

## NIETZSCHE'S ANALYSIS OF TRUTH

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The radical, critical analyses of truth that are sprinkled throughout Nietzsche's writings are challenging even today because they lie at the basis of the crisis of truth that has arisen in this century. Nietzsche's epistemology lies at the heart of his thinking and infiltrates both his critique of traditional philosophy and his search for a positive goal for man. My concern here will be to concentrate on the critical analyses of truth and the proposal of an experimental conception of truth.

Hume's skeptical reduction of knowledge to a psychological basis, to belief, "habit of mind" or disposition awoke Kant from his "dogmatic slumber." His response was to show that the objects of knowledge are genuine in the sense that they are "constituted" by our senses, our intuitions of space and time and the application of categories to experience. Phenomena or objects of knowledge are objective, paradoxically, because of the subjective, necessary determinations of the knower. Kant showed that knowledge is precisely *human* knowledge, knowledge conditioned by our sensory system, our intuitions and the structure of our mind. The world of phenomena is a world for us. The noumenal world, the "true world", transcends our knowledge. We have no access to "reality-in-itself." Later when Sartre avers that "the world is human" he is but summing up the consequences of Kant's "metaphysics of experience."

For a time, Nietzsche was attracted to Schopenhauer's claim to have discovered the secret identity of the "thing-in-itself": the primal will. In *The Birth of Tragedy* he paid homage to Schopenhauer's metaphysics and accepted his idea that a primal will is manifested in all phenomena conditioned by space, time and causality. But Nietzsche's notes of the 1870's already reveal skeptical doubts stimulated by Kant's analysis of

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knowledge. The influence of Kant is seen as "detrimental" because it promotes skepticism on the one hand and also exposes the "anthropomorphic" nature of knowledge and truth. Kant's theoretical support of the scientific (Newtonian) conception of the world had the effect of undermining the belief that scientific understanding yields truth. Nietzsche sees a basic "circular inference" in Kant's *Kritik*: it is a "scientific" analysis of science or knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Under the influence of Kant, even while grappling with his thought, Nietzsche was already veering towards skepticism *before* the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy*.

In his earliest notes, Nietzsche keeps returning to a basic theme: if Kant's critical analysis of knowledge is valid, then we have no knowledge of "truth" or of a "true world." We have no cognitive access to the noumenal world of "things-in-themselves". If, as Kant held, knowledge pertains to what is constituted by our cognitive-sensory "structure", and if the "true world" cannot be known, then the only "truth" we can know is 'truth' for us.

Aside from the impact that Kant had on Nietzsche, there emerged a simultaneous concern with the origin and value of truth. Offering a typical genetic analysis, Nietzsche argues that truth is a "social necessity", a value that emerges out of human experience because of its social utility. The social valuation of "truthfulness" indicates that the belief in truth is rooted in an evolved moral consciousness. Coeval with this socially determined valuation of truth is the development of a world-picture that is taken to be a mirroring of actuality. The polishing of this mirror, to continue the metaphor, is carried out in the sciences. Thus, man passes from a "naive anthropomorphism" to a more sophisticated anthropomorphism that is reflected in his representation of "the world". The anthropomorphism of mythological thinking is replaced by the anthropomorphism of common sense, common beliefs and, eventually, the empirical conception of the "world". In either case, the world that is imagined or known is entirely "human."<sup>2</sup>

Nietzsche agreed with Schopenhauer that the intellect is a tool that the species has developed, a tool that is analogous to the weapons of defence (or attack) that most animals possess.<sup>3</sup> The social value of truth is

<sup>1</sup> *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, trans. and ed., D. Breazeale, N.J., 1979, 32.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>3</sup> R. Nichols, "Schopenhauer's Analysis of Character," in *Schopenhauer: His Philosophical Achievements*, ed. M. Fox, Totowa, N.J., 1980, 113: "The nature of the intellect is... pragmatic; its function is to serve the organism as an instrument in its drive for preservation and procreation... At

linked to the intellect as a sophisticated tool in such a way as to emphasize the practical value of thought, knowledge and truth in virtually the same way in which pragmatists will trace the intellect to its biological basis. In "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," Nietzsche sketches a humanistic or pragmatic conception of truth in the form of an analysis of "anthropomorphic truth". What is unique about this disclosure of the practical, biological and social origin of knowledge and truth is that Nietzsche, unlike the pragmatists, does not accept it as a basis for an epistemology. From the beginning, he adopts a *critical* attitude towards that form of 'truth' that he regards as "human, all-too-human." Nietzsche is critical of the pragmatic notion of truth because he foresaw its possible, negative long-range effects on culture and because he denied that man is the measure of, or "criterion" of, truth. This attitude plays havoc with the attempt to grasp Nietzsche's idea of creative or experimental truth insofar as this is often falsely understood in light of the "anthropomorphic truth" that he treated ironically. The experimental truths of the eternal recurrence of the same and the will to power are not designed for man as he has been, but for man as Nietzsche believed he could be, for the "overmen" of the future who are themselves put forward as aesthetically conceived experimental possibilities. The *Uebersch* as an ideal and goal is a "myth", but with a difference: a myth that Nietzsche believed might be realized perhaps in a thousand years.

In seeking to unravel the tangled web of Nietzsche's numerous statements about truth, it is necessary to delineate what specific mode of truth he is referring to in a given context. There are three basic forms of truth that he analyzes: (1) transcendental or metaphysical truth, including the notion of a "true world"; (2) anthropomorphic truth or common-sense and/or empirical notions of truth —what are called "conditional truths"; and (3) creative, poetic or experimental truth. The first two forms of truth are frequently analysed and criticized. Absolute truth in any form is consistently denied or characterized as illusory. Anthropomorphic truths are those comprising commonsense beliefs about the world, as well as empirical conceptions about the world that are construed either as useful "conditional truths" or as convenient fictions that have practical, instrumental or functional value. Created truth, truth as *poiesis*, pertains to Nietzsche's positive, if sometimes vague, projections

bottom the intellect is a weapon in the struggle for existence and thus no different *in kind* from the claws or antlers of other animals."

of experimental truths that he believed would bring about a "transvaluation of values".

### *Absolute Truth and the True World*

The belief in an absolute Truth whether proposed in a religious or philosophical context is considered as an expression of a need for such a permanent truth or the deep-seated *pathos* in man that desires an absolute, immutable being or idea that is not subject to change, becoming or destruction. The recognition of the desire for absolute truth and the critical or skeptical awareness of its impossibility are the basic dual aspects of Nietzsche's tragic philosophic stance.

The belief that man could attain knowledge of an immutable, eternal truth is undermined by Nietzsche in virtually all of his works... except *The Birth of Tragedy*. There he more or less accepts Schopenhauer's metaphysics of the will and later chides himself for not having spoken in his own voice. However, during the same period in which he wrote his first major work (1870-1871), he had already begun to develop a skeptical epistemology that undermined his romantic-aesthetic tendencies of thought. In the same year in which he published his first major work, he wrote that truth is anthropomorphic, that it is social in nature, a "sum of human relations," a metaphorical creation designed for the sake of social existence and the "life-preserving" needs of the species.<sup>4</sup>

It was Kant's restrictions on knowledge and his denial of the applicability of categories of the understanding to "things-in-themselves" that set Nietzsche's skepticism in motion. In this regard, it has recently been said that

Nietzsche's theory of truth can be seen... as a denial of what Kant asserted... First, he did not believe that the categories which we apply to the world are the only possible categories... our construction of our world is a fact; but we could construct it in a different way... he did not believe that we apply our categories to the mere appearance of things, because he did not believe that it made sense to draw a distinction between what exists and what appears.<sup>5</sup>

Although this is substantially a fair statement of Nietzsche's standpoint, I shall attempt to show that he was far more amenable to Kant's

<sup>4</sup> *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. G. Colli and M. Montinari, Berlin and New York, 1973, III 2, 372-374. In *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* it is said that "the impulse to truth has... proved itself to be a life-preserving power." *Ibid.*, V 2, 149. On the other hand, the "will to truth" is also dangerous insofar as it undermines "illusions" that are also necessary to life.

<sup>5</sup> Mary Warnock. "Nietzsche's Conception of Truth," in *Nietzsche: Imagery and Thought*, ed. M. Pasley, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1978, 38.

categorical scheme than is indicated above. The "world" that Nietzsche criticizes as being a "falsification" of actuality is, more or less, one constructed out of Kantian categories. And by holding that the "constructed" world that we know is not authentic actuality Nietzsche also follows Kant's lead. Before delving into this issue in a more detailed way, it must be shown that the denial of absolute, transcendent 'Truth' was a necessary first step for Nietzsche, one that involved, amongst other things, a denial of the distinctions between the "apparent world" and the "true world" that is alluded to in the passage cited. There are *many* reasons why Nietzsche denies access to truth-in-itself and denies its reality.

Nietzsche sees the belief in absolute truth as a deep metaphysical need in man, a need that is first manifested in a theoretically interesting way by Plato in his conception of eternal forms or ideas. The religious belief in an eternal, immutable being or God is a more popular manifestation of the same metaphysical need. The metaphysics of Christianity postulates an absolute, unconditioned being who is the source and font of value, goodness and truth. God is not only the source (as in St. Augustine) of the illumination of knowledge and truth, but God *is* Truth. Certainly, if God exists, and God is the source of all intelligibility, then God must be absolute truth. As Kierkegaard once put it, God would know all reality as a "system" of compossible truths in perfect knowledge, a system of truths grounded in the eternal truth of God's being. However, if God or an absolute being does not exist, then there is no 'Truth'. Kierkegaard and Nietzsche agree on one thing: Truth in the sense of objective Truth cannot be an object of *knowledge*; it can only be an 'object' of belief or faith. When, in the notes of his last active years, Nietzsche proclaims that it is not a question of something *being* true (or known to be true), but of accepting something as if it were true, he comes close to expressing Kierkegaard's paradigmatic conception of ultimate truth: the holding fast in passionate subjectivity to what is, for reason, "objectively uncertain".

Heidegger's view that Nietzsche's saying "God is dead" means that the "suprasensory world is without effective power," "that metaphysics is at an end" because God (ostensibly "the realms of ideas and ideals") is non-existent<sup>6</sup> is ingenious, but misleading. The cultural phenomenon of "the death of God" entails the loss of belief in an absolute truth grounded

<sup>6</sup> Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. W. Lovitt, New York, 1977, 61. Independent of religious faith in God eroding, as early as 1872 Nietzsche saw that metaphysics is at an end as a result of Kant's *Kritik. Sämtliche Werke*, Berlin, 1980, VII, 425, 436.

in the being of God. More importantly, it entails the loss of belief in a morality that Nietzsche admits has been the most practical defence against nihilism devised so far. The nihilistic consequences of a loss of belief in God, absolute truth and a divinely sanctioned morality will be, Nietzsche accurately predicted, disastrous. This world and life itself will seem to have become meaningless. Of course, Heidegger is right in saying that Nietzsche also believes that metaphysics is at an end, that a belief in a "true world", a "metaphysical world" or a "transcendent world" is radically undermined. But the loss of *that* belief was primarily instigated by Kant's critical philosophy.

Although it is the case that similar effects follow from a loss of belief in a transcendent being and the loss of belief in a "true world", Nietzsche is aware of the difference between a sophisticated philosophical scepticism about a "true world" and the religious doubt that leads the madman to announce the death of God. Nietzsche's basic argument is that the Christian religion encouraged habits or attitudes of mind that eventually gave rise to doubts about its own truth and stimulated the investigation of the workings of nature because the natural world was seen as filled with "signs" of God. The moral valuation of honesty and truthfulness in Christianity (as opposed to Plato's "noble lies") generated cognitive habits that undermined the religious orientation that originally gave rise to them. The Christian world-view underwent an historical, internal self-suppression. Furthermore, Nietzsche argues, in *The Genealogy of Morals*, the religious asceticism of the Christian was gradually transformed into the painstaking discipline of the scientific inquirer. What Nietzsche is claiming in this regard is an Hegelian dialectical transformation of ideas and values into their opposite in a diachronic process.

The point of intersection of the cultural fall of religious belief and the rise of science is the point at which nihilism enters Western civilization. The loss of belief in God generates despair and moral confusion and the world according to science becomes increasingly "senseless." The philosophical dissolution of the idea of a "true world" (which Heidegger equates with "the death of God" in his overinterpretation) followed a different course than that of Christian metaphysics even though there are similarities between Platonism and Christianity. The negation of belief in a Platonic "true world" of forms seems to inaugurate epistemic nihilism while the loss of belief in God (conceived of as the moral law-giver) ushers in the sense that there is no morality. Dostoevsky exemplifies a radical reaction to this phenomenon when he announces that "If God did not exist, then everything would be permitted." The

similarities between the "true world" and God should not blind us to their differences.

Kant's metaphysics of experience dealt a death-blow to speculative metaphysics (despite Hegel's heroic attempt to rejuvenate it by means of a loophole in Kant's contract: "reason"). The devolution of the idea of a "true world" is characterized by Nietzsche as a series of tactical withdrawals. In his sketch of "the history of an error", he traces the formulation of a "true world" from the idea that the man of virtue (e.g., "Plato") is "the truth" — a highly questionable caricature of Plato's thought — to the Christian idea of the promise of a "true world" for the good person. The third stage is one in which the "true world" is unattainable, but obligatory: it is "Königsbergian" or Kantian. In the fourth stage of this devolution of an idea (positivism), the true world is seen as unattained and "unknown". Finally, the idea of a "true world" negates the "apparent world" also, and Zarathustra enters at this "high point of humanity."<sup>7</sup>

Presumably, then, the negation of the (false) antithesis between a true world and an apparent world involves the negation of all absolutes, especially the absolute of 'Truth.' The affirmation of *this* world entails the negation of an eternal world of forms, ideals or perfection. By applauding the denial of a true world Nietzsche is not embracing nihilism. On the contrary, he believes that by affirming the value of the world of time and becoming he is overcoming beliefs that, from his perspective, are life and world denying. If there were a true world, then this world of time, becoming, effort, suffering and action would be devalued, deemed imperfect, emptied of value. The question that lingers is, what does Nietzsche mean by "this world"?

The crucial ambiguity in Nietzsche's thought is found in his conception of what this world is. For, he repeatedly refers to "the world" (virtually in Kantian terms) as the schematized, constructed world that is constituted by our sensory, cognitive and psychological nature. Insofar as this "world" is knowable or intelligible, it is an ordered system of phenomena that is constituted by man. Since "the river of becoming" in which man exists cannot be linguistically or conceptually determined, it is not, in a strict sense, a *world*. It is a worldless chaos. Ironically, because of his own conception of knowledge, Nietzsche cannot legitimately claim to *know* that genuine actuality is a chaos. Depending on the linguistic-conceptual scheme that man imposes on "becoming", he may be said to

<sup>7</sup> *Werke in Drei Bänden* ed. K. Schlechta, Munich, 1955, II, 963.

live in a sequence of "worlds" each of which is a creative "falsification" of authentic actuality. This is what Nietzsche means when he asserts that there is no "true world". The sequence of worlds of appearance that men come to "know" comprises "reality". There is no genuine distinction between appearance and reality because, for us, appearance *is* reality. The world constructed by man is "true" for us. But it is not, ontologically, a 'true world'.

In Nietzsche's metaphor, we are like spiders in their webs and we can only catch in our webs (of language and concepts) what we are able to catch. Although it is admitted that language may constrain thought in terms of "a schema we cannot throw off," this means that the comprehensible world we describe in language is, according to Nietzsche's repeated assertions, a systematically "falsified" world. The phenomenal world that we know is "falsified" because it is a realm conditioned by the "perspectival optics" of human life, by our selective senses, by categories that are "fictions", by ordinary and philosophical language that radically simplifies what we experience and retains metaphysical presuppositions. Nietzsche could have argued consistently that, for the reasons he gives, humanization is falsification. However, he was not content merely to argue that any *world* we know, by virtue of the way we know it, by virtue of the transformation of immediate experience into "knowledge", cannot be a transhuman actuality or an accurate ontological 'picture' of actuality. For, he attempts to say something about what actuality is. That is, he expresses a knowledge about becoming-in-itself. This is where his epistemology becomes tangled.

Although Nietzsche consistently denies that there is any "true world", his various attempts to characterize the indescribable, dynamic flux of actuality leads him to claim an illicit knowledge of reality as it actually is. When he asserts his paradoxical view that "truth" is that kind of error without which our species could not exist, he is referring to the truth "for us" of our ordinary beliefs about the external world, as well as more sophisticated empirical conceptions of the phenomenal world. By designating "truth for us" as an elaborate (highly useful and practical) "falsification" of a dynamic, fluctuating actuality, Nietzsche surreptitiously introduces a distinction between the constituted phenomenal world and what may be called a "true" (if inexpressible) realm of complex processes. The question is, why does Nietzsche believe that actuality is a chaotic flux?

Aside from accepting Heraclitus' conception of the natural world as a ceaseless flux, as well as F.A. Lange's notion that nature is comprised of a

complex process of becoming, Nietzsche was also influenced by the Buddhist idea that "impermanence" and flux are universal features of actuality or what the Buddhists call the changing realm of *samsara*. Moreover, his persistent belief that actuality is not a schematized "world", but a chaotic stream of event-processes was reinforced by Kant and Hume's emphasis upon the stream of impressions or the complexity of the "manifold" we encounter in immediate experience. As if all these influences on him were not enough, he also learned from the burgeoning sciences of the nineteenth century that the natural realm is infinitely complex, a dynamic, fluctuating process of interacting "forces". In the *Nachlass* of 1881 Nietzsche toyed with the formula that he never actually used in his published writings: *Chaos sive natura*. Clearly paraphrasing Spinoza, he points to the chaotic, incongruent characteristics of the realm of nature. Elsewhere in his notes he remarks that if we had finer senses, we would see a distant mountain as a buzzing confusion of rapidly moving particles. Nature, he believed, was an infinitely complex chaos.

Although Nietzsche had good reasons for believing that *Wirklichkeit* was a complex of processes, he does not seem to have seen that he cannot, in terms of his negative epistemic notions, claim any *knowledge* of this presumed actuality. Certainly, given his many arguments that "reason" deceives us and converts what is dynamic into mummified concepts, he cannot hold that *Vernunft* gives us access to authentic reality. On the other hand, despite the fact that in *Twilight of the Idols* it is said that the senses do not deceive us or do not "lie", Nietzsche is not at all consistent in defending this view. For, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, he praises Copernicus and Boscovich for presenting theories that go beyond the crudity of our senses. More importantly, he frequently argues that sensation and perception involve a synthesis of immediate data. There is, even in the most primitive sensation, an "assimilation" process that selects out qualitative features of objects of experience. Moreover, since "values" are said to infiltrate sensory experience and affect what we perceive and how we perceive it, the senses are clearly subject to "deception". Intuition will not help here either insofar as Nietzsche frequently attacks claims to knowledge and truth that are based on "intuitions". Cutting a long story short, there is no way in which Nietzsche can make a claim to *know* that reality is a chaotic flux.

If it is argued that after all the hard sciences do offer a picture of actuality as comprised of extraordinarily complicated processes, this would be fine except for the fact that Nietzsche (in *The Joyful Wisdom* and elsewhere) insists that the scientific world-interpretation is suffused

by anthropomorphic sentiments and "fictions". Science, in fact, is characterized as the most remarkable "humanization" of reality imaginable. Therefore, Nietzsche cannot legitimately appeal to scientific knowledge or evidence for his conception of the authentic nature of actuality. He is trapped in the circle of his own critiques of knowledge and truth.

If Nietzsche were entirely consistent, he would have expressed an agnosticism about the nature of actuality. Neither religious metaphysics, nor commonsense beliefs, nor empirical knowledge nor science can lead us to 'Truth'. This is the "tragic insight" of which he speaks, the insight that engenders a "tragic philosophy", the realization that the "will to knowledge" and the "will to truth" have, in an ironic counterfinality, led to the negation of the possibility of apodictic truth. The enormous "pyramid of knowledge" that man has built by pursuing an "Alexandrian culture" has been built at the cost of the illusion of 'Truth'. The scientific "will to truth" reveals that there are many truths, many perspectives, innumerable "interpretations" of reality, a multiplicity of *kinds* of knowledge. Precisely because there are so many "truths" (conditional truths, truths for us), "There is no Truth".

Those who conceived of "true worlds", as in the various forms of metaphysical idealism, did so, Nietzsche argues, by constructing "the apparent world once more." That is, transcendental worlds were created by means of categories that were originally applied to what was designated as the "apparent world." To take a particular notion for the sake of illustration, we may refer to the concept of "unity". This conception, according to Nietzsche, arose out of the countless experiences of individuals who thought of entities as "identical cases." Such individuals were better able to survive in a dangerous environment than those who were unable to think of entities as "identical".<sup>8</sup> Those who correctly apprehended the coarse and fine distinctions among entities "perished" because they were unable to simplify creatively what they experienced. The diachronic sedimentation of the concept of unity led to the apotheosis of "identity" or unitary identity as a pure concept, "identity-in-itself". This conception became the cornerstone of all notions of perfect self-identity and provided the foundation for the construction of a "true world."

Because what is eternally "true" is immutable, this perfect and permanent realm became an object of veneration and the human world, the world of impermanence, time, becoming and death was denigrated as

<sup>8</sup> KGW, V 2, 149.

imperfect, "apparent." Cognitive "Egyptism" was the impetus to the creation of an unchanging world of perfect forms or beings. The fear of impermanence, becoming and perishing served to create the world of "Truth." Our thought and our language, transposed to a timeless realm of perfection, as well as our "need" for security and permanence, gave rise to the world of immutable Being. Absolute truth is a fiction, albeit a magnetic one. The apotheosis of "Truth-in-itself" was an attempt to create a deanthropomorphic, unconditioned reality by employing concepts that emerged out of the crucible of the anthropomorphic world. The perfect world of pure Being was constructed out of materials forged in the smithy of human experience and fired by the pain of becoming. Having consciously or unconsciously constructed a "true world" of eternal perfection, man then venerated his creation as if it were an alien, absolute power. The "true world" is an idealized, purified duplication of the "apparent world".

### *Truth For Us*

Since Nietzsche's critique of the idea of absolute truth relies, in part, on a psychological phenomenology of the origin of the valuation of absolute truth, it does not demonstrate that absolute truth is impossible. Absolute truth or absolute Being is not logically impossible. However, the arguments directed against the idea of truth-in-itself are designed to persuade us that we should no longer accept such a belief insofar as it undermines our valuation of, our appreciation of, existence. Clinging to *any* absolute is condemned as "decadent", as a flight from insecurity, impermanence, change and becoming. It reflects what Dewey called a "quest for certainty" that arises out of our experience in what Dewey characterizes, in an unintentionally Nietzschean manner, as an "aleatory world".

In *Human, All-Too-Human* it is recommended that we put metaphysical and theological questions "on ice." The exact sciences seem to provide us with unpretentious "truths" that are the consequence of a disciplined, impersonal precision that discloses specific features of the world. Nietzsche's naturalistic bent makes him sympathetic to the methods and results of scientific inquiry. This apparent "positivism" is deceptive, however, because, despite the belief that the empirical sciences bring us closer to the heart of actuality than metaphysical speculations, there is a recurring skepticism expressed about the genuine impersonality of science and its claims to have discovered the structure of the natural world. Nietzsche never was an uncritical positivist.

Although scientific inquiry operates without any overarching metaphysical absolutes, is able to disclose a variety of "truths", it nonetheless relies upon hypotheses, provisional assumptions, conventions, "fictions" and symbolic models of natural processes. The view that Nietzsche simply embraces empirical truths in lieu of absolute truth is false even though his reflections on scientific methods and knowledge had a profound influence on his own philosophy. Factual knowledge is not possible without interpretation, the projection of meaning into events and the value-relative selection of "facts." Just as Husserl holds that the "world of fact" is an intentional object constituted by "acts of consciousness," so does Nietzsche seem to hold that facts are the phenomena that are intentional objects of subjective, scientific or cultural intentionality or "value-interpretation." Our senses, our perception and our cognition are form-giving, meaning-creating and constituting as much for Nietzsche as for Husserl. Of course, Nietzsche looks beneath acts of consciousness in order to find the deep value-determinations that he believes are immanent in living beings.

Sophisticated scientific conceptions such as mathematical points, attraction and repulsion, force, etc., are considered as, *au fond*, anthropomorphic. The world-pictures of the physical sciences are rooted in our sensory experience, our imagination, and the conceptual schema of natural science often reflect our psychic nature. Thus, Nietzsche argues that the concept of force is derived from our subjective belief that we are "forces" when we will an action. Or, in another illustration, the idea of the isolated "atom" is modeled upon our belief that we are "subjects" or "egos" ("subject-atoms") that are capable of producing "effects." Both the factual world of everyday life and the empirical world according to scientific "world-interpretations" are imbued with "humanization."

Nietzsche more or less agreed with Hume that our conception of the external world and its event-sequences is, in large measure, influenced by our psychological "habits" or "dispositions." If certain "needs", "values" or human analogies *do* enter into scientific interpretations (as Ernst Mach held, specifically in regard to the idea of causality), then, to that extent, the scientific interpretation is influenced by "anthropomorphisms." For this reason, Nietzsche avers that we discover in things what we have projected into them and call our discovery "science." This does not mean, however, that, like the idealists, Nietzsche is claiming that the external world is unreal or that, in some way, we "create" an external realm of phenomena. There is an objective stream of actuality, a genuine flux, an infinitely complex and incongruent interaction of "processes."

However, the theoretical or experimental organization of this presumptive "chaos" involves an imposition of form, structure and meaning that is ineluctably anthropomorphic.

Nietzsche accepts the notion of a plurality of facts (granting his conception of facts), as well as a "plurality of interpretations." This phrase has a number of meanings in his thought: it refers to the many, presumably different, perspectival "interpretations" of the "world" that different species are capable of, the enormous variety of individual, human perspectives, the numerous cultural interpretations of "the world", as well as the exceedingly numerous scientific interpretations of similar phenomena or events. We should add to this Nietzsche's experimental postulate of a finite number of "will-points" (or "wills-to-power") that express, as Leibniz would say, the "world" from different and changing perspectives. If "reality" could be frozen at a point in its restless "becoming", it would be, Nietzsche maintains, nothing but the sum of interacting perspectival "centers of force." Even such a "reality" would not be "the same" or congruent because it appears different from each hypothetical, monad-like perspective.

The growth of the "exact sciences" in his day reinforced Nietzsche's emphasis upon the "perspectival optics of life" insofar as each advance in the sciences opened up a new, hitherto unsuspected, "perspective." This aspect of science—the proliferation of a plurality of interpretations put forward to "explain" similar phenomena—deeply influenced the approach to philosophy that Nietzsche adopted. In lieu of "fundamental truths," he proposed provisionally assumed guides or "fundamental probabilities" by which man may think and live.<sup>9</sup> This emulation of scientific thinking, the reliance on, for example, "working hypotheses", gave rise to the experimental conception of truth that was united, in a Centaur-like manner, with the notion put forward by Lange: that edifying philosophical ideals should be poetically expressed from the "standpoint of the ideal."

According to Nietzsche, what has come to be prized as "knowledge" is a consequence of a long process of creative, practical "falsification" for the sake of life, the enhancement of life and the extension of man's power over nature. The various cognitive-linguistic structures that Western

<sup>9</sup> Werke. Grossoktavausgabe, Leipzig, 1905ff, XIII, 72. Cp. *The Will to Power*, trans R. Hollingdale and W. Kaufmann, New York, 1968, §95: "That science has become sovereign... proves how the nineteenth century has rid itself of the domination of [metaphysical] ideals. A certain frugality to desire makes possible our scientific curiosity and severity—which is *our* kind of virtue—."

man has adopted have a direct or indirect utilitarian function. Both logic and the empirical conception of the world have their origins in a cognitive-linguistic framework that is so deeply rooted in our culture that it is virtually impossible to transcend. Very early in his life Nietzsche saw that if man's enormous collective intelligence, his "will to truth", is put in the service of science, then the world will be transformed. Man's technological *hubris* will exploit the natural world relentlessly. This cultural *nisus* will not take place without loss, however. Religion, myth, art and aesthetic culture will suffer and the *pathos* that seeks Truth will be unsatisfied. On the other hand, the natural world disclosed by science, despite its awesome discoveries, will not give man truth. This is the "tragic" cultural milieu into which twentieth century man will enter.

The empirical truths disclosed by scientific inquiry are "conditional truths." And the empirical world is an elaborate and systematic "falsification" of actuality. Useful conditional truths are constructed out of "useful fictions" or those kinds of "errors" that enable man to survive and prosper. Knowledge is a transformation of immediate experience and is suffused with inventive "postulates." To know is to "condition" or to be "conditioned." At even the most primitive level of sensation there is a kind of "abstraction", a process of assimilation that is compared with the assimilation of food by primitive organisms. The empirical world that man knows is a limited, circumscribed "world", a world that is conditionally "true" for us, but does not correspond to any ontologically objective world. The simplifying process that is considered as "knowledge" begins in sensation, continues in perception and conceptualization and is eventually expressed in judgment. At each stage of this constituting, constructive process of simplification our judgments recede from actuality.

Nowhere does Nietzsche deny the value of logically primitive concepts. Categorical, conventional fictions have enormous instrumental value. What is denied is that such basic concepts give us an understanding of the objective network of complex processes. The belief that the world has a "logical structure" is one that is based upon our projection of logic into it. Nietzsche believes that the notion of "being" lies at the foundation of logically primitive concepts. Conceptualization reduces, simplifies, schematizes what it acts upon; it implicitly imposes being on the process of becoming. Empirical concepts are more or less in the same boat as abstract conceptions. For both reduce the exceedingly complex flow of experience to a cognitive *stasis*.

The conditional truths comprising empirical knowledge are heuristically valuable and pragmatically useful, but they are truths for us, truths

elicited from the simplification of processes, human truths. Knowledge involves the imposition of conceptual-linguistic order on a presumed chaos. The ordering process moves us further and further from immediacy and yields a utilitarian picture of a restricted phenomenal domain. Empirical knowledge, then, gives us a theoretical interpretation of actuality comprised of conditional truths; it provides a world-picture that is not ontologically "true", but is "true" in an anthropomorphic sense. Realizing the enormous power of empirical knowledge, especially its technological power to transform the natural world, Nietzsche sometimes suggests that conditional, empirical "truths" are approximations to actuality. Ultimately, however, he admits that the knowledge we have of the empirical world is a form of *praktische Erkenntnis*, "practical knowledge" in the broadest sense.

Although it has been suggested that Nietzsche believes that we could have quite a different set of categories by which to understand the world than that which we do have, the fact of the matter is that he himself offers no entirely novel categories in his philosophy. In point of fact, he relies quite often on Kant's (fictional) categories and seems to criticize their ontological validity precisely because he sees their ascendancy in Western thought. The genetic analysis of the origin of the categories undermines their objectivity validity, their ontological meaning, but it does not suggest that we negate them entirely. Given Nietzsche's sympathies with a kind of structuralism, he sometimes suggests that the primarily Kantian categories of the understanding are so deeply rooted in our thinking and language that it is difficult to surpass them. In his notes, he mentions that the way we think, the categories we use, are conditions of our life, are perhaps necessary for our survival. Having frequently pointed to the enormous practical, instrumental or functional values of basic philosophical categories, and having acknowledged the amazing mastery of nature that is possible by virtue of their use, he cannot, even in his most skeptical moments, declare that our categorical scheme is completely asymptotic to actuality. If our sensory-conceptual framework that has evolved over a long period of time did not at least approximate in some way the realms of external event-sequences, then we would have perished as a species long ago. Even the most rudimentary mastery of an environment, not to speak of sophisticated technological achievements, would have been impossible otherwise. Of course, we must give Nietzsche the last theoretical word here: our survival, our evolution on earth, our store of empirical knowledge, does not necessarily disclose a "true world" or an apodictic ontologically "true" order.

In regard to the interpretation of empirical or scientific 'truth' under consideration, it has been said that Nietzsche's position is similar to C.S. Peirce's notion that truth should be understood in relation to "a theory of scientific method." The suggestion is made that in an important sense Nietzsche is sympathetic to the hypothetical advance of science towards the "ideal of truth."<sup>10</sup> Although this suggestion is an attractive one, we must remind ourselves that Nietzsche has consistently denied that there is any ultimate 'Truth.' The ideal of truth is not attainable in *any* domain. It is not possible for man to attain knowledge of any "unconditional truth" because there is no such truth. As we have seen from Nietzsche's understanding of science, he denies that scientific advance brings us any closer to ultimate truth. The rapid advances in the sciences undermine previous claims to validity or even truth and paradigm shifts raise the question whether there will ever be a community of scientists who come to agreement about truth in science. Each new scientific paradigm, as Kuhn argued, introduces a new system of interpretation, theoretical structure and relevant "facts." Presumably, theory-replacement could proceed indefinitely and Peirce's "ideal of truth" would elude scientific knowledge. The history of the sciences virtually confirms Nietzsche's theory of perspectival scientific theory: the methodology and the conceptual paradigm adopted determine the results. Insofar as Nietzsche was a dedicated instrumentalist and conventionalist in regard to scientific knowledge, it is quite doubtful that he would have agreed with Peirce's notion of the convergence of scientific knowledge on "truth."

As much as man is driven by a "will to truth" or metaphysical need for "Truth", he can never attain any knowledge of "truth-in-itself" in religion, metaphysics or science. The advance of science does not lead to any overarching, unified, synoptic truth. At best, it has generated numerous "little, unapparent truths" and has produced a bewildering variety of interpretations. The "world" is indeed "knowable", Nietzsche tells us, but it is "interpretable" in a variety of ways. The metastasization of scientific truths tends to undermine, even within science itself, the belief that a single, all-encompassing truth will ever be found. The dream of a "unified science" that surfaced in the thirties and forties is as far from realization now as ever. This last point gives us a different perspective on one of Nietzsche's pungent remarks: "There is no 'Truth' ", *because* "there are many kinds of 'truths'."<sup>11</sup> The advance of the scientific world-

<sup>10</sup> Mary Warnock, *op. cit.*, 52-53.

<sup>11</sup> *The Will to Power*, 291. This view is virtually the same as James' denial of the rationalists'

view, granting its enormous accomplishments, inclines us to admit "truths" and to prescind "Truth."

The transition from Nietzsche's critical analyses of religious, metaphysical and empirical truth to a consideration of his own experimental truths is often made too casually. Typically, it is assumed that his theory of a universal, immanent will to power is put forward as an ultimate, explanatory, metaphysical principle. This presupposes that Nietzsche has not understood his own often repeated critical analyses of knowledge and truth. It makes of a skeptical thinker who views prestigious scientific theories as conventional, fictional constructs a naive "metaphysician."

Before returning to a consideration of Nietzsche's creative, experimental truths, it should be pointed out that his thinking was deeply influenced by his understanding of scientific method and theory-construction. He saw that, contrary to popular belief, the scientific interpretation of phenomena was not leading to the disclosure of permanent truths. In the judgment of nineteenth century scientists (with whom he was familiar from his reading of Lange's *History of Materialism* and the writings of Ernst Mach and others) the deeper the probing of the natural world and the psychophysical world of man, the more profound was the doubt that science would ever discover the ultimate nature of reality. The standard cry was: we are ignorant. The primordial nature of the physical world, as well as the functioning of human consciousness in relation to its physical basis, eluded scientific understanding. The conventionalism suggested by Lange and asserted by Mach complicated the issue of scientific knowledge by stressing the role of fictions in science. The tendency of the sciences was not towards the disclosure of a unitary principle of explanation or the discovery of a primal reality, but towards a deep agnosticism. As Nietzsche pointed out in *The Joyful Science*, the mechanistic world-interpretation that promised to make nature intelligible yielded a "meaningless" process with no ascertainable goal.<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche's belief that the cosmos is meaningless and purposeless was in part an intuitive one and, in part, a belief instilled by the scientific conception of the natural world.

Despite the ironic agnosticism of the scientific world-interpretations,

idea of transcendental truth and the emphasis in his pragmatism on "truths in the plural." William James, *Essays in Pragmatism*, New York, 1948, 151, 175.

<sup>12</sup> *KGW*, V 2, 308.

Nietzsche clearly saw the enormous power of science as a means of mastering nature. In *Beyond Good and Evil* he accurately predicted that a great deal of work awaited man, for the practical scientists or "engineers" who would engage in the technological transformation of the earth. However, he felt that man's practical orientation, his emphasis upon technology, would undermine culture, art and the projection of ideals. New ideals were needed in the coming century to fill the void left by the loss of religious faith and the cold and senseless picture of the natural world proffered by science. The formulation of such new ideals would be in the form of scientific hypotheses, tentative experimental ideas that would challenge man to create a "human meaning" for the earth. Nietzsche's experimental truths were to be paradoxical poetic-scientific conceptions that would be put forward in the manner of scientific theories.

### *Experimental Truth*

Having abrogated absolute truth, and having relegated empirical knowledge to the discovery of a multitude of truths that served practical interests and aims, Nietzsche now emphasized the "making of truth", the creative, poetic art of shaping powerful, impressive, experimental truths. This is the razor's edge over which he would have Western civilization pass: the postulation of hypothetical truths that would be, in large measure, modeled upon scientific theories for the sake of a radical, new conception of the condition of human existence. One of the central aims of such experimental truths was to delete from the cosmos any remnant of objective purpose, objective teleology. What Nietzsche sought to accomplish through the proposal of the ideas of a universal will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same was the self-suppression of nihilism. Heidegger's belief that Nietzsche is the "last metaphysician" is mistaken. For, Nietzsche does not claim any absolute truth for his ideas of will to power and eternal recurrence. They are essentially elaborately constructed myths that have an existential meaning. They are designed to bring about a change of thought, feeling and existence that will entirely transform man's global vision of being-in-the-world.

The belief that one's life will be eternally repeated does, as has recently been said, serve as an "existential imperative." It is an idea the thought of which is an acid test for the life-affirming capacities of the overmen of the future.<sup>13</sup> It is ironic that Nietzsche formulates the idea of

the eternal recurrence of the same as a "scientific" notion given his completely conventionalist conception of science. For, science, in his opinion, is the most thorough humanization of nature conceivable. The eternal recurrence of the same is neither a scientific idea nor a metaphysical truth. Rather, it is an aesthetically conceived myth that emulates, in some respects, a scientific theory. It is put forward as a new myth that, if appropriated, will enhance an individual's "feeling of power". At one point, Nietzsche compares the idea of eternal recurrence to the Christian notion of immortality and the eternal punishment of the sinful. He points to the fact that these ideas had an enormous impact on man's existence. Why should the notion of eternal recurrence not have an equally powerful impact on man's conception of existence?

The radical nature of this experimental truth is shown by the fact that it is characterized as "the most extreme form of nihilism" insofar as it entails the idea of the "meaningless forever."<sup>14</sup> Here Nietzsche is putting forward a theoretical notion that deprives life of any objective meaning. Isn't this simply an affirmation that his own pet conception is nihilistic? This is not actually the case insofar as it is said that anyone who appropriates this terrible thought would surpass nihilism by virtue of the

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designed for "overmen" and for the overcoming of nihilism, this pertains to the eternal recurrence of the same as an "existential imperative." The formulation of the thought as a categorical imperative or an ethical imperative is slightly different. That is, the imperative "to live in such a way that you will no have your life eternally repeated." The latter seems to be the edifying aspect of the idea that encourages the individual to make of his life something that he would want to live again and again. However, the appropriation of "the most abysmal thought" is meant primarily as a test of courage and life-affirmation. As an existential imperative, the idea of eternal recurrence is clearly presented in its negative aspect insofar as it entails the acceptance of the negativities of life including the periodic appearance of "the last man." There is, then, a distinction between eternal recurrence as an "existential imperative" and as an "ethical imperative."

<sup>14</sup> *The Will to Power*, 35-36. It is clear from *Thus Spake Zarathustra* and *Beyond Good and Evil* that the negativistic implications of the idea of eternal recurrence do not pertain to how it will appear to others, but are intrinsic to the conception. On this point, Copleston has noted that the doctrine of eternal recurrence "logically involves pessimism" insofar as it "excludes the notion that there is any given end for life—all teleology is banished." In addition, it is correctly pointed out that Nietzsche held that "man himself must... construct a meaning for life through his own creative work" and the will to believe that the overman will become "the meaning of the earth." F.C.S. Copleston, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Philosopher of Culture*, London, 1975, 157-159. Nietzsche, like Kierkegaard before him, was opposed to the conception of an immanent objective teleology in actuality espoused by Hegel. Kierkegaard substituted a "subjective teleology" that gives meaning to existence for Hegel's idea of an objective teleology. Nietzsche seemed to have a similar notion in mind insofar as he urges us to strive for "self-overcoming" in time and becoming, to "create beyond" ourselves, as well as to strive to realize the "ideal self" that lies above us. Always the emphasis is on the transformation of the self in the intensification of *Existenz*. In addition, he projected a created teleology by the insistence that not man, but the overman is the goal." In this sense, and in others as well, it is not the case that Nietzsche banished *all* teleology, but only extrinsic, objective teleology.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Bernd Magnus, *Nietzsche's Existential Imperative*, Bloomington and London, 1978. Although Magnus is right in holding that eternal recurrence was Nietzsche's "countermyth", one

affirmation of life and existence in the face of such an idea. The affirmation of eternal recurrence leads to the "enhancement of the feeling of power" that is Nietzsche's conception of a lived truth. In order to appropriate the thought of eternal recurrence, an individual must be capable of the highest degree of life-affirmation. A paradoxical state is induced by the enhancement of subjective meaning in the face of an idea that depletes the cosmos of *objective* meaning. The endurance of the thought of eternal recurrence is said to produce "the greatest elevation of man's *consciousness of strength*." The thought of eternal recurrence is an entrance requirement for acceptance in the demanding school of *Übermenschlichkeit*. The subjective acceptance of the thought of the eternal recurrence of the same induces an ecstatic state of consciousness akin to an intense aesthetic experience. What I believe underlies the description of such an intense state of being is something similar to the "justification" of the cosmos "as an aesthetic phenomenon" that Nietzsche first referred to in *The Birth of Tragedy*. To be able to endure the thought of an idea that denudes the cosmos of objective meaning, to live this thought, entails the overcoming of nihilism by means of the acceptance of an ultra-nihilistic hypothetical conception. Nietzsche seemed to believe that nihilism cannot be overcome *theoretically*. It can only be transcended in *Existenz*. In this regard, Nietzsche is not alone since Kierkegaard suggested that the "nihilistic standpoint" cannot be overcome by new theories of reality. It can be surpassed only through ethical or religious faith, through the passionate acceptance of a "subjective truth." Like Kierkegaard, though for different reasons, Nietzsche shifts attention from objective teleology to what Kierkegaard called a "subjective teleology."

Going against the grain of traditional Western thought, especially the thought of Hegel, Nietzsche argues that there is no objective teleology operative in the cosmos or in history. If there were a purpose towards which all things are moving, Nietzsche suggests, then that purpose would already have been attained. Moreover, if an objective teleology is stressed, then individual existence is actually robbed of meaning. As in Hegel's thought, we would only be torch-bearers of the purpose of the Absolute. Nietzsche came to the ironic conclusion that human existence could have meaning only in a meaningless cosmos.

In a crucial passage in his notes Nietzsche describes the eternal recurrence of the same as the closest "approximation" of becoming to a "world of Being." The thought of the imposition of Being on becoming is

said to generate a "high-point of meditation."<sup>15</sup> This is actually a strange notion insofar as Nietzsche repeatedly declares that the imposition of "Being" on the stream of becoming (*via* logic or categorization) involves a falsification of actuality. The act of imposing 'being' on actuality is paradigmatically found in logic. For, logic is construed as the "attempt... to understand the actual world according to a scheme of Being devised by ourselves."<sup>16</sup> Now, if logical determination entails a simplification of, a falsification of, actuality, then the idea that the thought of eternal recurrence is an approximation of becoming to Being is, *a fortiori*, a fictional conception. The thought of the repetitious recurrence of "the same" is, to borrow Kierkegaard's phrase, an "absolute paradox." Presumably, the appropriation of the thought of eternal recurrence, the subjective acceptance of this absolute paradox, generates an intense existential meditation. In effect, the idea of the eternal recurrence of the same is a completely paradoxical notion the subjective acceptance of which engenders an ecstatic intensification of existence, a deep feeling of power. This state of being obliterates the negativity of the objective theoretical meaning of eternal recurrence by intensifying the *subjective meaning* of existence.

The aim of the theory of eternal recurrence is to enhance the existence of the individual who affirms it as if it were "true." A liberating, intense feeling of "yea-saying" to life in the face of what is called the most extreme form of nihilism generates a "feeling of power" that negates all *theoretical* negativity. The purpose of the experimental truth of the idea of eternal recurrence is the transformation of the existence of the individual who accepts it as "true." Nihilism is overcome, then, by virtue of the most demanding life-affirmation, the most strenuous affirmation of *Existenz* in relation to the thought of an objectively meaningless cosmos.

Having renounced belief in God as creator and sustainer of the world, Nietzsche had to provide a mythical answer to the question, what is it that impells the "becoming", "the eternal ring of becoming", that is presumably eternally recurring? At this point, he introduces his most complex myth, the myth of the will to power. Having found a striving for power or a striving for a "feeling of power" in history, society and the individual, Nietzsche eventually came to believe that a *nisus* towards power is the most universal characteristic of all existence. The power-

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, § 617.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, § 539.

motive was discerned in the most violent actions of individuals and in the spiritual aspirations of men (e.g., "the Brahmins"). Nietzsche's psycho-history, as well as his psychology, uncovers the universal presence of a will to power in man. Using man analogically, he projects a will to power into all beings, organic and inorganic.

Employing his typical analogical reasoning, Nietzsche interprets organisms as a whole and even their cells in terms of multiple "wills to power." Finally, extending his human analogy to the most basic constituents of the physical world, he interprets theoretical "point-centers" as if they were "will-points." Of course, the idea that there are immanent wills to power acting through all beings is an experimental "hypothesis", a "metaphor" or, simply, a mythical notion put forward as an experimental truth. If all "anthropomorphic truth" entails a falsification, then it would seem to be the case that the conception of a universal will to power that is based upon "human analogy" is also an elaborate fiction. There is reason to believe that the projection of a will to power to non-human entities (on the basis of human analogy) is one of Nietzsche's most ingenious experimental truths.

Joining the will to power to eternal recurrence, as Heidegger suggests,<sup>17</sup> we have an underlying *nisus* towards "more and more", towards power, as the motor force that generates and sustains an endless process of creation and destruction. The postulated striving for power is not something that is satisfied in an individual, a collectivity or in the cosmos. Thus, the plurality of wills to power that expend their energy in "becoming" only repeat the process of "growth" again and again without cessation. The synthesis of the will to power and eternal recurrence produces an immense cosmic spectacle which is a dramatic aesthetic vision. Again, what is missing from this conception of an eternal cosmic process is objective meaning. Nietzsche goes out of his way to delete from the universe any shred of objective meaning in his "experiment with truth." However, precisely this stark and dramatic cosmic vision seems to be the justification of the world and life as an "aesthetic phenomenon." Certainly, this austere aesthetic vision is not intended for those who need to believe in an objectively given meaning or a transcendental source of meaning (God). Nor is it intended for those who cannot live without apodictic truth or absolute truth. For whom is this poetic, experimental truth, this marriage of eternal recurrence and will to power, intended?

Even though, like any theoretician, Nietzsche was enamored of his chief hypothesis, the idea of will to power, he knows full well that it is not true in any sense of objective truth. Even as he writes that the "will to power is the ultimate *factum* to which we come,"<sup>18</sup> his skeptical side knows that there are no ultimate, no purely objective, uninterpreted "facts" of any kind. The notion of a pervasive will to power operative in all beings is an experimental "guess at the riddle of existence," an interpretive model of actuality based on a presumed *human* tendency, an hypothesis that is applied to the cosmos by means of a physical theory (that of Boscovich) which Nietzsche views as a sophisticated working hypothesis that relies upon "conventional fictions." To assume that Nietzsche has regressed here to metaphysical truth is to misunderstand him. He was not being facetious or posturing when he took pride in the fact that he is the first philosopher to do without the value of ultimate 'Truth.' If there is a will to power underlying all things, then it would be an "unconditioned reality", precisely the kind of reality to which, he frequently tells us, we have no access. Although he often writes in an assertive tone about his idea of will to power, Nietzsche reveals the nature of this conception in the most forceful arguments he presents for it. In arguing for the idea of will to power Nietzsche uses basic notions that he consistently repudiates. For example, that the will possesses causal power, that there is an "intelligible character" hidden behind phenomena, that a "human analogy" ever leads to knowledge about any objective reality, etc. The theory of will to power is a tragic myth that is proffered as an experimental truth.

*Der Wille zur Macht* was intended as an experimental work that would serve as an intellectual gymnasium for the "overmen" whom Nietzsche envisaged as possible. The "transvaluation of values" was largely designed to test the courage, the strength and life-affirmative power of "overmen" who have not yet, in the full sense, existed. The union of the idea of will to power and the eternal recurrence of the same formed a set of experimental truths that are so unsparing of common human sentiments, so stark and pitiless, so devoid of traditional consolations, that only a genuine *Uebersensch* could bear to accept them as "truths." The very absence of meaning in the energistic cosmos Nietzsche described reinforced the need for man "to create beyond himself," to create, most of all, meaning in existence. The central meaning, the

<sup>17</sup> Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, trans. D.F. Krell, New York, 1979, I, 18-24.

<sup>18</sup> *Werke. Grossoktavausgabe*, Leipzig, 1905ff, X I, 415.

primary goal, that Nietzsche projected for man was the creation of the conditions for the possibility of the emergence of the "overman." The tragic myths or experimental truths of eternal recurrence and will to power were designed to bring about a transvaluation of values that heralds the emergence of "supreme men" who are construed as the "goal" of civilization.

Against the background of a senseless cosmic process not only is a subjective meaning and teleology projected, but a cultural meaning as well. A "nihilism of strength" is required to transcend the loss of theoretical meaning, to affirm this world, this life, the sacred value of existence. The dysteleology of the cosmos in Nietzsche's myths serves to intensify the value and meaning of life in the human world. The tragic, Dionysian vision that Nietzsche's twin terrible truths projects goes beyond the pessimism of Schopenhauer and Buddhism. Those who are able to do so are asked to look "down into the most world-denying of all possible ways of thinking." However, the existential negation of such theoretical, experimental negations, gives rise to an "opposite ideal." That is,

the ideal of the most high-spirited, alive and world-affirming human being who has not only come to terms and learned to get along with whatever was and is, but who wants to have *what was and is* repeated into all eternity, shouting insatiably *da capo*—not only to himself but to the whole play and spectacle.<sup>19</sup>

This willing of the eternal return of the same that is perpetuated by immanent "wills to power" is variously attributed to the overmen of the future, to the "most moderate" individuals who are able to tolerate the contingencies of life, "the accidents of life", without "extreme articles of faith," to those who "are sure of their power and represent the attained strength of humanity with conscious pride."<sup>20</sup> The idea of eternal recurrence in particular is considered as a "disciplinary" conception that will strengthen the strong and paralyze the "world-weary" and decadent.<sup>21</sup> The aim of the created, poetic, experimental truths is to bring about a transvaluation of values, a way of thinking that is competitive with previous religious conceptions of the condition and destiny of man, to test the "yea-saying" orientation towards life and existence of the "overmen." Nietzsche is fully aware of the dangers inherent in proposing such a tragic vision of human existence and realizes that the vast majority of

<sup>19</sup> *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, § 56.

<sup>20</sup> *The Will to Power*, § 55.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, § 862.

people (understandably) would recoil from such tragic myths. For those who have the courage to affirm life with its antitheses, its suffering, its contingencies, without the consolation of escape from time and becoming or salvation beyond this world, the myth of eternal recurrence offers the possibility of a Dionysian affirmation of existence that generates meaning in *pathos*, in existence, the subjective, transforming "feeling of power." The very absence of objective teleology increases the need to affirm meaning in existence, to transcend the realm of the "human, all-too-human". The acceptance of the *nisus* of will to power in coordination with the idea of eternal recurrence requires a "pessimism", but a "pessimism of strength" that gives absolute assent to *this* world and views it as sacred.<sup>22</sup> The deep eternity that Zarathustra cried for in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* is found in the experimental truth of the eternal recurrence insofar as the finite world of time, becoming and life is eternalized.

Almost from the beginning Nietzsche was always interested not so much in the ultimate truth of a religious belief, a metaphysical system or even the scientific world-view as in the personal, cultural and social effects that are produced or would be produced by accepting it as true. Every holding-for-true on the part of a culture or a civilization is a risk, a danger and hope. By projecting his own experimental truths or myths, Nietzsche seems to suggest, with good reason, that all previously accepted "truths" have been conscious, or more likely, unconscious experiments in value. For the passionate belief that something is true is, for Nietzsche, a belief in a "table of values." Whether his twin experimental truths or myths, the will to power and eternal recurrence, as well as the 'myth' of the "overman" that is believed to be possible, could be the means of creating a new, life-affirming type of individual who is able to engage in the self-creation of meaning is what is called the "great perhaps."

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<sup>22</sup> *Werke. Grossoktavausgabe*, XVI, 372.