habituating bodies in certain ways. And indeed, biological life has never been apolitical, even when it was excluded from the polis, as Foucault suggests for the millennia when “man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence.”²²⁷ One need merely ask the half of the population born with the kind of body deemed to lack the “additional capacity” about this. However, Foucault’s account shows an explicit merging of discourses of biological and political life, or more precisely, it shows the production of a natural life through normalizing discourses that immediately are brought under the scope of public concern. These discourses, combined with a “technology of wars” raise the stakes in the potential for the production of bare life that sits at the heart of all politics:

²²⁵ Michel Foucault. *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990, pg. 139.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 137.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of population.²²⁸

Agamben's analysis of the camp as the modern biopolitical paradigm thus holds true in that it expresses the particular mass-form in which life today is laid bare. Biopolitics causes bare life, which is always a possibility lurking at the heart of any politics, to be produced on a more conspicuous and horrifying scale, exercised at the level of entire "races" and populations.

Calling the camp the "fundamental biopolitical paradigm of the West,"²²⁹

Agamben expresses the worry that even the humanitarian efforts of United Nations refugee camps are only perpetuating this logic that is bound up with bare life:

The separation between humanitarianism and politics that we are experiencing today is the extreme phase of the separation of the rights of man from the rights of the citizen. In the final analysis, however, humanitarian organizations—which today are more and more supported by international commissions—can only grasp human life in the figure of bare or sacred life, and therefore, despite themselves, maintain a secret solidarity with the very powers they ought to fight. It takes only a glance at the recent publicity campaigns to gather funds for refugees from Rwanda to realize that here human life is exclusively considered (and there are certainly good reasons for this) as sacred life—which is to say, as life that can be killed but not sacrificed—and that only as such is it made into the object of aid and protection. The "imploring eyes" of the Rwandan child, whose photograph is shown to obtain money but who "is now becoming more difficult to find alive," may well be the most telling contemporary cipher of the bare life that humanitarian organizations, in perfect symmetry with state power, need. A humanitarianism separated from politics cannot fail to reproduce the isolation of sacred life at the basis of sovereignty, and the camp—which is to say, the pure space of exception—is the biopolitical paradigm that it cannot master.²³⁰

Agamben is surely right to notice that the refugee camp is a space in which people are treated as bare life and that such treatment follows and in some sense even bolsters the powers it ought to fight, but he is also right in his parenthetical aside that "there are certainly good reasons for this." In conflating biopolitics with the production of bare life, Agamben is left to conclude that any activity that follows a biopolitical paradigm itself

²²⁸ Ibid., 137.

²²⁹ Agamben, 181.

²³⁰ Ibid., 133-134.

produces bare life, but this does not seem to be the case. The problem faced by humanitarian efforts is that when they set up the refugee camp, a large group of people has already been laid bare by the politics of the place in which it lives. This is not a point about who did what, as if to say, “Don’t blame Doctors Without Borders; the crazy government/rebel group/terrorists/fill in the blank are the bad guys and the humanitarian efforts are doing their best” (though who could argue that there is a bit of truth in such simplicity in most of these situations?). Rather, this is a point about timing and about temporality, and temporality is the problem that exposes the limits of a genealogical politics.

The answer to how a given political arrangement deploys the capability interior to it and turns an entire population into sacred life is never just that the bad guys did it (or at least the bad guys are almost always a much more complex network than meets the eye). We cannot therefore believe in a binary system in which politics goes bad because of bad guys and good guys help fix a bad situation by saving the victims. Instead, genealogies are an appropriate response to such disasters, for they refuse the simple explanations that immediately offer themselves and instead contextualize an event within a larger logic, as thinkers like Foucault and Agamben do for the genocides of the twentieth century. We can also expand the meaning of genealogy to include the studies that bring unexplored factors to bear on a situation, such as the recent examination of how climate change has affected the crisis in Darfur. Whether a narrative explores isolated factors or a pervasive logic, these practices of genealogical politics bring to light silently operating orders in a way that solicits a new future.

But as we have seen in the previous analysis, genealogies cannot make a future politics be so. Genealogy is a political practice oriented toward what is to come. Wherever a genealogical politics is practiced, a new politics is always on the way. We both must live with an orientation to this future, and yet cannot live in it. When life has been laid bare, the future cannot matter until the present is addressed, and this present is one that is given by the temporality of bodies with material needs. The space of the camp must be deconstructed. The idea of the humanitarianism operating within the space of the camp must be deconstructed. Neither of these is innocent. But if these relief efforts continue within the space of the orders that made them necessary, it will be because life has already been laid bare and no other orders are available at the present moment. The urgency of materiality will not wait upon a politics that has not yet come. When politics is yet to come, bare life insists upon an ethics of the meantime. This meantime is not some isolated span of time needed only in the case of refugees. It is a mode of temporality in which our bodies are always to a certain extent invested as we orient ourselves to change and future orders. Even as worlds and orders become lit up by the subversive discourses that seek to expose their silence, the bodies resistant to such orders are also dependent upon them because their material needs are bound up in their workings and systems. The meantime refers to the impossibility of postponing action until a time when action will be untainted by the order it is resisting. The temporality of orders moves differently from the temporality of mortal bodies, and mortal bodies thus live between orders. Their resistance is a bound resistance.

An attention to materiality has helped us first to think about the malleability of bodies that allows for the formation of worlds, and second, to think about the temporality

of a genealogical politics that exposes those worlds. We now see a third way in which an increased focus on materiality is an appropriate focus as we look toward a future Nietzschean politics. If a biopolitics that lays life bare in a technologically advanced and systematic way now faces some global “we,” then the genealogy inviting a future will never move quickly enough for the bodies most open to its words. Thinking about the body’s materiality is then crucial for understanding the political future of Nietzsche’s text as a genealogical politics because it helps us to think, first of all, how bodies temporalize this political future (as we have seen in our discussion of dissemination and bodily resistance). Secondly, though, in thinking about materiality, we become attuned to what cannot be liberated by a liberating genealogical politics. Bodies in their immediate lives, marked by material mortality, cannot be liberated from having been laid bare by words that open up and promise a new future. They require instead a materiality that is always tainted by the order that has laid them bare in the first place. Materiality thus allows us to see both the possibilities and the limitations of a genealogical politics.

Concluding Remarks

Throughout this dissertation, we have observed Nietzsche’s performance of a bodily division into its material and spiritual elements, in which the body’s physical enjoyment and health is subordinated and sacrificed in the name of a future. In this division, the body has re-spiritualized itself and represented itself as a seat of forces whose logic is independent of the material contingencies, and in doing so, has continued in the tradition of the Socratic “practice of death” even as it begins to twist free of philosophy’s traditional denial of the body. We now see that the very logic of a genealogical politics is one that encounters bodies as future potential in order to

continuously ignite that bit of the body's own physiology retained in the face of repressive orders. The work of genealogy occurs in a temporal difference with the immediacy of lived experience. Though it is an activity of mortal bodies, it requires a futural orientation beyond the futurity of one's own daily life. Self-overcoming is not an isolated event, but one that is spread out across space and time. It is undecidable, unpredictable, and always on the way.

The self-overcoming marked by Nietzsche's fortuitous physiology is thus *a* beginning of a larger event of self-overcoming while in no way being *the* beginning. Nor is the fortuitous event of Nietzsche's physiology *the* overcoming event, but is rather an event that allows for an articulation soliciting a new world. This articulation takes place both before and after the event of a new world in the way that we have seen. Like the madman, Nietzsche the genealogical midwife comes before the event that has already happened, thus making his event of articulation the first that solicits the event by bringing it into the purview of language. The articulating event brings the larger event out of the silence of the body's differencing, thus allowing bodies to engage more explicitly with the event that has already begun within and among them.

We have therefore gained a certain amount of clarity concerning how and why Nietzsche's body continues the practice of death and sacrifice even as his words open a future that allows bodies an expanded range of possibilities for life. His philosophical practice is always oriented toward a future that is not yet, but his body practices the articulation of this future in a present defined by the world that it resists. In engaging the future, Nietzsche surrenders his own body to the spiritualized practice of philosophy, and his genealogical practice proves powerless to effect a better or more enjoyable life for his

own suffering body. But this practice does not occur without disrupting the text in which it is translated, and this inquiry has kept an ear at the site of this disruption. In attending to Nietzsche's own subordinated materiality, we have found an element of embodied existence that genealogical, deconstructive philosophy cannot address adequately. A genealogical politics will therefore always be accompanied by an ethics of the meantime; such an ethics is never exempt from deconstruction, but must rather be deconstructed even as it is necessary. Bodies both want to live and want to live otherwise, and thus live always in between.

Bibliography

- Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans Daniel Heller-Roazen.. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998.
- Ansell-Pearson, Keith. *The Fate of the New Nietzsche*. UK: Avebury Press, 1993.
- Aristotle. *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans. Martin Ostwald. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall Press, 1962.
- "De Anima." *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon. New York: Random House, 1941.
- Behler, Ernst. *Confrontations: Derrida/Heidegger/Nietzsche*, trans. Steven Taubeneck. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991.
- Breazeale, Daniel. "Ecce Psycho: Remarks on the Case of Nietzsche." *International Studies in Philosophy* 25(2), 1993, pp. 19-33
- Burgard, Peter J., ed. *Nietzsche and the Feminine*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1994.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Cadello, James. "Nietzsche and the Living Body: Late- and Post-modern Readings of Nietzsche on Health." *International Studies in Philosophy* 25(2) 1993, 97-107.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson. London: The Athlone Press, 1983.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982.

- *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*, trans. Barbara Harlow. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979.
 - *The Ear of the Other*, ed. Christie McDonald. USA: Schocken Books Inc., 1985.
 - *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005.
- Deutscher, Penelope. *A Politics of Impossible Difference: The Later Work of Luce Irigaray*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2002.
- Diethel, Carol. *Nietzsche's Women: Beyond the Whip*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996.
- Foucault, Michel. *The Order of Things*. New York : Vintage Books, 1994.
- *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. Donald F. Bouchard. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977.
 - *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. New York: Random House, 1978.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*, trans. Joan Stambaugh. Albany: SUNY Press, 1996.
- *Nietzsche*, trans. David Farrell Krell, 4 vols. New York: Harper and Row, 1979-1987.
 - "Nietzsche's Word: God is Dead." *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. Julian Young and Kenneth Haynes. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans. Gillian C. Gill. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991.
- Kaufmann, Walter. *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1950.
- Klossowski, Pierre. *Nietzsche and the Vicious Circle*, trans Daniel W. Smith. London: The Athlone Press, 1997.

- Kofman, Sarah. *Nietzsche and Metaphor*, trans. Duncan Large. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993.
- "Explosion I: Of Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*," trans. Duncan Large. *Diacritics* 24(4), Winter 1994, 50-70.
- Krell, David Farrell. *Infectious Nietzsche*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996.
- Krell, David Farrell and Donald L. Bates. *The Good European*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997.
- Lacoue-Labarthe, Philippe. *The Subject of Philosophy*, ed. Thomas Trezise. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993.
- Marcuse, Herbert. *An Essay on Liberation*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.
- Michelfelder, Diane P. and Richard E. Palmer, eds. *Dialogue and Deconstruction: The Gadamer-Derrida Encounter*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1989.
- Mills, Charles. *Blackness Visible: Essays on Philosophy and Race*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998.
- Nehamas, Alexander. *Nietzsche: Life as Literature*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. Richard T. Gray. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
 - *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the early 1870's*, trans. Daniel Breazeale. New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979.

- *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986.
- *The Gay Science*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1974.
- *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Viking Penguin, 1966.
- *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1966.
- *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale. New York: Random House, 1967.
- *Twilight of the Idols*, trans. Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- *The Antichrist*, trans. Judith Norman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- *The Case of Wagner*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- *Ecce Homo*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann. New York: Random House, 1967.
- *Unpublished Letters*, ed. Kurt F. Leidecker. New York: Philosophical Library, 1959.
- *Nietzsche: Werke Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 30 vols. Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1969.
- *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 volumes. Berlin and Munich: Walter de Gruyter and Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1980.
- *Werke in Drei Banden*, ed. Karl Schlecta. Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1965.

- Oliver, Kelly and Marilyn Pearsall. *Feminist Interpretations of Friedrich Nietzsche*.
University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 1998.
- Plato. *Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing
Company, 1997.
- *Plato's Theaetetus*, ed. Seth Benardete. Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1984.
- Sallis, John. *Being and Logos: Reading the Platonic Dialogues*. Bloomington: Indiana
University Press, 1996.
- Schacht, Richard, ed. *Nietzsche's Postmoralism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University
Press, 2001.
- Schrift, Alan, ed. *Why Nietzsche Still?* Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of
California Press, 2000.
- Scott, Charles. *The Question of Ethics: Nietzsche, Foucault, Heidegger*. Bloomington:
Indiana University Press, 1990.
- *The Time of Memory*. Albany: SUNY Press, 1999.
- *The Lives of Things*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.
- Strauss, Leo. *On Plato's Symposium*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001.
- Vallega-Neu, Daniela. *The Bodily Dimension in Thinking*. Albany: SUNY Press, 2005.

MELANIE SHEPHERD

1029 South Atherton Street

State College, PA 16801

Phone: 814-235-7651 Email: mjs584@psu.edu Student ID: 9 8437 8118

Education:

The Pennsylvania State University

- **Ph.D.**, Philosophy, December, 2007.
Dissertation: Dislocations: Nietzsche, Autobiography, and the Writing of Bodily Events
Director: Professor Charles Scott, Vanderbilt University

Hanover College, Hanover, IN.

- **B.A.**, Philosophy, magna cum laude, 2002.
Major: Philosophy, Minor: Spanish

Conference Presentations:

- "Doing Justice to Decadence: Nietzsche and the Question of Objectivity"
Northwest Philosophy Conference, Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon,
October 2007.
- "Even When He Wounds Himself: On Nietzsche and Subjectivity"
Participants Conference: Collegium Phaenomenologicum, Citta di Castello, Italy,
July 2005.

Commentaries at Professional Conferences:

- Response to "Animot Ethics: Derrida, Human Exceptionalism, and the Extent of Justice," Professor Jack Furlong, Transylvania University
Midsouth Philosophy Conference, University of Memphis, February 2007
- Response to "Animot Ethics: Derrida, Human Exceptionalism, and the Extent of Justice," Jack Furlong, Transylvania University
Midsouth Philosophy Conference, University of Memphis, February 2007

Awards:

- Humanities Initiative Dissertation Fellowship: Rock Ethics Institute, 2006.
- University Graduate Fellowship: Penn State University, 2002-2007
- Outstanding Student in Philosophy: Hanover College, 2002
- Alumni Association Leadership Award: Hanover College, 2002
- Panhellenic Award: Hanover College, 2002
- Gamma Sigma Pi (top 7 percent of class): Hanover College, 2001
- Mortar Board: Hanover College, 2001
- Academic All American Cross Country Team, 1999